King Charles

From School to Battle-field: A Story of the War Days

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Содержание

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CHAPTER I

"If there's anything I hate more than a rainy Saturday, call me a tadpole!" said the taller of two boys who, with their chins on their arms and their arms on the top of the window-sash, were gazing gloomily out over a dripping world. It was the second day of an east wind, and every boy on Manhattan Island knows what an east wind brings to New York City, or used to in days before the war, and this was one of them.

"And our nine could have lammed that Murray Hill crowd a dozen to nothing!" moaned the shorter, with disgust in every tone. "Next Saturday the 'Actives' have that ground, and there'll be no decent place to play – unless we can trap them over to Hoboken. What shall we do, anyhow?"

The taller boy, a curly-headed, dark-eyed fellow of sixteen, whose long legs had led to his school name of Snipe, turned from the contemplation of an endless vista of roofs, chimneys, skylights, clothes-lines, all swimming in an atmosphere of mist, smoke, and rain, and glanced back at the book-laden table.

"There's that Virgil," he began, tentatively.

"Oh, Virgil be blowed!" broke in the other on the instant. "It's bad enough to have to work week-days. I mean what can we do for – fun?" and the blue eyes of the youngster looked up into the brown of his taller chum.

"That's all very well for you, Shorty," said Snipe. "Latin comes easy to you, but it don't to me. You've got a sure thing on exam., I haven't, and the pater's been rowing me every week over those blasted reports."

"Well-l, I'm as bad off in algebra or Greek, for that matter. 'Pop' told me last week I ought to be ashamed of myself," was the junior's answer.

And, lest it be supposed that by "Pop" he referred to the author of his being, and thereby deserves the disapproval of every right-minded reader at the start, let it be explained here and now that "Pop" was the head – the "rector" – of a school famous in the ante-bellum days of Gotham; famous indeed as was its famous head, and though they called him nicknames, the boys worshipped him. Older boys, passed on into the cap and gown of Columbia (items of scholastic attire sported only, however, at examinations and the semi-annual speech-making), referred to the revered professor of the Greek language and literature as "Bull," and were no less fond of him, nor did they hold him less in reverence. Where are they now, I wonder? – those numerous works bound in calf, embellished on the back with red leather bands on which were stamped in gold – 's Virgil, – 's Horace, –

's Sallust, – 's Homer? Book after book had he, grammars of both tongues, prosodies likewise, Roman and Greek antiquities, to say nothing of the huge classical dictionary. One could cover a long shelf in one's student library without drawing upon the works of any other authority, and here in this dark little room, on the topmost floor of a brownstone house in Fourteenth Street, a school-boy table was laden at its back with at least eight of Pop's ponderous tomes to the exclusion of other classics.

But on the shelf above were books by no means so scholarly and far more worn. There they stood in goodly array, Mayne Reid's "Boy Hunters," "Scalp Hunters," "The Desert Home," "The White Chief," flanked by a dusty "Sanford and Merton" that appeared to hold aloof from its associates. There, dingy with wear though far newer, was Thomas Hughes's inimitable "Tom Brown's School-Days at Rugby." There was what was then his latest, "The Scouring of the White Horse," which, somehow, retained the freshness of the shop. There were a few volumes of Dickens, and Cooper's Leatherstocking Tales. There on the wall were some vivid battle pictures, cut from the *London Illustrated News*, – the Scots Grays in the mêlée with the Russian cavalry at Balaklava; the Guards, in their tall bearskins and spike-tail coats, breasting the slopes of the Alma. There hung a battered set of boxing-gloves, and on the hooks above them a little brown rifle, muzzle-loading, of course. The white-covered bed stood against the wall on the east side of the twelve-by-eight apartment, its head to the north. At its foot were some objects at which school-

boys of to-day would stare in wonderment; a pair of heavy boots stood on the floor, with a pair of trousers so adjusted to them that, in putting on the boots, one was already half-way into the trousers, and had only to pull them up and tightly belt them at the waist. On the post hung a red flannel shirt, with a black silk neckerchief sewed to the back of the broad rolling collar. On top of the post was the most curious object of all, – a ribbed helmet of glistening black leather, with a broad curving brim that opened out like a shovel at the back, while a stiff, heavy eagle's neck and head, projecting from the top, curved over them and held in its beak an emblazoned front of black patent leather that displayed in big figures of white the number 40, and in smaller letters, arching over the figures, the name, Lady Washington. It was the fire-cap of a famous engine company of the old New York volunteer department, – a curious thing, indeed, to be found in a school-boy's room.

The desk, littered with its books and papers, stood in the corner between the window and the east wall. Along the west wall was a curtained clothes-press. Then came the marble-topped washstand, into which the water would flow only at night, when the demand for Gotham's supply of Croton measurably subsided. Beyond that was the door leading to the open passage toward the stairway to the lower floors. In the corner of the room were the school-boy paraphernalia of the day, – a cricket bat, very much battered, two base-ball bats that the boys of this generation would doubtless scan suspiciously, "heft" cautiously,

then discard disdainfully, for they were of light willow and bigger at the bulge by full an inch than the present regulation. Beneath them in the corner lay the ball of the year 1860, very like the article now in use, but then referred to as a "ten shilling," and invariably made at an old shoe-shop at the foot of Second Avenue, whose owner, a veteran cobbler, had wisely quit half-soling and heeling for a sixpence and was coining dollars at the newly discovered trade. All the leading clubs were then his patrons, – the Atlantics, the Eckfords, the Mutuals, the Stars, even the Unions of Morrisania. All the leading junior clubs swore by him and would use no ball but his, – the champion Actives, the Alerts, the Uncas. (A "shanghai club" the boys declared the last named to be when it first appeared at Hamilton Square in its natty uniform of snow-white flannel shirts and sky-blue trousers.) Base ball was in its infancy, perhaps, but what a lusty infant and how pervading! Beyond that corner and hanging midway on the northward wall was a portentous object, an old-fashioned maple shell snare-drum, with white buff leather sling and two pairs of ebony sticks, their polished heads and handles proclaiming constant use, and the marble surface of the washstand top, both sides, gave proof that when practice on the sheepskin batter head was tabooed by the household and the neighborhood, the inoffensive stone received the storm of "drags," and "flams," and "rolls." Lifting the curtain that overhung the boyish outfit of clothing, there stood revealed still further evidence of the martial tastes of the occupant, for the

first items in sight were a natty scarlet shell-jacket, a pair of trim blue trousers, with broad stripe of buff, and a jaunty little forage-cap, with regimental wreath and number. Underneath the curtain, but readily hauled into view, were found screwed and bolted to heavy blocks of wood two strange-looking miniature cannon, made, as one could soon determine, by sawing off a brace of old-fashioned army muskets about a foot from the breech. Two powder-flasks and a shot-bag hung on pegs at the side of the curtained clothes-press. A little mirror was clamped to the wall above the washstand. Some old fencing foils and a weather-beaten umbrella stood against the desk. An open paint-box, much besmeared, lay among the books. Some other pamphlets and magazines were stacked up on the top of the clothes-press. Two or three colored prints, one of Columbian Engine, No. 14, a very handsome Philadelphia "double-decker." Another of Ringgold Hose, No. 7, a really beautiful four-wheeler of the old, old type, with chocolate-colored running gear and a dazzling plate-glass reel, completed the ornamentation of this school-boy den. There was no room for a lounge, – there was room only for two chairs; but that diminutive apartment was one of the most popular places of resort Pop's boys seemed to know, and thereby it became the hot-bed of more mischief, the birthplace of more side-splitting school pranks than even the staid denizens of that most respectable brownstone front ever dreamed of, whatever may have been the convictions of the neighborhood, for Pop's boys, be it known, had no dormitory or school-house in common. No

such luck! They lived all over Manhattan Island, all over Kings, Queens, and Westchester counties. They came from the wilds of Hoboken and the heights of Bergen. They dwelt in massive brownstone fronts on Fifth Avenue and in modest wooden, one-story cottages at Fort Washington. They wore "swell" garments in some cases and shabby in others. They were sons of statesmen, capitalists, lawyers, doctors, and small shopkeepers. They were rich and they were poor; they were high and they were low, tall and short, skinny and stout, but they were all pitched, neck and crop, into Pop's hopper, treated share and share alike, and ground and polished and prodded or praised, and a more stand-on-your-own-bottom lot of young vessels ("vessels of wrath," said the congregation of a neighboring tabernacle) never had poured into them impartially the treasures of the spring of knowledge. They were of four classes, known as the first, second, third, and fourth Latin, corresponding to the four classes of Columbia and other colleges, and to be a first Latin boy at Pop's was second only to being a senior at Yale or Columbia. As a rule the youngsters "started fair" together at the bottom, and knew each other to the backbone by the time they reached the top. Few new boys came in except each September with the fourth Latin. Pop had his own way of teaching, and the boy that didn't know his methods and had not mastered his "copious notes" might know anybody else's Cæsar, Sallust, or Cicero by rote, but he couldn't know Latin. Pop had a pronunciation of the Roman tongue that only a Pop's bred boy could thoroughly appreciate. Lads who came, as come

in some rare cases they did, from Eton or Harrow, from the Latin schools of Boston or the manifold academies of the East, read as they had been taught to read, and were rewarded with a fine sarcasm and the information that they had much to unlearn. Pop's school was encompassed roundabout by many another school, whose pupils took their airing under ushers' eyes, to the howling disdain of Pop's unhampered pupils, who lined the opposite curb and dealt loudly in satirical comment. There was war to the knife between Pop's boys and Charlier's around the corner, to the end that the hours of recess had to be changed or both schools, said the police, would be forbidden the use of Madison Square. They had many faults, had Pop's boys, though not all the neighborhood ascribed to them, and they had at least one virtue, – they pulled well together. By the time it got to the top of the school each class was like a band of brothers, and never was there a class of which this could be more confidently asserted than the array of some twenty-seven youngsters, of whom Snipe and his smaller chum, Shorty, were prominent members, in the year of our Lord eighteen hundred and sixty.

Yet, they had their black sheep, as is to be told, and their scapegraces, as will not need to be told, and months of the oddest, maddest, merriest school life in the midst of the most vivid excitement the great city ever knew, and on the two lads wailing there at the attic window because their fates had balked the longed-for game at Hamilton Square, there were dawning days that, rain or shine, would call them shelterless into constant

active, hazardous life, and that, in one at least, would try and prove and temper a brave, impatient spirit, – that should be indeed the very turning-point of his career.

Patter, patter, patter! drip, drip, drip! the rain came pelting in steady shower. The gusty wind blew the chimney smoke down into the hollow of the long quadrilateral of red brick house backs. Three, four, and five stories high, they hemmed in, without a break, a "plant" of rectangular back-yards, each with its flag-stone walk, each with its square patch of turf, each with its flower-beds at the foot of the high, spike-topped boundary fence, few with visible shrubs, fewer still diversified by grape arbors, most of them criss-crossed with clothes-lines, several ornamented with whirligigs, all on this moist November afternoon wringing wet from the steady downpour that came on with the dawn and broke the boys' hearts, for this was to have been the match day between the Uncas and the Murray Hills, and Pop's school was backing the Indians to a man. One more week and winter might be upon them and the ball season at an end. Verily, it was indeed too bad!

With a yawn of disgust, the shorter boy at the open-topped window threw up his hands and whirled about. There on the bed lay the precious base-ball uniform in which he was wont to figure as shortstop. There, too, lay Snipe's, longer in the legs by nearly a foot. "There's nothing in-doors but books, Snipy. There's only one thing to tempt a fellow out in the wet, – a fire, and small chance of that on such a day. We might take the guns up on the

roof and shoot a few skylights or something – "

"Shut up!" said Snipe, at this juncture, suddenly, impetuously throwing up his hand. "Twenty-third Street!"

Shorty sprang to the window and levelled an old opera-glass at the summit of an odd white tower that loomed, dim and ghost-like, through the mist above the housetops quarter of a mile away. Both boys' eyes were kindling, their lips parting in excitement. Both were on tiptoe.

"Right! Down comes the lever!" was the next announcement. "Upper Fifth, I'll bet a bat! Listen!"

Suddenly there pealed on the heavy air, solemn and slow, the deep, mellow tones of a great bell. Even as he counted the strokes each boy reached for his cap. One – two – three – four!

"Fourth!" cried Shorty. "Come on!" And, light as kittens, away scurried the two, skimming down three flights of stairs, nearly capsizing a sedate old butler, snatching their top-coats in the hall, letting themselves out with a bang, leaping down the broad flight of brownstone steps to the broader walk below, then spurting away for Union Square, fast as light-heeled, light-hearted lads could run.

CHAPTER II

A curious thing to look back upon is the old volunteer fire department of New York as it was forty years ago. No horses, no fire-boats, few steamers, no telegraph alarm-boxes, only a great array of practically go-as-you-please companies, averaging forty or fifty men apiece, scattered all over the inhabited parts of the island from Harlem to the Battery. Sixty of these organizations, there or thereabouts, were hose companies, each manning a light, high-wheeled, fancifully painted carriage with its hose-reel perched gracefully above the running-gear, decked out with fancy lamps and jangling bells, – a carriage so light that a boy could start it on the level and a dozen athletic men could make it fairly spin over the paved streets. Then there were fifty engine companies, all but two or three specially favored bands "tooling" hand machines, some of the old "double-deck" Philadelphia pattern, some with long side levers, "brakes" they called them; others still with strange, uncouth shapes, built by some local expert with the idea of out-squirting all competitors. Down in Centre Street was the heavy apparatus of the Exempt Company, only called upon in case of fires of unusual magnitude. Near by, too, was stored a brace of what were then considered powerful steamers, brought out only on such occasions; but two companies that wielded strong political influence proudly drew at the end of their ropes light-running and handsome steam fireengines, and

these two companies, Americus 6, – "Big Six" as they called her, – and her bitter rivals of Manhattan 8, were the envied of all the department. Add to these some nineteen hook and ladder companies that ran long, light, prettily ornamented trucks, and you have the New York fire department as it was just before the war. Famous men were its chiefs in those days, and the names of Harry Howard and John Decker, of Carson and Cregier, were household words among the boys at Pop's, most of whom were strong partisans of some company on whose speed and prowess they pinned their faith. Strange, indeed, to-day seems the system by which fire alarms were communicated. There were no electric bells, no gongs, no telephones in the various engine-houses, which were scattered all over the town, generally in groups of two, an engine and a hose company being "located" side by side, though a large number occupied single houses. On the roof of the old post-office at Nassau Street, in a huge frame-work at the rear of the City Hall, and in tall observation-towers of iron tubing or wooden frame, placed at convenient points about the city, were hung big, heavy, deep-toned bells that struck the hour at noon and nine at night, but otherwise were used exclusively for the purpose of giving alarms of fire. The city was divided into eight districts, and the sounding of the tower bells of any number from one to eight, inclusive, meant that a fire had been discovered within the limits of that district, and all companies designated for service therein must hunt it up and put it out. The seventh and eighth districts divided the lower part of the city, a

little below Canal Street, evenly between them. Then, as the city broadened there, the great, far-spreading space between the East and North Rivers, south of Twenty-second Street, was parcelled off into the third, fourth, fifth, and sixth districts, beginning from the west. These were quite narrow at the south, but flared out north and eastward. Above them, on the east and west sides of the city respectively, lay the first and second districts, the former extending almost to Harlem, which had on Mount Morris its own bell-tower and at its foot a little department of its own. Night and day a single watcher was perched in the glass-enclosed lookout at the summit of each lofty tower, his sole communication with the world below being a speaking-tube to the engine-house at the base and a single wire that connected his "circuit" with the main office at the City Hall, a circuit so limited in its possibilities that it could only administer a single tap at a time upon the tiny gong-bell over the watcher's desk, and finally the big, booming bell that, hanging midway down in the lofty structure, was yet so high above the neighboring roofs and walls that its sound bellowed forth in unimpeded volume. It was struck by a massive swinging hammer, worked by a long steel lever aloft in the watch-tower, the entire apparatus being the design, as were some of the strange-looking engines, of ex-Chief Carson, and one of the greatest treats that Pop's boys could possibly have was to be piloted of a wintry Saturday afternoon or summer evening, by one of their number who had the *open sesame*, up, up the winding stairway, up past the huge, silent monster that hung

midway. (You may venture to bet they wasted no time there, but scurried past him, full tilt, lest an alarm should come at the instant and he should suddenly boom forth and stun them with his clamor.) Once well past him, they breathed freer, if harder, for the climb was long, and at last, tapping on a little trap-door, were admitted to the sanctum at the summit, and could gaze in delight and wonderment about them and over the busy, bustling world far, far beneath. Once well above the low ground of Canal Street, the city rose, and from the Hudson to the East River, along about the line of Spring Street, the ground was high, and here was established the inner row of Gotham's picket guards against fire: three tall towers, one away over at Essex Market, on the far east side, guarding the sixth district; one on Marion Street, guarding the lower fourth and fifth; one over at McDougal Street, guarding the lower third. The next post to the northward was at Jefferson Market, on Sixth Avenue, a tall white wooden shaft that seemed to pierce the skies, so low were all the surrounding buildings, and from his eerie at its summit Jefferson's ringer watched over the upper third and fourth districts. The next tower was Twenty-third Street, near First Avenue, an open affair of iron, like that at McDougal, and here the guardian looked out over all the lower first and upper fifth districts, as well as having an eye on the northeastern part of the fourth. Then came Thirty-second Street, far over near Ninth Avenue, another open cage; and in the cozy, stove-warmed roost at the top of each, snugly closed against wind and weather, day and night, as has been said,

and only one man at a time, the ringer kept his ceaseless vigil. It was his duty to be ever on the alert, ever moving about and spying over the city. If an unusual smoke or blaze manifested itself anywhere, he would at once unsling his spy-glass and examine it. If it lay long blocks or miles away and closer to some other tower, the unwritten law or etiquette of the craft demanded that he should touch the key of his telegraph. This instantly sounded the little bell in the other towers on his circuit, and called upon his fellows to look about them. At no time could he sit and read. He must pace about the narrow confines of his rounded den, or on the encircling gallery outside, and watch, watch, watch. Whenever he discovered a fire, the first thing was to let down his lever and strike one round of the district in which it lay, – fast if the fire was near, slow if at a distance. This was all the neighboring companies had to judge by, as the first arrivals at the engine-house, or the loungers generally sitting about the stove back of the apparatus, or the bunkers who slept there at night, sprang for their fire-caps, raced for the trumpet that stood on the floor at the end of the tongue, threw open their doors, manned the drag-rope, and "rolled" for the street. No company could speed far on its route before meeting some runner or partisan who could tell the exact or approximate location of the fire. The first round from the tower would start every machine in its neighborhood. Then the ringer would spring to his telegraph and rapidly signal to the City Hall two rounds of the district, then add the number of his tower. Then back he would go to his

lever and bang another round. If the fire was trivial four rounds would suffice; if a great conflagration ensued he would keep on ringing for half an hour, and if it proved so great that the chief engineer deemed it necessary to call out his entire force, word would be sent to the nearest tower, and a general alarm would result, – a continuous tolling until signalled from the City Hall to cease. Well did Pop's boys remember the one general alarm of 1859, when the magnificent Crystal Palace at Sixth Avenue and Forty-second Street went up in smoke; and all in half an hour! And thrilling and interesting it was to the favored few of their number permitted sometimes to stand watch of an evening with the ringer, and to peer down on the gaslights of the bustling streets and over dim roofs and spires and into many an open window long blocks away! It was joy to be allowed to man the lever with the silent, mysterious hermit of the tower and help him bang the big bell when the last click of the telegraph from the City Hall announced that the second-hand of the regulator at the main office had just reached the mark at nine o'clock. It was simply thrilling to sit and watch the keen-eyed sentinel as he suddenly and intently scanned a growing light about some distant dormer window, reached for his glass, peered through it one instant, then clapped it into its frame, sprang for the lever, and in another moment three or four or five deep, clanging notes boomed out on the night air from below. It was wild delight to lean from the gallery without and watch the rush and excitement in the streets, – to hear the jangle of the bells of the white hose

carriage as "she" shot suddenly into view and, with a dozen active dots on the drag-rope, went spinning down the street, closely followed by her next-door neighbor, the engine, with a rapidly growing crew. It was keen excitement to watch the bursting of the blaze, the roll of the smoke from the upper windows, to see it wax and spread and light up the neighboring roofs and chimneys with its glare, to mark from on high the swiftly gathering throngs on the broad avenue, and under the gaslight to see company after company come trotting out from the side streets, curving round into the car-tracks, and the moment the broad tires of their engine, truck, or carriage struck the flat of the rails, up would rise a yell from every throat and away they would go at racing speed. It was thrilling, indeed, to see two rival companies reach the avenue at the same point and turn at once into the tracks. Then to the stirring peal of the alarm the fiercely contending bands would seem fairly to spurn the stones beneath their flying feet, and carts, carriages, "busses," everything except the railway-cars themselves, would clear the track for the rival racers, and the air would resound with their rallying-cries. Time and again, it must be owned, so fierce was the strain for supremacy, that furious rows broke forth between the contestants, and that between many companies there were for months and years bitter feuds that often led to war to the knife, and a fire was sometimes left to look out for itself while the firemen settled their quarrel with fists, stones, and "spanners." As a rule, though, there were so many companies at each fire that there were more than enough to fight

the flames, for every company had to run to two districts as well as cover its own neighborhood. Rowdyism was rampant in some of the organizations, but then a benignant "Tammany" guarded the interests of a force so strong in numbers, so potent a factor in politics, and only when a company had become repeatedly and notoriously negligent of its proper duties in order to indulge its love for fight was it actually disbanded. Compared with the system of to-day it was almost grotesque; but in the years when Pop's boys were in their glory the old volunteer fire department was on its last legs, yet was as ignorant of its coming dissolution as of the approach of the great war that should summon so many of its members to meet a foe far harder to down than the hottest fire they had ever tackled. They were still monarchs of all they surveyed, those red-shirted, big-hearted roughs, and many a company had a jolly word of welcome for Pop's boys, who more than once had given some favorite company first notice – "a still alarm" – of a blaze, and thereby enabled the "Zephyrs" of 61 Hose or the "Pacifics" of 28 Engine to be first at the fire, getting a "scoop" on their nearest neighbors of the "Lexington" or the "Metamoras," for every company besides its number had its name, and every company, high or low, its swarm of boy admirers, adherents, and followers, most of them, it must be admitted, street *gamins*.

And all this explanation as our two youngsters are scooting through the dripping rain for Union Square.

As they sped across Fifth Avenue a long white seam flashed

into view just beyond the Washington statue, and went like a dim streak sailing away up Fourth Avenue.

"There goes Twelve Truck!" panted Shorty, already half-winded in the fierce effort to keep up with Snipe's giant strides. "Seven Hose must be just ahead. Look out for Twenty-three now!"

Yes, out from Broadway, as he spoke, a little swarm of men and boys on the drag-ropes, another company came, hauling a bulky little red hand-engine, and went tugging in chase of the lighter hook and ladder. A minute's swift run brought the youngsters to the open square, another around to the broad space in front of the Everett, and there the misty atmosphere grew heavy and thick, and the swarm of scurrying men and boys breathed harder as they plunged into a dense drift of smoke. Just as our youngsters noted that the crowds were running eastward through Nineteenth Street, the old rallying cry of another company was heard, and a light hose carriage came bounding across the car-tracks from the direction of Broadway. Snipe by this time was a dozen yards ahead, and could not hear or would not heed the half-choking, warning cry of puffing little Shorty.

"Lay low, Snipe; that's the Metamora. Look out – look out for the – "

Too late! Half a dozen young fellows were sprinting along beside their pet hose carriage. No more were needed on the ropes, and as Shorty rounded the corner into Nineteenth Street

and saw the flames bursting from the roof of a stable close to Lexington Avenue, he saw, too, with bursting heart, three of those young flankers spring up on the sidewalk in chase of long-limbed Snipe, saw one of them overtake him, lay sudden hand on his shoulder on one side and hurl him violently to the left, just in time to be tripped over the tangling foot of another and tumbled headlong into the reeking gutter, there to lie, stunned and almost senseless, till Shorty, raging, yet breathless and helpless, strove to lift his bleeding head upon his knee.

CHAPTER III

Bigger crowds ran to fires, big or little, in those days than now. The blaze which had well-nigh destroyed an old frame stable in Nineteenth Street that rainy Saturday afternoon before a single fire company reached the scene, and that drew to the spot in the course of half an hour at least twenty companies, – engine, hose, or hook and ladder, – would be handled now by one compact little battalion with one-tenth the loss, with no more than forty men, without an unnecessary sound, and in much less than half the time. Although aided by sympathizing hands, Shorty had barely time to get Snipe on his shaky legs and in the lee of a sheltering tree-box when another company came tearing around from upper Fourth Avenue, – their old friends of Zephyr Hose, – close followed by Engine 28, and Shorty lifted up his voice in a yodel that instantly brought two or three panting young fellows to his side, – big boys who had run with their pet company the half-mile from Twenty-eighth Street. Instant suspicion, mingled with wrath, gleamed in their eyes at sight of Snipe's pale face and bleeding temple. "Yes, the Hulker fellows!" sobbed Shorty, now half mad with indignation and excitement. "I saw just the two that did it. One of them belongs to the first nine of the Metamoras, – the juniors, – and had a row with Snipe the day of the match. Briggs was with them. Wait till we tend to Snipe, then we can fix him."

The youngster's heart was beating hard and savagely, for the outrage was brutal. There had been angry words between the rival clubs, the Uncas and the Metamora, the day of their great game, and hosts of other juniors had gathered about the wrangling nines, not utterly displeased at the idea of a falling out between two of the strongest and, as juniors went in those days, "swellest" organizations on the list. Then, as luck would have it, several of the older boys of both clubs were devoted followers, even "runners," of two rival hose companies, the Uncas almost to a man pinning their fortunes on the white Zephyr, whose home was but three short blocks above Pop's school, and one of whose active members, the son of a Fifth Avenue millionaire, was the biggest and oldest – and stupidest – of Pop's pupils, though not in the classical department. The Metamoras, in like manner, swore by the swell hose company of that name, whose carriage was housed on Fifth Avenue itself, diagonally over across the way from the impressively dignified and aristocratic brownstone mansion of the Union Club. And what Pop's boys, the First Latin, at least, were well-nigh a unit in condemning was that just two of their own number, residents of that immediate neighborhood, were known to be in league with the Metamora crowd, even to the extent, it was whispered, of secretly associating with the Hulkers, and by the Hulkers was meant a little clique led by two brothers of that name, big, burly young fellows of nineteen and eighteen respectively, sons of a wealthy widow, who let them run the road to ruin and bountifully paid their way, – two young scapegraces

who were not only vicious and well-nigh worthless themselves, but were leading astray half a score of others who were fit for better things. No wonder the hearts of the Uncas were hot against them.

Into the area doorway of a neighboring dwelling, with faces of gloom, they had led their wounded comrade. Sympathizing, kind-hearted women bathed his forehead and smoothly bandaged it, even as the uproar without increased, and companies from far down-town kept pouring into the crowded street. By this time half a dozen streams were on the blaze and the black smoke had turned to white steam, but still they came, Gulick and Guardian, hose and engine, from under the Jefferson tower, and natty 55 Hose, – the "Harry Howards," – from away over near the Christopher ferry, and their swell rivals of 38, from Amity Street, close at the heels of Niagara 4, with her handsome Philadelphia double-deck engine, and "3 Truck," from Fireman's Hall, in Mercer Street, and another big double-decker, 11, from away down below the Metropolitan Hotel, raced every inch of the mile run up Broadway by her east side rival, Marion 9. Fancy the hundreds of shouting, struggling, excited men blocking Lexington Avenue and Eighteenth Street for two hundred yards in every direction from what we would call to-day a "two-hundred-dollar fire," and you can form an idea of the waste of time, money, material, and energy, the access of uproar, confusion, and, ofttimes, rowdyism, that accompanied an alarm in the days before the war. Remember that all this, too, might

result from the mere burning out of a chimney or the ignition of a curtain in a garret window, and you can readily see why taxpayers, thinking men, and insurance companies finally decided that the old volunteer department must be abolished.

But until the war came on there was nothing half so full of excitement in the eyes of young New York, and Pop's boys, many of them at least, thought it the biggest kind of fun outside of school, where they had fun of their own such as few other boys saw the like of.

It was inside the school, however, on the following Monday morning, that the young faces were grave and full of import, for Snipe was there, still bandaged and a trifle pale, and Shorty, scant of breath but full of vim and descriptives, and time and again had he to tell the story of the Hulkers' attack to classmates who listened with puckered brows and compressed lips, all the while keeping an eye on two black sheep, who followed with furtive glances Snipe and Shorty wherever they went; and one of these two was the Pariah of the school.

The only son of a wealthy broker, Leonard Hoover at eighteen years of age had every advantage that the social position of his parents and a big allowance could give him, but he stood in Pop's school that saddest of sights, – a friendless boy. Always immaculately dressed and booted and gloved, he was a dullard in studies, a braggart in everything, and a success in nothing. For healthful sports and pastimes he had no use whatever. Books were his bane, and at eighteen he knew less of Latin than boys

in the fourth form, but Pop had carried him along for years, dropping him back thrice, it was said in school traditions, until at last he had to float him with the First Latin, where he sat week after week at the foot of the class. It was said that between the revered rector of the school and the astute head of the firm of Hoover, Hope & Co. a strong friendship existed, but whatever regard "the Doctor" entertained for the father he denied the son. Long years of observation of the young fellow's character had convinced this shrewd student of boy nature that here was a case well-nigh without redeeming feature. Lazy, shifty, lying, malevolent, without a good word or kind thought for a human being, without a spark of gratitude to the father who had pulled him through one disgrace after another, and who strove to buy him a way through life, young Hoover was, if truth were confessed, about as abhorrent to the Doctor as he was obnoxious to the school. A plague, a bully, a tyrant to the little fellows in the lower classes, a cheat and coward among his fellows, filled with mean jealousy of the lads who year after year stepped over his head to the upper forms, stingy though his pockets were lined with silver, sneaking, for he was never known to do or say a straightforward thing in his life, it had come to pass by the time he spent his sixth year with Pop that Hoover was the school-boy synonym for everything disreputable or mean. And, as though the Providence that had endowed him through his father with everything that wealth and influence could command was yet determined to strike a balance somewhere, "Len" Hoover had

been given a face almost as repellent as his nature. His little black eyes were glittering and beady, which was bad enough, but in addition were so sadly and singularly crossed that the effect was to distort their true dimensions and make the right optic appear larger and fuller than the left, which at times was almost lost sight of, – a strange defect that even Pop had had the weakness to satirize, and, well knowing that Hoover would never understand the meaning, had in a moment of unusual exasperation referred to him as "Cyclops," or Polyphemus, a name that would have held among the boys had it not been too classical and not sufficiently contemptuous. An ugly red birth-mark added to his facial deformity, but what more than anything else gave it its baleful expression was the sneer that never seemed to leave his mouth. The grin that sometimes, when tormenting a little boy, distended that feature could never by any possibility be mistaken for a smile. Hoover's white, slender, shapely hands were twitching and tremulous. New boys, who perhaps had to shake hands with him, said they were cold and clammy. He walked in his high-heeled boots in a rickety way that baffled imitation. He never ran. He never took part in any sport or game. He never subscribed a cent to any school enterprise, – base ball, cricket, excursion, or debate. He never even took part in the customary Christmas gifts to the teachers, for in the days of this class of Snipe's and Shorty's and others whose scholarly attainments should have won them first mention, there were some beloved men whom even mischief-loving lads delighted to remember in

that way. One Christmas-tide Hoover had appeared just before the holiday break-up, followed by a servant in dark livery, a thing seldom seen before the war, and that servant solemnly bore half a dozen packages of which Hoover relieved him one at a time, and personally took to the desk of the master in each one of the five rooms, left it there without a word of explanation, but with an indescribable grin, bade the servant hand the sixth to the open-mouthed janitor, and disappeared. A perplexed lot were Pop's several assistants when school closed that afternoon. John, the janitor aforesaid, declared they held an informal caucus in the senior master's room (Othello was the pet name borne at the time by this gifted teacher and later distinguished divine), and that three of the number, who had smilingly and gracefully thanked the boys for the hearty little tribute of remembrance and good will with which the spokesman of the class had wished each master a Merry Christmas, declared they could accept no individual gift from any pupil, much less Hoover, and that he, John, believed the packages had been returned unopened.

And this was the state of feeling at the old school towards its oldest scholar, in point of years spent beneath its roof, on the bleak November morning following Snipe's and Shorty's disastrous run to the fire, when at twelve o'clock the First Latin came tumbling down-stairs for recess. Ordinarily they went with a rush, bounding and jostling and playing all manner of pranks on each other and making no end of noise, then racing for doughnuts at Duncan's, two blocks away. But this time there was gravity

and deliberation, an ominous silence that was sufficient in itself to tell the head-master, even before he noted the fact that Hoover was lingering in the school-room instead of sneaking off *solus* for a smoke at a neighboring stable, that something of an unusual nature was in the wind.

"Why don't you go out to recess, Hoover?" said he, shortly. "If any lad needs fresh air, it's you."

No answer for a moment. Hoover stood shuffling uneasily at the long window looking out on Fourth Avenue, every now and then peering up and down the street.

Impatiently the master repeated his question, and then, sullen and scowling, Hoover answered, —

"I can have trouble enough – here."

"What do you mean?" asked Othello.

"They're layin' for me, – at least Snipe is."

"By Snipe you mean Lawton, I suppose. What's the trouble between you?" and the master sat grimly eying the ill-favored fellow.

"It's not a thing – I want to speak of," was the answer. "He knows that I know things that he can't afford to have get out, – that's all." Then, turning suddenly, "Mr. Halsey," said he, "there's things going on in this school the Doctor ought to know. I can't tell him or tell you, but you – you ask John where Joy's watch went and how it got there."

The master started, and his dark face grew darker still. That business of Joy's watch had been the scandal of the school all

October. Joy was one of the leaders of the First Latin, a member of one of the oldest families of Gotham, and this watch was a beautiful and costly thing that had been given him on his birthday the year before. One hot Friday noon when the school went out to recess, Joy came running back up the stairs from the street below and began searching eagerly about the bookcases at the back of the long school-room. A pale-faced junior master sat mopping the sweat from his forehead, for the First Latin had executed its famous charge but two minutes before, and he had striven in vain to quell the tumult.

"What's the matter, Joy?" he asked. "I *beg* pardon. *Mr.* Joy, I should say. I wonder that I am so forgetful as to speak to a young gentleman in the First Latin as I would to boys in the other forms in the school."

At other times when the weakling who had so spoken gave voice to this sentiment it was the conventional thing for the First Latin to gaze stolidly at him and, by way of acknowledgment of the sentiment, to utter a low, moaning sound, like that of a beast in pain, gradually rising to a dull roar, then dying away to a murmur again, accentuated occasionally here and there by deep gutturals, "Hoi! hoi! hoi!" and in this inarticulate chorus was Joy ever the fugleman. But now, with troubled eyes, he stared at the master.

"My watch is gone, sir!"

"Gone, Mr. Joy? You terrify me!" said Mr. Meeker, whose habit it was to use exaggerated speech. "When – and how?"

"While we were – having that scrimmage just now," answered Joy, searching about the floor and the benches. "I had it – looked at it – not two minutes before the bell struck. You may remember, sir, you bade me put it up."

"I do remember. And when did you first miss it?"

"Before we got across Twenty-fifth Street, sir."

By this time, with sympathetic faces, back came Carey and Doremus and Bertram and others of the First Latin, and John, the janitor, stood at the door and looked on with puzzled eyes. It was not good for him that valuables should be lost at any time about the school. All four young fellows searched, but there was no sign. From that day to this Joy had seen no more of his beautiful watch. Detectives had sought in vain. Pawn-shops were ransacked. The Doctor had offered reward and Mr. Meeker, the master, his resignation, but neither was accepted.

And now Hoover, the uncanny, had declared he had information. It was still over an hour before the Doctor could be expected down from his morning's work at Columbia. The head-master felt his fingers tingling and his pulses quicken. He himself had had a theory – a most unpleasant one – with regard to the disappearance of that precious watch. He knew his face was paling as he rose and backed the downcast, slant-eyed youth against the window-casing.

"Hoover," said he, "I've known you seven years, and will have no dodging. Tell me what you know."

"I – I – don't *know* anything, sir," was the answer, "but you

ask John. He does."

"Stay where you are!" cried the master, as he stepped to his desk and banged the gong-bell that stood thereon. A lumbering tread was heard on the stairway, and a red-faced, shock-headed young man came clumsily into the room. Mr. Halsey collared him without ado and shoved him up alongside Hoover. He had scant reverence for family rank and name, had Halsey. In his eyes hulking John and sullen Hoover were about on a par, with any appreciable odds in favor of the janitor.

"Hoover tells me you know where Joy's watch went and who took it. Out with the story!" demanded he.

"I d-don't," mumbled John, in alarm and distress. "I – I only said that – there was more'n one could tell where it went." And then, to Mr. Halsey's amaze and disgust, the janitor fairly burst into tears. For two or three minutes his uncouth shape was shaken by sobs of unmistakable distress. Halsey vainly tried to check him, and angrily demanded explanation of this womanish conduct. At last John seemed about to speak, but at that moment Hoover, with shaking hand, grabbed the master's arm and muttered, "Mr. Halsey, – not now!"

Following the frightened glance of those shifting eyes, Halsey whirled and looked towards the stairs. Then, with almost indignant question quivering on his lips, turned angrily on the pair. With a queer expression on his white and bandaged face, Snipe Lawton stood gazing at them from the doorway.

CHAPTER IV

That famous charge of the First Latin is something that must be explained before this school story can go much further. To begin with, one has to understand the "lay of the land," or rather the plan of the school-room. Almost every boy knows how these buildings facing on a broad business thoroughfare are arranged: – four or five stories high, thirty or forty or fifty feet front, according to the size of the lot, perhaps one hundred to two hundred deep, with the rooms from basement to attic all about of a size unless partitioned off on different lines. In the days whereof we write Pop had his famous school in the second and third floors of one of these stereotyped blocks. Two-thirds of the second floor front was given up to one big room. A high wooden partition, glazed at the top and pierced with two doors, divided this, the main school-room, from two smaller ones where the Third and Fourth Latin wrestled with their verbs and declensions and gazed out through the long rear windows over a block of back-yards and fences. Aloft on the third floor were the rooms of the masters of the junior forms in English, mathematics, writing, etc. But it is with the second, the main floor and the main room on that floor, that we have to do. This was the home of the First Latin. It was bare as any school-room seen abroad, very nearly. Its furniture was inexpensive, but sufficient. A big stove stood in the centre of the long apartment, and some glazed bookcases

between the west windows and against the south wall at the west end. A closet, sacred to Pop, was built against the north wall west of the stairway, which was shut off by a high wooden partition, reaching to the ceiling. A huge coat-rack stood in the southeast corner. A big open bookcase, divided off into foot square boxes for each boy's books, occupied the northeast corner, with its back against the northward wall. Six or seven benches abutting nearly end to end were strung along the south side, extending from the west windows almost to the coat-rack, the farthermost bench being at an obtuse angle. The bookbox, doors, and partitions were painted a cheerful lead color, the benches a deep dark green. So much for the accommodation of the lads. Now for their masters. On a square wooden dais, back to the light, was perched the stained pine desk at which from one-thirty to three each afternoon sat glorified Pop. Boy nor man ventured to assume that seat at other time, save when that front, like Jove, gleamed above the desk to threaten and command, and the massive proportions, clad in glossy broadcloth of scholarly black, settled into the capacious depths of that wicker-bottomed chair. In front of the desk, six feet away, the low stove, so often seasoned with Cayenne pepper, warmed the apartment, but obstructed not his view. At an equal distance beyond the stove was the table at which from nine A.M. to three P.M. sat the master in charge of the room, and thereby hung many and many a tale. It was a great big, flat-topped table, covered with shiny black oilcloth, slightly padded, and was so hollowed out on the master's side that it

encompassed him round about like some modern boom defence against torpedo attack, and many a time that defence was needed. From the instant of the Doctor's ponderous appearance at the door law and disciplined order prevailed within this scholastic sanctuary, but of all the bear-gardens ever celebrated in profane history it was the worst during the one hour in which, each day from eleven to twelve, Mr. Meeker imparted to the First Latin his knowledge of the higher mathematics and endeavored to ascertain what, if any, portion thereof lodged long enough to make even a passing impression on the minds of that graceless assembly. There were other hours during which the spirit of mischief had its sway. There were other masters who found that First Latin an assemblage of youths who made them wonder why the Doctor had, after long, long years of observance, finally banished forever the system of punishment which was of the breech – the *vis a tergo* order, that was the mainstay of grammar-school discipline in Columbia's proud past; but it was left to Mr. Meeker to enjoy as did no other man the full development of a capacity for devilment, a rapacity for mischief never equalled in the annals of the school.

Whenever the class was formed for recitation it took seats on those northward-facing benches, the head of the class in a chair, with his back to the avenue window, close by the westernmost bench. The others of the "Sacred Band," as that guileful First Latin had once been derisively named, strung out in the order of their class rank along the benches, with Hoover, nine times

out of ten, alone at the bottom. The system of recitation was peculiar to the school, and proved that the "copious notes," so often scornfully, yet enviously, referred to by outsiders, were only blessings in disguise. It might be that Virgil was the subject of the hour, the lesson say some fifty lines in the third book, and in this event Beach, not Meeker, was in the chair, a man of firmer mould, yet not invulnerable. One after another, haphazard, the youngsters were called upon to read, scan, translate, and at the very first slip in quantity, error in scanning, mistake of a word in translation, the master would cry "Next," and the first boy below who could point out the error and indicate the correction stepped up and took his place above the fellow at fault. A perfect recitation was a rarity except among the keen leaders at the head, for no error, big or little, was ever let pass. It was no easy thing for the average boy to read three lines of the resounding dactylic hexameters of "P. Virgilius Maro" according to the Columbia system of the day without a slip in quantity. Scanning, too, was an art full of traps for the unwary, but hardest of all for one of Pop's boys was it to translate. No matter how easy it might be by the aid of the oft-consulted "pony" to turn the Latin into English, it was the rule of the school that the Doctor's own beautiful rendition should be memorized word for word wherever it occurred, and the instances, like the notes, were all too copious. At the word "Enough" that checked his scanning the boy began to translate, and having given the poetic and flowery version of the great translator, then turned to and, word by word, followed with the

literal meaning. Then came the prodding questions as to root, verb, subject, etc., and lucky was the youngster who, when he took his seat, found himself no more than half a dozen places below where he started. At the end of the hour the marks were totted up, and he who had the highest number marched to the head of the class, the others being assigned according to their score. It was all plain sailing when the Doctor himself was in the chair. Few boys ventured on fun with him. On the other hand, few other masters could maintain order on a system that gave such illimitable possibilities for devilment. To illustrate: It is a brisk October morning. School has "been in" an hour. The First Latin is arrayed for recitation in the Æneid, and the boys have easily induced an Italian organ-grinder to come, monkey and all, to serenade them, and to the lively notes of "Patrick's Day in the Morning" one of the confirmed scamps of the class is called upon to begin. He himself was the heaviest subscriber to the fund which secured the services of the dark-eyed exile and his agile monkey. Bliss knows nothing whatever of the lesson and is praying for the appearance of the red-capped simian at the window. The janitor has been sent down to bid the organ-grinder go away, but the boys have blocked that game by bidding higher, and the Italian is warned to pay no attention to such orders, but to hold his ground, – the neighborhood approves of him and he'll be short a quarter if he goes. John comes panting up-stairs to report his ill success, and meantime the recitation cannot go on. Bliss is finally told to pay no attention to "Patrick's Day" and to push

ahead on the most beautiful lines in the book,

"Non ignara mali, miseris succerere disco,"

and Bliss slips on the quantity of the first syllable of the third word, is promptly snapped up by Doremus, next below, who tallies one on his score and jumps above him. Bliss shuts his book despairingly. "Mr. Beach," he begins, in tones of deepest injury, "I know that just as well as anybody else; but I protest, sir, I'm so distracted by that grinding I can't do myself justice – or the subject either." And if the astute Beach had any lingering doubt as to whether the boys worked that game themselves or not the doubt is banished now. Bertram, Doremus, Snipe, Shorty, all are on their feet and pleading with the master to have that impudent music stopped. Mr. Beach vainly warns them to their seats and commands silence.

"Mr. Beach, let me go down and drive him away, – I can do it," implores Beekman, the pigmy Gothamite. It is three minutes before the master can compel silence in the class, so great is its sense of the outrage upon its peace and dignity.

"Mr. Beach, let me fetch a policeman," cries Shorty, who knows there isn't a blue-coat nearer than the Harlem depot at Twenty-sixth Street, and is spoiling for a chance to get out-of-doors.

"The next boy who speaks until bidden will have five marks struck off," says Beach, and with one accord the First Latin opens its twenty-seven mouths, even Hoover swelling the chorus, and, as though so many representatives in Congress assembled

were hailing the chair, the twenty-seven ejaculate, "Mr. Beach, nobody's got five yet." Then little Post jumps up, in affected horror, and runs from his seat half-way to the master's table. "Mr. Beach!" he cries, "the monkey!"

"Aw, sit down, Post," protests Joy, in the interest of school discipline and harmony. "You ought to be ashamed of yourself making such a fuss about a monkey." Snipe and Carey seize the first weapons obtainable – the sacred ruler and the Japan tray on the Doctor's desk – and make a lunge for the windows.

"Lawton – Carey! Back to your seats!" orders Beach.

"We only want to drive the monkey away, sir," protests Snipe, with imploring eyes. "Post'll have a fit, sir, if you let the monkey stay. He's subject to 'em. Ain't you, Post?"

"*Yes*, sir," eagerly protests Post, on the swear-to-anything principle when it's a case of school devilment, and two minutes more are consumed in getting those scamps back to their places and recording their fines, "Ten marks apiece," which means that when the day's reckoning is made ten units will be deducted from their total score. The settlement, too, is prolonged and complicated through the ingenuity of Snipe and the connivance of Bagshot and Bertram, who have promptly moved up and occupied the place vacated by their long-legged, curly-pated, brown-eyed comrade, and who now sturdily maintain that Snipe doesn't know where he belongs. As a matter of fact, Snipe doesn't; neither does he greatly care. He's merely insisting on the customary frolic before the class settles down to business, but to

see the fine indignation in his handsome face and listen to the volume of protest on his tongue you would fancy his whole nature was enlisted in the vehement assertion of his rights.

Mr. Beach fines Snipe another five for losing his place, and then stultifies himself by ordering Bertram and Bagshot back to their original station, thus permitting Snipe to resume his seat, whereupon he promptly claims the remission of the fine on the ground that he himself had found it, and Bertram, a youth of much dignity of demeanor, gravely addresses Mr. Beach, and protests that in the interests of decency and discipline Lawton should forfeit his place, and to prove his entire innocence of selfish motive offers to leave it to the class, and go to the foot himself if they decide against him, and the class shouts approval and urges the distracted Beach to put Snipe out forthwith. Then somebody signals "Hush!" for Halsey, the head-master, the dark Othello, has scented mischief from afar, and is heard coming swiftly down from the floor above, and Halsey is a man who has his own joke but allows no others. Bliss is the only boy on his feet as the stern first officer enters and glances quickly and suspiciously about him.

"Go on with the recitation, Mr. Beach," he says. "That Italian was doubtless hired by these young gentlemen. Let them dance to their own music now, the eloquent Bliss in the lead. Go on with your lines, Bliss."

And as this is just what Bliss can't do, Bliss is promptly "flunked" and sent to the foot, where Hoover grins sardonically.

He's ahead of one fellow anyhow. Just so long now as that organ-grinder does must Halsey stay – and supervise, and scorch even the best scholars in the class, for well he knows the First Latin and they him, and their respect for him is deeper than his for them, despite the known fact that Pop himself looks upon them with more than partial eyes. The class is getting the worst of it when in comes an opportune small boy. "Mr. Meeker says will Mr. Halsey please step into the Fourth Latin room a minute," and Halsey has to go.

"If those young gentlemen give you any trouble, Mr. Beach, keep the whole class in at recess," he says, and thereupon, with eyes of saddest reproach, the class follows him to the door, as though to say, How can such injustice live in mind so noble? But the moment Halsey vanishes the gloom goes with him. Beach's eyes are on the boys at the foot of the class, and with a batter and bang the Japan tray on the Doctor's desk comes settling to the floor, while Joy, who dislodged it, looks straight into the master's startled eyes with a gaze in which conscious innocence, earnest appeal, utter disapprobation of such silly pranks, all are pictured. Joy can whip the bell out from under the master's nose and over the master's table and all the time look imploringly into the master's eyes, as though to say, "Just heaven! do you believe me capable of such disrespect as that?" Three boys precipitate themselves upon the precious waiter, eager to restore it to its place, and bang their heads together in the effort. Five marks off for Shorty, Snipe, and Post. Bagshot is on the floor, and

announces as the sense of the First Latin that a boy who would do such a thing should be expelled. Mr. Beach says the First Latin hasn't any sense to speak of, and tells Bagshot to begin where he left off. Bagshot thereupon declares he can't remember. It's getting near the "business end" of the hour, and the whole class has to look to its marks, so it can't all be fun. Thereupon Beach, who is nothing if not classical, refers to Bagshot's lack of acquaintance with the Goddess of Memory. "Who was she, Bagshot?" "Mnemosyne." "Very good; yes, sir." ("Thought it was Bacchante!" shouts little Beekman. "No, sir. Five marks off, Beekman. No more from you, sir.") "Now, Bagshot, you should be higher than ten in your class to-day, and would be but for misbehavior. What was the color of Mnemosyne's hair?" Bagshot glares about him irresolute, and tries the doctrine of probability.

"Red!"

Beach compresses his lips. "M – n – no. That hardly describes it. Next."

"Carnation," hazards Van Kleeck.

"Next! Next! Next!" says Beach, indicating with his pencil one after another of the eager rank of boys, and, first one at a time and distinctly, then in confused tumbling over each other's syllables, the wiseacres of the class shout their various guesses.

"Vermilion!"

"Scarlet!"

"Carrot color!"

"Solferino!"

"Magenta!"

"Pea-green!"

"Sky-blue!"

"Brick-red!" (This last from Turner, who makes a bolt for a place above Bagshot, and can only be driven back and convinced of the inadequacy of his answer by liberal cuttings of ten to twenty marks.) Then, at last, Beach turns to Carey, at the far head of the class, and that gifted young gentleman drawls, —

"Fl-a-a-me color."

"Right!" says the master, whereupon half a dozen contestants from below spring to their feet, with indignation in their eyes:

"Well, what did I say, sir?"

"That's exactly what I meant, sir."

"I'll leave it to Bliss if that wasn't my answer, sir."

And nothing but the reappearance of Othello puts an end to the clamor and settles the claimants. Shorty submits that his answer covered the case, that Mnemosyne herself couldn't tell carrot color from flame, and is sure the Doctor would declare his answer right, but is summarily squelched by Mr. Halsey, and he has the "*nous*" to make no reference to the matter when the Doctor comes. The hour is nearly over. Only three minutes are allowed them in which to stow their Virgils in the big open bookcase and extract their algebras. Halsey vanishes to see to it that the Third Latin goes to the writing-room without mobbing the Fourth. The marks of the First are recorded, not without a volume of comment and chaff and protest. Then silence settles

down as the master begins giving out the next day's lesson, for the word has been passed along the line of benches, "Get ready for a charge!" A moment later the janitor sounds the bell on the landing without, and twenty-six young fellows spring into air and rush for the bookcase. Not a word is spoken, – Hoover, alone, holds aloof, – but in less time than it takes to tell it, with solemnity on every face except one or two that will bubble over in excess of joy, the First Latin is jammed in a scrimmage such as one sees nowadays only on the football field. The whole living mass heaves against those stout partitions till they bend and crack. From the straining, struggling crew there rises the same moaning sound, swelling into roar and dying away into murmur, and at last the lustier fight their way out, algebras in hand, and within another five minutes order is apparently evolved from chaos.

In such a turmoil and in such a charge Joy's watch disappeared that October day, and the school had not stopped talking of it yet.

It has been said that two boys were the observed of gloomy eyes the Monday following Snipe's misfortune. One, Hoover, of course. The other a fellow who in turn had sought to be everybody's chum and had ended by being nobody's. His name was Briggs. He was a big, powerful fellow, freckle-faced, sandy-haired, and gifted with illimitable effrontery. He was a boy no one liked and no one could snub, for Briggs had a skin as thick as the sole of a school-boy's boot, and needed it. One circumstance after another during the previous year had turned one boy after

another from him, but Briggs kept up every appearance of cordial relations, even with those who cold-shouldered him and would have naught to do with him. During the previous school-year he had several times followed Snipe, Shorty, and their particular set, only to find that they would scatter sooner than have him one of the party. He had been denied admission to the houses of most of the class. He had been twice blackballed by the Uncas, and it was said by many of the school when Briggs began to consort with Hoover that he had at last found his proper level. One allegation at his expense the previous year had been that he was frequently seen at billiard-rooms or on the streets with those two Hulkers, and even Hoover had hitherto eschewed that association. Perhaps at first the Hulkers would not have Hoover. The class couldn't tell and really didn't care to know. One thing was certain: within the fortnight preceding the opening of this story Briggs and Hoover had been together more than a little and with the Hulkers more than enough.

"Are you sure of what you say?" both Carey and Joy had asked Shorty that exciting Monday morning, as the eager youngster detailed for the tenth time the incidents of the assault on Snipe.

"I'm as sure of it as I am of the fire," said Shorty, positively. "Jim Briggs was with the Metamora crowd, running in the street. He looked back and laughed after he saw Snipe down."

But when confronted with this statement by the elders of the "Sacred Band" Briggs promptly and indignantly denied it.

"I never heard of it till to-day!" said he. "'Spose I'd stand by

and see one of my class knocked endwise by a lot of roughs? *No*, sir!"

It was a question of veracity, then, between Briggs and Shorty, the class believing the latter, but being unable to prove the case. Snipe himself could say nothing. Being in the lead, he had seen none of the runners of the Metamora except the heels of a few as they bounded over him when he rolled into the street. There was an intense feeling smouldering in the class. They were indeed "laying" for Hoover as they had been for Briggs when they tumbled out for recess. The latter, with his characteristic vim and effrontery, denied all knowledge of the affair, as has been said, and challenged the class to prove a thing against him. The former, as has been told, lurked within-doors. What had he to fear? He was not at the scene of the fire and the assault. He never had energy enough to run. There was some reason why he shrank from meeting or being questioned by the boys. There was some reason why Snipe Lawton should have left them and returned to the school, and was discovered standing there at the doorway, looking fixedly at the head-master's angered face as it glowered on Hoover and the tearful John. Whatever the reason, it could not well be divulged in the presence of Mr. Halsey. Hoover stood off another proposed demonstration in his honor after school at three o'clock by remaining behind, and only coming forth when he could do so under the majestic wing of the Doctor himself. Pop looked curiously at the knots of lingering First Latins, and raised his high-top hat in response to their salutations. Hoover huddled

close to his side until several blocks were traversed and pursuit was abandoned. Then he shot into a street-car, leaving the Doctor to ponder on the unusual attention. And so it happened that while the class was balked for the time of its purpose, and the victim of Saturday's assault was debarred from making the queries he had planned, Mr. Halsey was enabled to pursue his bent. Just as the little group of five, gazing in disappointment up the avenue after the vanishing forms of the Doctor and Hoover, was breaking up with the consolatory promise that they'd confront Hoover with their charges first thing in the morning, the open-mouthed janitor came running.

"Oh, Lawton!" he panted, "Mr. Halsey says he wishes to speak with you, and to please come right back."

"I'll wait for you, Snipe," said Shorty. "Day-day, you other fellows." And wait he did, ten, twenty minutes, and no Snipe came, and, wondering much, the smaller lad went whistling down the avenue, forgetful, in the fact that he still wore the jacket, of the dignity demanded of a lad of the First Latin and full sixteen. He wondered more when eight o'clock came that evening and without Snipe's ring at the door-bell. He wondered most when he saw Snipe's pallid, sad-eyed face on the morrow.

CHAPTER V

There was something in the friendship between those two members of the First Latin not entirely easy for the school to understand. In many ways they were antitheses, – Snipe, over-long; Shorty, under-sized; Snipe, brown-eyed and taciturn, as a rule; Shorty, blue-eyed and talkative (Loquax was Pop's pet name for him); Snipe was studious; Shorty quick to learn, but intolerant of drudgery. Both loved play, active exercise, and adventure. Both took naturally to everything connected with the fire department, but in addition the smaller boy had a decided love for the military, and was a member of the drum corps of a famous organization of the old State militia, and vastly proud of it. Snipe loved the fishing-rod, and Shorty had no use for one. Shorty loved drill, Snipe couldn't bear it. Take it all in all, they were an oddly assorted pair, but when forty-eight hours passed without their being in close communion something had gone sadly amiss; and that was the case now.

Everybody knew that Snipe Lawton had little or no money of any kind, but few knew why. His own father had been dead many years. His mother had remarried when he was twelve years old, and between the boy and his step-father there was no love whatever. Nor was this the boy's fault. Open-hearted, affectionate, and of gentle nature, he had really tried to like and to win the regard of the man who had won his mother's heart

and had given her an attractive, even a beautiful, home. But there are men who have no sympathy whatever with boys. Mr. Park was one of these, and, after two years of experiment, gave up trying to understand his step-son, and declared that the boy must be sent away to school. It is needless to describe what those two years were to the mother or to the son. Both welcomed the decision, though it cost the former many tears. A younger sister was married and living in New York City. Mr. Park was a Columbiad and a fervent admirer of the great Doctor. It was arranged that the boy should have his home under the roof of his aunt, Mrs. Lawrence, and his lessons under Pop. He grew rapidly, and his clothes were generally short for him. He was shy, sensitive, and hated to ask for money from home, because it had to come from his step-father. Time and again he could not go to the little social gatherings of his schoolmates, with whom he became popular almost from the start, solely because of his outgrown coat and trousers. His aunt had a houseful of company much of the time; her husband's kindred were numerous and prevalent, and, to tell the truth, she was a little ashamed of the tall, shy, sometimes awkward, if not gawky, boy, whose wrists were always in evidence and whose trousers were so short and shabby. And so it resulted that poor Snipe had his little bedroom in her garret, which the servants soon learned they could neglect with impunity, and a place at her table when they were not entertaining company; but home, he really had none. Breakfast was served at the Lawrences' at nine o'clock, but before that time Snipe

was expected to come down to forage for himself and be off to school and out of the way. Luncheon he could take with him, if he chose to put it up and carry it, but as none of the other boys did this Snipe soon ceased, and one of Duncan's doughnuts was the mid-day sustenance, washed down by a glass of what the Doctor referred to as "copious cold Croton" (the Doctor loved that word copious), and on this rather meagre diet Snipe worried through the day till dinner-time, which with Uncle and Aunt Lawrence was half-after six, and a very hungry boy was he who silently, even humbly, took his seat among the lively, chattering party (there were always six or eight in the family circle), and, as soon as his appetite was appeased, was permitted to withdraw, presumably, to his studies, though the fact that he was at Shorty's home was always comforting to Aunt Lawrence, for she had great regard for certain feminine relatives of the smaller boy, and believed that wherever they presided her nephew could not possibly get into mischief. It is not that Aunt Lawrence was either knowingly neglectful or actively unkind. She was a busy woman, a fashionable woman, a woman full of pleasant impulse. She had told George to be sure and come to her whenever anything went wrong, when he needed advice or aid, or – rather vaguely – anything else. She had told the butler to be sure to see that Master George had coffee ready every morning at quarter-past eight, and the seamstress was ordered to keep his wardrobe in repair, and for a month or so both did as they were bid, and then let Master George look out for himself. Mr. Park had requested Mr.

Lawrence to see that George was given fifty cents each Saturday for his spending money, out of which he was to provide his own shoes and gloves. This was Park's own allowance in the old days when he was a boy at the grammar school and Columbia was away down-town, about on line with the City Hall, and the boys lunched sumptuously at Shaddle's for thrippence; but Park had not to buy his shoes in those days, though he said he bought his gloves out of his little sum. He simply argued that it would be good discipline for his step-son to learn to economize. Gloves and shoes cost much less in the ante-bellum days than now, and less in Park's school-days than in those of his step-son. George took what was given him silently and without appeal, and during his three years at Pop's that was every cent of money he received from home. But gloves, he said, he had no use for, and boots were far beyond him. Furthermore, low shoes, summer and winter both, were best to run in, and not another boy at the Doctor's dreamed of the true state of the case, unless it was little Shorty, for to that boy the hungry heart of the lonely fellow seemed to go out from the start. He, too, was an alien; he, too, had left the mother wing to find a nest in the great, thronging city; he, too, was probably not a little in the way, but for him at least there was warmth and interest and sympathy and kindliness, and many a time and oft did Snipe roost all night long in that snug white bed of Shorty's, with no one "at home" the wiser. And many and many a time had he been made welcome at the bountiful board where Shorty sat among an affectionate kindred, and the

tall boy's soft brown eyes seemed mutely to thank each member of the big family circle for every pleasant word. They had grown to like him, despite his silence, or perhaps because of it and its contrast with Shorty's chatter. They took no note of his short-sleeved, skimpy sack-coat or the low shoes at which Briggs had sneered and other fellows at school had levelled their witticisms until they saw it hurt, and then, wonder of wonders, the latter quit it. With all their impulse for fun and frolic and mischief, Pop's boys had the leaven of gentlemen. Even Hoover had never twitted Lawton on the evidences of his poverty, and there were others of that immortal twenty-seven little better off than he. In all the First Latin, Briggs had been the only one to continue the torment after the discovery that it brought pain and distress, and even Briggs no longer dare attempt it when certain of the class were near, for Julian, overhearing him one day, had called him aside at recess and told him that only a mean-spirited whelp would be guilty of such a thing, slapped his face, and invited him into a neighboring stable to fight it out, which invitation Briggs declined. Even little Shorty, overhearing Briggs one day, had flown at him like a young bull-terrier and drawn blood from Briggs's nose before they could be separated. The class stood up for Snipe most loyally in these days of his early tribulations, and by the time Second Latin year was over no one seemed to think of his worn and undeniably shabby garb. Snipe himself was "all right," said they. But there was lingering venom in the soul of Briggs, and as for Hoover, his soul was that of Ishmael

and his hand against everybody, and when these two crabbed natures drifted together in alliance, offensive and defensive, it meant trouble for somebody, and there was no fun in the First Latin when Tuesday came, for to one and all it was plain that Snipe Lawton's heart was heavy, and his big brown eyes were full of nameless misery.

Twice that morning had Shorty tried to get him aside with sympathetic question, but the elder shook his head. There was no time. At recess, when Shorty counted on seeing his chum and hearing the whole story, Lawton never came out at all. John, the janitor, said he was having a talk with Mr. Halsey, trying to get him not to report something to the Doctor, but John himself seemed ill at ease and anxious to avoid question. The class communed together and instinctively connected Briggs and Hoover with the mystery, but Hoover had disappointed everybody by remaining away from school that day, and as for Briggs, he was in everybody's way. Wherever he saw a group in low-toned conference he would make for it, and by his very presence and loud-voiced questions and conjectures put an end to their confidences. Everybody seemed to feel that when the Doctor came down that afternoon there would be a sensation of some kind, and school reassembled after recess and the First Latin went to its benches without even accidentally upsetting one of them. Snipe was sitting at the end of the upper bench looking drearily out on the avenue, and Mr. Halsey, with darker face than usual, had taken his accustomed place.

A spiritless recitation was begun, Snipe losing his head and memory and place after place. There were boys who knew the answers to questions at which he only shook his head and who presently refused to speak and go above him. Halsey's face grew darker and darker at these evidences of sympathy. The "next! next! next!" became incessant. Up even towards the head of the class, above the seat to which the sad-eyed fellow had drifted, there was no animation. The leaders gave their answers in low tones, as though to say, "We've got to go through with this, but we've no heart in it. Snipe's proper place is up here among us." It was actually a relief to everybody when at last, towards the close of the hour, the Doctor's heavy tread was heard, slow and majestic, ascending the wooden stairs.

It was his custom to halt at the doorway, and from that point of view survey his waiting scholars, the foot of the class coming in for invariable comment. I can see him now, portly, erect, scrupulously neat and exact in dress from the crown of his deeply weeded high top hat to the tip of his polished shoes. Clean shaved, the wide upper lip, the broad massive chin, the great sweep of jaw. Collar, cuffs, and shirt-front immaculate; coat, waistcoat, and trousers, and the broad stock of flawless black. The gold seal dangling from his watch ribbon the only speck of color, the gold top of his stout, straight, black cane concealed in his hand. Under their shaggy brows the deep-set gray eyes twinkle, as slowly he lifts the long ferule and points it at the luckless wight on the lowermost bench; then with inquiring gaze

sweeps the line of intent young faces, looking for some one.

"What!" he says. "Another occupant! Where, then, is the

> 'Monstrum horrendum, informe, ingens, cui lumen ademptum'?"

And at any other day the class, barring Hoover, would have shouted with appreciative joy; but not to-day. Despite Hoover's absence a cloud has lowered over their house. They cannot laugh, even in counterfeited glee, and the Doctor's face changes on the instant as he steps within. He has noted Lawton's unusual position and his strange, white face.

"Anything wrong, Mr. Halsey?"

The head-master rises and turns to his revered senior. In low tone he says, so that only one or two can catch the words, "A matter I'll have to tell you after school, sir." And school must last over an hour longer. Silently the class exchanges the text-book for Xenophon. The Doctor's own hour has come, sacred to Greek, and silently the boys retake their places. But the occasion weighs upon the Doctor's mind. Something tells him there is worry ahead, and the sooner it is met the better. One expedient never fails him. "How have they done to-day, Mr. Halsey?"

The head-master purses up his lip. He knows that since recess at least, so far as recitation is concerned, they have done unusually ill; but he knows what the Doctor desires.

"*Behaved* rather better than usual, sir."

"One good turn deserves another," says Pop. "How many young gentlemen of the First Latin deserve half holiday? All

hands up!" And up go the hands, but with only half the usual alacrity.

"The ayes have it. The class may retire."

And slowly the First Latin finds its legs and lingers, for Halsey whispers to Pop, and the latter, with somewhat grayer shade to his face, says, "Lawton will remain."

The boys dawdle unaccountably about the big bookcase, glancing over their shoulders at Lawton, who sits with drooping head and downcast eyes opposite Halsey's table. Briggs, panting a little, slinks through the silent group to the doorway, and scuttles quickly down the stairs. When Joy and Beekman reach the street he is peering round the stable at the corner, but slips out of sight an instant later. Three or four of the class, Shorty among them, still hover about the coat-rack. Shorty says he can't find his overshoes, which is not remarkable, as he did not wear them. Halsey is nervously tapping his desk with the butt of his pencil and glancing at the dawdlers with ominous eyes. At last the Doctor uplifts his head and voice. He has been looking over some papers on his desk.

"Those young gentlemen at the coat-rack seem reluctant to leave school, Mr. Halsey. Hah! Julian, cestus bearing! Dix, ecclesiasticus! Et tu, puer parvule, lingua longissima!" He pauses impressively, and, raising hand and pencil, points to the door. "If one of 'em comes back before to-morrow, Mr. Halsey, set him to work on Sallust."

And then the three know enough to stand no longer on the

order of their going. Their faces are full of sympathy as they take a farewell peep at Snipe, and Shorty signals to unseeing eyes "I'll wait." And wait the little fellow does, a long hour, kicking his heels about the cold pavement without, and then the Second Latin comes tumbling down-stairs, scattering with noisy glee, and marvelling much to see Shorty looking blue and cold and mournful. He will not answer their questions; he's only waiting for Snipe. And another quarter-hour passes, and then for an instant the boy's eyes brighten, and he springs forward as his tall chum appears at the doorway, cap downpulled over his eyes, coat-collar hunched up to his ears, a glimpse of stocking between the hem of his scant trousers and those inadequate shoes. But the light goes out as quickly as it came, for with Lawton, similarly bundled up and well-nigh as shabby, is the head-master, who silently uplifts his hand and warns Shorty back; then, linking an arm in one of Lawton's, leads him away around the corner of Twenty-fifth Street.

It is more than the youngster can stand. Long-legged Damon, short-legged Pythias, the two have been friends since Third Latin days and chums for over a year. Shorty springs after the retreating forms, but halts short at sound of his name, called in imperative tone from above. At the open window stands the Doctor gazing out. He uses no further words. His right hand is occupied with his snowy cambric handkerchief. With his left he makes two motions. He curves his finger inward, indicating plainly "Come back!" and then with the index points down the avenue, meaning

as plainly "Go!" and there is no cheery, undignified whistle as Shorty hastens to tell his tale of sorrow to sympathetic ears at home.

CHAPTER VI

There were three more school-days that week, and they were the quietest of the year. On the principle that it was an ill wind that blew nobody good, there was one instructor to whom such unusual decorum was welcome, and that was poor Meeker, who noted the gloom in the eyes of most of the First Latin, and responsively lengthened his face, yet at bottom was conscious of something akin to rejoicing. His had been a hapless lot. He had entered upon his duties the first week in September, and the class had taken his measure the first day. A better-meaning fellow than Meeker probably never lived, but he was handicapped by a soft, appealing manner and a theory that to get the most out of boys he must have their good-will, and to get their good-will he must load them with what the class promptly derided as "blarney." He was poor and struggling, was graduated high in his class at college, was eager to prepare himself for the ministry, and took to teaching in the mean time to provide the necessary means. The First Latin would have it that Pop didn't want him at all, but that Meeker gave him no rest until promised employment, for Meeker had well known that there was to be a vacancy, and was first to apply for it. But what made it more than a luckless move for him was that he had applied for the position vacated by a man Pop's boys adored, "a man from the ground up," as they expressed it, a splendid, deep-voiced, deep-

chested, long-limbed athlete, with a soul as big as his massive frame and an energy as boundless as the skies. He, too, had worked his way to the priesthood, teaching long hours at Pop's each day, tutoring college weaklings or would-be freshmen in the evenings, studying when and where he could, but wasting never a minute. Never was there a tutor who preached less or practised more. His life was a lesson of self-denial, of study, of purpose. Work hard, play hard, pray hard, might have been his motto, for whatsoever that hand of his found to do that did he with all his might. Truth, manliness, magnetism, were in every glance of his clear eyes, every tone of his deep voice. Boys shrank from boys' subterfuges and turned in unaccustomed disgust from school-boy lies before they had been a month in Tuttle's presence; he seemed to feel such infinite pity for a coward. Never using a harsh word, never an unjust one, never losing faith or temper, his was yet so commanding a nature that by sheer force of his personality and example his pupils followed unquestioning. With the strength of a Hercules, he could not harm an inferior creature. With the courage of a lion, he had only sorrow for the faint-hearted. With a gift and faculty for leadership that would have made him a general-in-chief, he was humble as a child in the sight of his Maker, and in all the long years of his great, brave life, only once, that his boys ever heard of, did he use that rugged strength to discipline or punish a human being, and that only when courtesy and persuasion had failed to stop a ruffian tongue in its foul abuse of that Maker's name. It was a solemn day for the

school, a glad one for the church militant, when he took leave of the one to take his vows in the other. There wasn't a boy among all his pupils that would have been surprised at his becoming a bishop inside of five years, – as, indeed, he did inside of ten, – and the class had not ceased mourning their loss when Meeker came to take his place. "Fill Tut's shoes!" said Snipe, with fine derision. "Why, he'll rattle around in 'em like shot in a drum." No wonder Meeker failed to fill the bill.

And yet he tried hard. Something told him the First Latin would decide whether he should go or stay. Halsey had not been consulted in his selection, or Halsey would have told the Doctor in so many words that it took a man of bigger calibre to handle that class. Beach had not been consulted. He had known Meeker in undergraduate days and thought him lacking in backbone. Pop had "sprung" him, so to speak, upon the school, as though he really felt he owed his boys an apology, and, with the ingenuity of so many unregenerate young imps, the First Latin set to work to make Meeker's life a burden to him.

It was one of the fads of the school that the individual slate should be used in mathematical hour instead of a wall slate or blackboard. It was one of the practices to give out examples in higher arithmetic or equations in algebra and have the pupils work them out then and there, each boy, presumably, working for himself. Meeker introduced a refinement of the system. He announced one example at a time, and directed that as soon as a pupil had finished the work he should step forward and deposit

his slate, face downward, on the corner of the master's table. The next boy to finish should place his slate on top of that of the first, and at the end of five minutes the pile of slates thus formed was turned bottom side up. All boys who had not finished their work in the given time – four, five, six, or eight minutes, according to the difficulty of the problem – were counted out. All whose work proved to be incorrect were similarly scored, while those who had obtained by proper methods the right result were credited with a mark of three, with an additional premium for the quickest, the first boy counting six, the second five, the third four. Meeker introduced the system with a fine flourish of trumpets and marvelled at its prompt success. Even boys known to be lamentably backward in the multiplication-table were found to present slates full of apparently unimpeachable figures in cube root or equations of the second degree, and the whole twenty-seven would have their slates on the pile within the allotted time. "Of course," said Meeker, "it is beyond belief that young gentlemen of the First Latin would be guilty of accepting assistance or copying from a competitor's work," whereat there would be heard the low murmur, as of far-distant, but rapidly approaching, tornado, and the moan would swell unaccountably, even while every pencil was flying, every eye fixed upon the slate. This thing went along for two or three days with no more serious mishap than that twice, without an apparent exciting cause, while Meeker would be elaborately explaining some alleged knotty point to Joy or Lawton, the half-completed stack would edge

slowly off the slippery table and topple with prodigious crash and clatter to the floor. Then Meeker bethought himself of a stopper to these seismic developments, and directed that henceforth, instead of being deposited at the corner, the slates should be laid directly in front of him on the middle of the desk. This was most decorously done as much as twice, and then an extraordinary thing occurred. It had occasionally happened that two or even three of the boys would finish their work at the same moment, and in their eagerness to get their slates foremost on the stack a race, a rush, a collision, had resulted. Then these became surprisingly frequent, as many as four boys finishing together and coming like quarter horses to the goal, but the day that Meeker hit on the expedient of piling the slates up directly in front of him, and at the third essay, there was witnessed the most astonishing thing of all. Snipe was always a leader in mathematics, as he was in mischief, and he, Carey, Satterlee, and Joy were sure to be of the first four, but now, for a wonder, four, even five, minutes passed and not a slate was in. "Come, come, gentlemen," said Meeker, "there's nothing remarkable in this example. I obtained the result with the utmost ease in three minutes." And still the heads bent lower over the slates and the pencils whizzed more furiously. Five minutes went by. "Most astonishing!" said Meeker, and began going over his own work to see if there could be any mistake, and no sooner was he seen to be absorbed thereat than quick glances shot up and down the long bench-line and slates were deftly passed from hand to hand. The laggards got

those of the quicker. The experts swiftly straightened out the errors of the slow, and some mysterious message went down from hand to hand in Snipe's well-known chirography, and then, just as Meeker would have raised his head to glance at the time and warn them there was but half a minute more, as one boy up rose the twenty-seven and charged upon him with uplifted slates. Batter, clatter, rattle, bang! they came crashing down upon the desk, while in one mighty, struggling upheaval the class surged about him and that unstable table.

> "But those behind cried 'Forward!'
> And those before cried 'Back!'"

Turner, Beekman, Snipe, and Shorty vigorously expostulating against such riotous performances and appealing to their classmates not to upset Mr. Meeker, who had tilted back out of his chair only in the nick of time, for the table followed, skating across the floor, and it was "really verging on the miraculous," said he, "that these gentlemen should all finish at the same instant." But that was the last of the slate-pile business. "Hereafter, young gentlemen," said Meeker, on the morrow, "you will retain your seats and slates, but as soon as you have obtained the result hold up your hand. I will record the name and the order and then call you forward, as I may wish to see your slates." This worked beautifully just once, then the hands would go up in blocks of five, and the class as one boy would exclaim "Astonishing! Miraculous!" Then Meeker abandoned the speed system and tried the plan of calling up at thirty-second

intervals by the watch as many boys as he thought should have finished, beginning at the head of the class. And then the First Latin gave him an exhibition of the peculiar properties of those benches. They were about eight or nine feet long, supported on two stoutly braced "legs," with the seat projecting some eighteen inches beyond each support. Put one hundred and forty pounds on one end of an eight-foot plank, with a fulcrum a foot away, and the long end will tilt up and point to the roof in the twinkling of an eye. Meeker called his lads up three at a time, at the beginning of the next new system, and smiled to see how smoothly it worked and how uncommonly still the lads were. Then came exhibit number two, and in the most innocent way in the world Doremus and Ballou – the heavy weights of the class – took seats at the extreme lower end of their respective benches. The sudden rising of the three other occupants when called forward resulted in instant gymnastics. The long bench suddenly tilted skyward, a fat young gentleman was spilled off the shorter end, vehemently struggling and sorely bruised, and then back the bench would come with a bang that shook the premises, while half the class would rush in apparent consternation to raise their prostrate and aggrieved comrade. Hoover's bench was never known to misbehave in this way, for he had it usually all to himself, except when some brighter lad was sent to the foot in temporary punishment. But no matter how absurd the incident, how palpable the mischief, it was apparently a point of honor with the class to see nothing funny in it, to

maintain an expression of severe disapproval, if not of righteous indignation, and invariably to denounce the perpetrators of such indignity as unworthy to longer remain in a school whose boast it was that the scholars loved their masters and would never do aught to annoy them. The most amazing things were perpetually happening. Meeker's eyes were no sharper than his wits, and he could not understand how it was that Snipe and Joy, two of the keenest mathematicians in the class, should so frequently require assistance at the desk, and when they returned to their seats, such objects on his table as the hand-bell, the pen-rack, or even the ink-stand, would be gifted with invisible wings and whisk off after them. Nothing could exceed Snipe's astonishment and just abhorrence when it was finally discovered that a long loop of tough but almost invisible horse-hair was attached to the back of his sack-coat, or the condemnation in the expressed disapprobation of the class when Joy was found to be similarly equipped. Then Meeker's high silk hat, hung on a peg outside Pop's particular closet, began to develop astonishing powers of procreation, bringing forth one day a litter of mice, on another a pair of frolicsome kittens. Meeker abandoned the hat for a billycock as the autumn wore on, and the class appeared content; only the Doctor was allowed a high hat. But Meeker was of nervous temperament, and started at sudden sounds and squirmed under the influence of certain others, noting which the class sympathetically sprinkled the floor with torpedoes and jumped liked electrified frogs when they exploded under some

crunching heel, and the fuel for the big stove presently became gifted with explosive tendencies that filled Meeker's soul with dread, and the room with smoke, and the breasts of the First Latin with amaze that the janitor could be so careless. Then there was a strolling German band, with clarinets of appalling squeak, that became speedily possessed of the devil and a desire to "spiel" under the school windows just after the mathematical hour began, and Meeker's voice was uplifted from the windows in vain protest. The band was well paid to come and the policeman to keep away. I fear me that many a dime of poor Snipe's little stipend went into that unhallowed contribution rather than into his boots. All this and more was Meeker accepting with indomitable smiles day after day until the sudden withdrawal of George Lawton from the school, – no boy knew why, and all the fun went out of the hearts of the First Latin when they heard the rumor going round that Pop himself had written to his old pupil, Mr. Park, suggesting that his step-son would better be recalled from a city which seemed so full of dangerous temptation to one of George's temperament, and yet Pop had really seemed fond of him.

The whole thing was unaccountable. The most miserable lad in school, apparently, was Shorty. He had gone to the Lawrences to inquire for his chum right after dinner that Tuesday evening, and the servant checked him when he would have bolted, as usual, up the stairs to George's room. Mrs. Lawrence was entertaining friends at dinner, but had left word that if Master

Reggie came he was to be told that George could see no one that evening, that Mrs. Lawrence would explain it all later. Shorty went there Wednesday on his way to school, and the butler said Master George was still in his room, and that he was not to be disturbed. Wednesday at recess the leaders of the class held a council and determined to appoint a committee to ask an explanation of the Doctor, since not a word could be extracted from Halsey or Beach, and the committee called right after recitation and "rose and reported" within two minutes. Pop silently pointed to the door. Then seeing that Shorty and Joy still lingered, half determined, supplemented the gesture by "Young gentlemen, pack yourselves off! When I am ready to tell you, you'll hear it and not before."

But the woe in Shorty's face was too much for him, after all. He knew the lads and the friendship they bore each other.

"Here you, sir!" he cried, with affected sternness, "sit there till I want you," and he pointed to a bench, even while frowning at the others of the disheartened delegation, who scuttled away down-stairs in dread of the Doctor's rising wrath. When all were gone and the big, bare school-rooms were still, Pop looked up from a letter he was writing, beckoned with his long forefinger, then reversing the hand, pointed downward at the floor beside his desk, and Shorty, recognizing the signal, with leaping heart and twitching lips, marched up and took his stand, looking dumbly into the Doctor's pallid face. The great man shoved his gold-rimmed spectacles half-way up across the expanse of forehead

the lads had likened to "a ten-acre lot," folded his hands across the voluminous waistcoat, and leaned back in his chair. Then his eyes swept downward.

"Has our friend Snipe often been in need of money?" he asked.

"He had hardly any at all, sir," blurted Shorty, with something like a sob. "There are holes in the soles of his shoes and corresponding holes worn in his stockings, and the skin of the soles of his feet'll go next. He never had enough to get a decent lunch with, and couldn't join our first nine last year because he hadn't the uniform and wouldn't ask for one. The Club subscribed and bought it, – he was so bully a player. All the – "

The Doctor knows that Shorty is not named because of brevity in speech, and upraises a white hand. "Did he owe any of the boys, – Hoover, for instance?"

"He wouldn't borrow," said Shorty, indignantly; "last of all from Hoover. None of us ever owe *him* anything except – " And Shorty gulps, and the tears that were starting to his eyes burn out before the sudden fire of his wrath.

"Except what?" asks Pop, deliberately.

"A lickin'," says Shorty, with reddening face, whereat the Doctor's head tilts back and the great stomach heaves spasmodically. The grim lines about the wide mouth relax. It is his way of laughing and he enjoys it, but Shorty doesn't.

"I wish you'd tell me what's the trouble with – with Lawton, sir," he almost sobs again. "They won't let me see him, and the

boys say it's all a – " But here Shorty breaks off, which is unlike him.

"Yes," suggested Pop, "they say it's all a – what?"

"Shame," said Shorty, well knowing that that shame is mentally qualified by a most unqualified adjective.

Pop ponders a moment. "Has none of the boys missed anything besides Joy, – no trinkets, rings, anything?"

"Hoover and Briggs are always missing something, sir, and Seymour lost a gold pencil."

"But Lawton never borrowed and didn't owe anybody, – in school, I mean?" asks Pop.

"Didn't owe anybody *anywhere* that I know of!" protests Shorty. "He says it makes him sick to owe anything. If Hoover says anything different, he's lying. That's all."

"What's the reason Hoover isn't at school?" asks Pop, and while his face does not change the eyes study closely.

"He's afraid of trouble because some of that Metamora set tripped and hurt Snipe, running to a fire last Saturday."

"That's what you get for running to fires, sir. Young gentlemen have no business mingling with crowds and rowdies. That's why you lost the head of the class in Latin three weeks ago. You spent hours at that big fire down-town when you should have been at your Virgil."

Shorty reddens, but attempts no defence. He knows it is so. He knows, furthermore, that if the bell were to strike the next minute he'd be off like the wind, – Latin, and even Snipe, to the

contrary notwithstanding. What he doesn't understand is how the Doctor knows all about it.

"Youngster," says the Doctor, after a moment's reflection, "I want Hoover back at school at once, and there must be no harming him in any way. What's more, I have told Lawton to stay away until I send for him. There are reasons for this, and you can say so to the class. To-night you will see him yourself, and he will tell you the whole story. Now, I must write to Hoover *paterfamilias*. Run along!"

But Pop is mistaken in one matter. Shorty does not see Snipe that night, nor the next day, nor the next. He waits vainly until late in the evening, then goes to the Lawrences', and Mrs. Lawrence, with scared face, comes down to ask what he means. George had asked permission soon after dark to go and spend one hour with his friend and chum and tell him his troubles. It is now ten o'clock. He has not been there, and he has not returned.

CHAPTER VII

Forty-eight hours passed without a trace of George Lawton, and they were the saddest two days the First Latin ever knew. "All the life went out of the school with Snipe," was the way Joy expressed it, though no fellow in the whole establishment was credited with more mischief than the speaker. Lessons and recitations, despite the best efforts of Halsey and Beach and the lamb-like bleatings of Meeker, seemed to fall flat. Even the leaders went through with them in a style more dead than alive, and at every sound upon the stairs all eyes would be fixed on the doorway and matters would come to a stand-still in the class. It was plain that every boy was thinking only of the missing comrade and praying for tidings of him. The masters, too, were weighed down with apprehension – or something. Othello's dark face wore a yellowish hue, and Meeker looked the picture of nervous woe. His complexion, always pallid, now seemed ashen, and he started at every sudden sound. Thursday went by without a word of any kind of news. The class huddled together at recess, taking no notice whatever of Hoover, who skulked away for his smoke, followed by many unloving eyes but without audible comment, for Shorty had conveyed Pop's dictum to the class, and when Pop took his boys into his confidence, as, through some one or two of their number he sometimes did, and told them thus and so, there was no question. That class at least observed his

wishes to the letter. Hoover had been told to return to school and no questions asked, and the First Latin was virtually pledged to the arrangement.

"Aut impendere viam, aut poscere causas."

But a wretched-looking Hoover it was that emerged from the Doctor's closet at two that afternoon and slunk back to the accustomed place at the foot of the room. Even Briggs had steered clear of him, and every one noted how Briggs flitted about from group to group during recess, his old-time "cheek" apparently vanished, his effrontery replaced by nervous appeal. He had seized on Shorty, as the boys turned out for recess, with eager question about Snipe, but the youngster impatiently shook him off and shot away, light of foot as he was heavy of heart, and the eyes of the others followed him as he turned into Twenty-fourth Street, for all seemed to know he was using his half-hour to speed to the Lawrences' for news of Snipe. Before the bell recalled them he was back, mournfully shaking his head, and they trooped up-stairs, low-voiced and disconsolate, Hoover slinking in alone, last of all, his hands in his pockets, his shoulders hunched, his eyes flitting nervously about. All through the half-hour the talk had been as to the possible cause of Snipe's mysterious withdrawal from the school and later and more mysterious disappearance. Everybody felt that John, the janitor, could tell something, even if it were only a lie – or a pack of lies, for John's veracity was a thing held up to scorn at the end of a hair. But John kept under the wing of some teacher

and could not and would not be approached, and John looked white and scared. The Doctor came at the usual time, made the usual impressive pause at the doorway, pointed, as usual, to the usual foot of the class, who blinked and shifted rather more than ever. Then Pop removed his hat and strode with his usual deliberation to the closet, hung it on its peg, produced his gold-rimmed spectacles, and, as usual, wiped the glasses with his spotless cambric handkerchief as he looked over the notes and letters on his desk, while in subdued, half-hearted way the recitation went on. Then, with only a glance along the line of young faces, all studying him and none regarding Halsey, who at the moment had little Beekman on the rack, he signalled to Shorty, and the boy sprang to his side.

"Hear anything?" he asked, in undertone, as though he needed not to be told that Shorty had gone to inquire.

"No news, sir," said Loquax, with lips that twitched alarmingly. "Mrs. Lawrence will be here right after school."

"Then you stay. I may need you," said the Doctor, and pointed to the bench.

Five minutes later, after rapidly reading the brief missives on his desk, the Doctor arose, signalled to Hoover, ushered him into the lead-colored closet, followed and shut the door, from which quarter of an hour later Hoover emerged, as has been said, looking limp and woe-begone, and the moment school was over slunk away homeward without a word. By this time the First Latin was half mad with mingled curiosity and concern,

when an elegantly dressed woman, followed by a manservant with a compact little parcel under his arm, appeared at the Fourth Avenue entrance, where the group still lingered, waiting for Shorty, and the whisper went round that it was Mrs. Lawrence, Snipe's aunt. The excitement rose to fever heat. Doremus and Satterlee, scouting about the avenue an hour later, declared that she had been crying when she came forth again and walked away to Twenty-fourth Street. Friday came. Shorty was ten minutes late at first recitation and failed in every lesson, yet not a word of rebuke came from any one of the masters. Halsey merely inclined his dark head, and with a tinge of sympathy in his tone, wherein they had long known only cutting sarcasm or stern admonition, said, "Never mind going further to-day." At recess, again, the boy bounded away to the Lawrences' and came back five minutes late, with face as hopeless as before, but he bore a note, which he laid upon the Doctor's desk, and without a word accepted the "ten marks off" for his delay, which at any other time would have caused a storm of protest. Pop arrived three minutes ahead of time, saw at a glance that little Pythias was down near the foot of the class, and made not the faintest allusion to it. He had barely taken his seat and looked over the two or three notes when a heavy tread was heard upon the stair, and despite Halsey's efforts the recitation hung fire, and every boy stared as a tall, grim-visaged, angular man of middle age stepped within the door, and in another moment was clasping hands with the Doctor, who left his dais to greet him. There was a brief, low-toned exchange

of words, then Halsey and the new-comer caught each other's eye, despite the former's effort to stick to his work, and, faintly flushing, Halsey arose, and they too shook hands.

"How have they done to-day, Mr. Halsey?" promptly queried the Doctor; and as nobody had done well or behaved ill, Halsey hesitated. He could not dissemble. Pop saw the hitch and cut the Gordian knot.

"Gentlemen of the First Latin," he said, "the school is honored by a visit from one of Columbia's most distinguished alumni. Shall we give him an exhibition performance in the Anabasis or – take half holiday?"

The class would rather stay but not exhibit; and so in five minutes the decks are clear, and, next to Beekman, the shortest boy in the highest class is being presented to the tall graduate. Before the name was mentioned he knew that it must be Lawton's step-father, Mr. Park.

First there has to be another conference of some ten minutes' duration between the Doctor and his visitor, who had taken the youngster's hand and looked down into his anxious face with solemn, speculative eyes and without the ghost of a smile. Shorty feels his soul welling up in mightier sympathy with Snipe. There is not a thing in Park's manner to invite a boy's trust or confidence. Then the two turn to Shorty, and he is summoned to rejoin them.

"The Doctor tells me you have been my – er – young Lawton's most intimate friend, – that most of his hours out of school

have been spent with you. I had heard as much before through his mother and his aunt, whom I believe you know, – Mrs. Lawrence."

The boy looks up, unspeaking, his blue eyes clouded. It needs but faint encouragement, as a rule, to relax his tongue; but neither in word nor manner does he find encouragement here. He looks, and his gaze is fearless, if not a little defiant, but he answers never a word.

"What I wish to know is something of your haunts, occupations, etc. We supposed that when in your company and in the home of such eminent persons as your grandparents our boy would be safe."

Shorty reddens. Many a time when Snipe would have studied he has coaxed him out for a run afar down-town, a visit to some bell tower or some famous fire company, where they were never without kindly welcome.

"I gather," continues Park, "from what has been told me at his aunt's, that your associates were not always of the better class of boys."

Shorty turns redder still. Many a time when he would have been glad to spend an evening at the home of Joy or Beekman, Doremus or Satterlee, Snipe had held back. "You go," he said: "I'll stay here and read," and it wasn't long before Shorty fully understood the reason. Snipe could not bear to go in such shabby attire, but he had no better, and could get none without importuning his mother. No one in the houses of the fire

department looked or said critical things about his clothes. Snipe was just as welcome as Shorty, and the rough fellows of the red shirts seemed to enjoy explaining everything about the different styles of engines and all the intricacies of their running rules to the brown-eyed boy, who seemed to ponder over what he was told and to remember everything. And so it had resulted that whenever a cold or rainy Saturday came round and they couldn't play ball, big Damon and little Pythias had spent many an hour going from one engine-or hose-house to another, studying the different "machines," learning to know the foremen or leaders of the rival companies, and often climbing to the tall perches of the bell towers and gazing out through the watcher's long glass over the far-spreading city, the smoky shores of Jersey or Long Island, the thicket of masts bordering the rivers, and the distant glimmering bay. It was all of vivid interest. True, they heard language that was eminently unclassical. They penetrated into sections of the great city where the fashionable garments of their wealthier schoolmates would have become the target for the satire of the saloons and the missiles of the street Arabs. They saw and heard all manner of things at which Aunt Lawrence would have shrunk in dismay, and concerning which Shorty's own people were sometimes apprehensive. But as neither boy cared to imitate the language or the manners thus discovered, it was held that no great harm resulted. That they might have been far better employed every right-thinking moralist will doubtless declare, and that they would have been better employed even

Snipe, down in the bottom of his heart, would have admitted – but for his clothes. It is astonishing how much one's garb has to do with one's goodness, even among school-boys.

And all this was passing through Shorty's mind as the steely blue eyes of Mr. Park were searching his flushing face, and more things, too. With all her ambition and moderate wealth, Mrs. Lawrence occupied a social position just a plane below that on which moved Shorty's kith and kin. Beautiful old homes on the lower avenue and around Washington Square where they were welcome knew not Mrs. Lawrence. She had encouraged, unquestioning, Snipe's growing intimacy with his little friend, because it "brought the families together," as she once gushingly explained to Shorty's favorite aunt, and, as she confided to her husband, might lead to even more. Much, therefore, did she question Snipe as to what took place at table, in the parlor and music-room of the big household in Fourteenth Street, and, in the engrossing interest she felt in the doings of certain of its elder inmates, lost all thought of those of the boys themselves. Not until within the past few days had she been required to give an account of her stewardship, and now the butler's revelations, gathered mainly, as he stated, from market conferences with the magnate who presided over the board at Shorty's, had filled her with dismay.

"Them boys, ma'am," was that dignitary's comprehensive summing up, "do be seeing the worst society in New York, 'stead of rejoicin' in the best – with their relatives."

"You do not answer," at last says Park. "Could you find no better way of spending your play hours than going around among low firemen?"

"We spent 'em at base ball when the weather was good," says Shorty, shortly, and there is glowing temper in the tone which the Doctor knows of old, and he sees it is time to interpose.

"I have never said anything to you about this, my young friend," says he, "because I found that your relatives knew all about it, and thought you capable of keeping out of trouble; but I did not know Lawton was so often with you. What Mr. Park wishes to know is why you spent so much time among the firemen and so little among your classmates?"

Shorty turns to the Doctor fearlessly. Him he knows and trusts. Twice for boyish misdemeanors has the great teacher bidden him take his books and leave the school, and both times has he reinstated him, as he had others, within twelve hours. "I don't care for these Sammy-go-softly boys," he had confided to Shorty. "I don't mind a little fun, but it must not take the form of impertinence to teachers or disobedience of their orders. If they are unjust, I'll straighten it out myself, but don't you try." Like most of the boys in the First Latin, Shorty knows he has the Doctor's sympathy and friendship, and so the answer comes pat. "The reason was because he had no money and was ashamed of his clothes."

Mr. Park is severely judicial. School-boy impetuosity must not be permitted to ruffle him. With great dignity he begins, —

"I do not approve of young lads having unlimited pocket-money or fashionable clothes, much less so in the case of a lad who must make his own way in the world, as George will have to do."

"That's what Snipe said," was Shorty's quick reply. "Most of the class have both, however; and as he had neither and I only a little, we couldn't keep up with the crowd, so we spent our time together."

"I am amazed that your grandparents should approve of such pernicious association for so young a lad as you," says Park, shifting the point of attack, for he feels that a revelation is imminent, and doesn't care to have the rector know how little he gave and how much he demanded. But it is bad fencing, for Shorty "disengages" with equal skill and follows with a palpable hit. Ignoring Park's comment, he faces the Doctor again.

"You know, sir, that there isn't another boy in the class has to get his boots and gloves and pay his way on fifty cents a week." And Pop, inwardly convulsed, feels compelled to reprove.

"Tut, tut!" he says. "These are matters for parents and guardians to settle. Little boys must hold their tongues." And when Pop means to be especially crushing he "little boys" the First Latin.

"Any proper and necessary expense incurred by George would have been promptly allowed," says Park, loftily, "had he seen fit to confide in me or in his mother."

"He *couldn't* tell his mother, even when he was nearly

barefoot," blurts out Shorty. "She wrote him last year she'd rather sell her watch than ask you for money for him!" And now Park, too, reddens, for he realizes that the statement is probably true. Hastily he returns to the charge. This boy knows and talks too much. It isn't safe to allow him the floor. Pop turns away, with evidences of earthquake-like disturbances underneath that silken waistcoat.

"Then this is the excuse," says Park, severely, "for his resorting to pawnbrokers – with stolen property."

And Shorty bursts out indignantly, "He never stole a thing, or sold it either!" And now his eyes look pleadingly to the Doctor as though to say, "You know this can't be so! Why do you let him lie?"

And as though to answer the appeal and come to the rescue of a maligned and beloved pupil, Pop turns instantly, every sign of merriment gone.

"Surely you are misinformed, Park," he says. "There was nothing but some last year's books and his father's old shotgun. He told us everything."

"He didn't tell you everything," answers Park, with emphasis. "How much of this is due to evil associations you can judge better than I; but look here," and from a bulging pocket of his overcoat he produces a package wrapped in a red silk handkerchief. A minute later and he lays upon the desk Seymour's handsome gold pencil-case, an old-fashioned watch and chain, such as women wore twenty years earlier, and some cameo earrings, with

breastpin to match. "These," says he, solemnly, "were recovered this morning. They represent only a small portion of what his aunt, his benefactress, has found to be missing from her box of disused trinkets and heirlooms. The boy was shrewd enough to confine his stealings to things that wouldn't have been missed for weeks or months, perhaps, had not a faithful domestic's suspicions been aroused. This will be a sore blow to his poor mother. It has almost prostrated his aunt, and I dare say we don't begin to know the worst. Has nothing been missed by his classmates here at school?"

There are beads of sweat on the Doctor's pale forehead as he turns away, Joy's watch instantly occurring to him. As for Shorty, in distress and consternation, mingled with vehement unbelief, for once in his life he is dumb.

CHAPTER VIII

Another week began. Pop's boys gathered on Monday morning, and the first question on every lip was for Snipe, and all in vain. He had disappeared as from the face of the earth. Shorty looked an inch shorter and several pounds lighter. His chatter was silenced, his young heart heavy as lead. He had had two miserable days, and there were more before him. He had been closely questioned, both at home and at the Lawrences', over and over again, as to all their haunts and habits, which he and poor Snipe had shared in their leisure hours, and stoutly he maintained that never had Snipe entered a pawnshop while they were together, – never had he mentioned such a thing. The one piece of information he could give, that went to confirm the suspicions attaching to the missing boy, was that during the three weeks previous to his disappearance George had seemed to have much more money than usual. He had ordered a new pair of shoes, had bought some collars and neckties, had "stood treat" two or three times, and had got Shorty to go with him to a great clothier's, much affected by the school, to try on some overcoats. He had totally outgrown the one he brought from home two years previous, and was going without one, and seemed divided in his mind whether to buy a new one for winter or a new suit of clothes. Another thing Shorty had to tell was that of late Snipe had missed several evenings when Shorty expected him, or had come

very late and said he had been of an errand. Of course, it was now apparent to poor Mrs. Lawrence that her nephew's suddenly discovered crimes were all due to her intrusting him entirely to Shorty and his kindred, and Mr. Park was oracularly severe in his comments on youthful depravity of so glaring a character that it could be satisfied with no association less disreputable than that of the rowdies of the fire department. He went so far as to make some such assertion to Shorty's uncle, who was called into a conference, and this was lucky for Shorty, – one of the few lucky things that happened to him that sorrowful winter. Ordinarily he would doubtless have been made the recipient of several lectures of the same tenor as Mr. Park's, only less radical, but the moment Park ventured to assert that his step-son had been led astray, and that Shorty's kindred had shut their eyes to the boys' misdoings and let them go their wicked ways, he stirred up the whole tribe and put them on the defensive. Uncles and aunts might even have thought somewhat as did Park, but not after he laid his accusation at their door. Shorty submitted his whole cabinet of possessions to prove that nothing of his was missing, except one pair of gold sleeve-links, which he had lent Snipe, and gladly lent him. "If Snipe ever stole, why didn't he steal my watch?" he chokingly asked. "It was as good as Joy's, and hadn't any name on it, as his had, and he could have sold it easier." All the evidence in creation couldn't make that butt-headed boy believe that Snipe was a thief. What he probably *had* stolen, since they were missing from his room, were his

school-books of previous years, a set of Marryat's novels that had belonged to his father, and his father's old shotgun, which he had brought to New York with him, and had no use for whatever. Perhaps he was thinking, poor fellow, of selling his father's old watch, a bulky, yellow "turnip," too big for him to wear, in order to get the money to buy those sorely needed clothes. Shorty well remembered Snipe's story of how his mother cried during that summer's vacation because she could give him so little when he needed so much; but Park's dominion was absolute. "That boy must learn the value of money," he constantly said. "He must know as I knew what it is to plan and contrive to make five cents do the work of twenty-five. *Then* he may amount to something." Park said the boy's clothes were better than he wore in his school-days, when he had to sweep shop and make the fires and sleep in an attic, without a curtain to his window or a rag to the floor. Shorty began to realize at last how great must have been Snipe's temptations, and still he wouldn't believe he stole. Even the sight of Seymour's pencil failed to convince him, – even the fact that Snipe had certainly run away, if indeed he had not made away with himself.

But in the class there was gloom and sadness almost equal to Shorty's, and by Monday noon all the story was out and much besides. Nothing could exceed the virtuous amaze of Briggs. He always had suspected Lawton, "but you fellows would not believe." Nothing more sardonic than Hoover's grinning face could be imagined. His blinking eyes seemed fairly to snap

with comfort over the contemplation of Lawton's turpitude. By this time it was being asserted that Snipe had stolen his aunt's diamonds, Joy's watch, and every missing item, big or little, that had disappeared during the three years of his membership in the school. John, the janitor, was overhauled, questioned and cross-questioned. He dodged, parried, broke away, but by implication confessed that he found out that Lawton was going to a certain pawnshop on Third Avenue, and had been there two or three times within the previous month. Park paid the school another visit that afternoon and had brief conference with the Doctor, looked steadily and with stern disapproval at poor Shorty, sitting midway down the line and drifting gradually towards the foot. The First Latin took Park's measure, as they had Meeker's, and disapproved of him. They wondered would he attempt to address them. If he did, not one applauding hand could there be, except Briggs's or possibly Hoover's, if he referred to Snipe's to-be-expected fall. Snipe might have fallen, but if ever a boy was pushed and driven over a precipice he was, said they, and, take them by and large, the First Latin would have gone out of their way to shake hands with Snipe or to avoid shaking hands with his step-father. Park left before school closed, but to Joy's request of the Doctor, in the name of the class, for news of Snipe, the answer was given that they still had nothing authentic, though they thought they had a clue. He had once spent a month with some kinsfolk of his poor mother's in Pennsylvania, and Park opined that he would presently be heard of there, where his

peculations, he might hope, had not yet become known.

There were half a dozen of the boys walking together down the avenue that afternoon, Shorty in their midst. They were plying him with questions and conjectures. No, he was not going to the Lawrences', he said. He would never, probably, go there again. No, he hadn't been around among the engine-houses. He didn't at all believe in Snipe's guilt, and wouldn't believe he was hiding on that account. How did he account for Seymour's pencil? He couldn't account for it. All he could say was, that he'd bet anything he owned that Snipe wasn't a thief, and some day they'd find it out, and find out who was. It so happened that Briggs had gone on ahead with Hoover, the two lads with their heads close together in eager conference, but at Eighteenth Street he held back and stood waiting for the little knot of excited boys. Bertram and Joy were of the lot, tall young fellows on whose upper lips the down was sprouting and who on Sundays went to church in their first tophats. They were the elders, the senate of the school, and at sight of Briggs they muttered malediction and cautioned silence.

"Say, Shorty!" cried the pachyderm, as Pop had named him, "twice last week I went to your house and asked for you, and the man said you weren't home. You were up in your room with Snipe Lawton, and I know it. I watched, and saw you come out with him half an hour later. What you 'fraid of? Think I was policeman with a search-warrant?"

The little fellow's blue eyes blazed up, but Bertram grabbed

him and Joy turned savagely on the leering tormentor. "Shut up! you sneaking whelp!" he cried, "or I'll smash you here and now!" And glaring and red-faced in his wrath, Joy looked fully capable of doing it.

"Why, what have I done?" sneered Briggs. "He's the fellow that stood by the thief that's been robbing us right and left, and didn't dare let his own classmate come up in his room."

"You used to ring the bell and bolt up there the moment the door was opened, you cad!" answered Joy, "just as you did at my house and others until orders had to be given not to let you in. Get out of the way! No one in this party wants to be seen in the same street with you."

"Oh, all right," snarled Briggs. "If you want to run with thieves and pickpockets you're welcome. I don't."

But now there was a crash on the broad flagstones as the red-labelled, calf-bound, tightly-strapped volumes of Virgil and Xenophon went spinning to the curb, and, wrenching himself free from Bertram's relaxing grasp, Shorty flew at Sandy Briggs like a bull terrier at some marauding hound. Quick, alert, active, the surest-footed boy in the school, there was no dodging his spring. The whack of the leather on the flagging was echoed on the instant by the biff-bapp of two knotty fists, and Briggs reeled back before the sudden storm and tumbled into the gutter. Instantly the others threw themselves on Shorty or between the two. Briggs bounded up in a fury, the blood streaming from his nose, rage and blasphemy rushing from his swelling lips. He

was ready enough to fight a boy so much smaller, and disdained Julian's prompt proffer of himself as Shorty's substitute. A policeman at the Everett corner came sprinting across at sight of the swift-gathering crowd. Joy and Julian saw him, and grabbing Briggs, darted with him down the stairway to the Clarendon's barber-shop. Bertram, Beekman, and Gray snatched up Shorty and Shorty's books and fled with him eastward towards Lexington Avenue. The row was over as quick as it began, but not, alas! the results. "I'll pay that blackguardly little cur for this, – you'll see if I don't!" shrieked Briggs at his captors, and they all knew that even as he could dissemble, that fellow could hate.

Late that afternoon the Doctor sat in the midst of his books and manuscripts in the solemn library, the sanctum in which he rarely permitted himself to be disturbed, yet he lifted his massive head and listened eagerly as a servant entered with a message.

"Send him right in here," said he, throwing down his pen, and the words were hardly out of his mouth when in came Shorty, bounding, breathless, excited, and with snapping eyes. "Ha, lad! So you've heard from Lawton! What does he say?" And trembling, rejoicing, triumphing, yet troubled, the youngster read from a letter in his hand.

> Dear Shorty, – I couldn't stand it. I had to go, and, please God, I'll never come back, only I want you to know the reason and you won't blame me much. I begged Halsey not to tell the Doctor or anybody what that low sneak of

a janitor told him. It's no disgrace to be so poor that a fellow has to pawn his old books and things to get shoes, and you know how I was fixed; you know that I was on my bare feet, almost, and that my clothes wouldn't cover me. I couldn't ask a penny of Aunt Lawrence, and they didn't seem to see or care how I looked. I couldn't worry mother any more, so what *was* there to do? They gave me a shilling apiece for the school-books, and then I took over my Marryats – I hadn't even read some of 'em – and got twenty cents apiece, and finally father's old shotgun. It was mine; mother had given it to me. It was no use to me. Why shouldn't I sell it and buy clothes? I didn't know it was so costly and valuable, but Aunt Lawrence says now it was worth one hundred and fifty dollars. It came from London. I thought I was lucky to get seven dollars for it. Of course old Binny saw me one night ["Binny is the butler," explained Shorty. "He hated both of us, I suppose, having to answer door so much, – Aunt Lawrence wouldn't let Snipe have a key"], and I guess he must have sneaked after me; but when Halsey told me it was known I visited the pawnbroker's (it wasn't a pawnbroker's. It was just a second-hand store), and demanded to know what I'd sold, and talked of the disgrace and all that, and hinted things about Joy's watch and other missing items I never even heard of, I told him the whole thing, and begged him not to make trouble for me, – I had enough. But he said the Doctor must know, and the Doctor sent me round with him and I showed him the shop, and he rowed the man in charge and said my aunt must be told at once. You never heard such a row as she

made, – the shame and the disgrace I'd brought on them all. She could never show her face in society again. Selling my father's books! my father's beautiful gun, that my poor mother had so proudly intrusted to me! Why, Shorty, she drove me nearly mad. Even Halsey tried to stop her after a while, and to say it didn't begin to be as bad as she made it, but she ordered me to my room, and then came up and jawed until I was near crazy, and then when she'd talked herself out up comes Cousin Maud, and she just belched fire and brimstone for an hour; and after dinner that night Uncle Lawrence, – why, he never so much as noticed me generally, and you know how he used to pass us on the street and never see us, – he went on at a perfectly infernal rate. I was an ingrate and a thief and a consorter with the lowest order of humanity (rough on *you* that was, Shorty), and when he got through I'm blessed if they didn't wind up by sending my little cousin, Queenie, – I always liked her, – but she went on and preached about disgrace and shame just like Aunt Lawrence, and how good they'd all been to me, and how shocking was my ingratitude! She supposed I spent the money in liquor and cigars for my rowdy friends (I did stand treat to milk and custard pie as much as twice); and then Aunt Lawrence comes up again, and read me what she'd written to mother, and that was the last pound. I had five dollars left that I was saving for some clothes, and planning to sell the old watch and get the rest of the money I needed, but she took that away, lest I should steal that too, she said, and I was to be sent back to Rhinebeck as soon as mother could be heard from. She'd been to the Doctor and told him

I don't know what, and came back and said the Doctor and teachers as much as declared they thought me the thief that stole Joy's watch. She told me to go and say good-by to you and confess everything, but I shall never disgrace the home where I was so kindly welcomed by setting foot inside its doors again. I've started out for myself, Shorty, dear old boy, and I'll make a living, never you fear, and I'll write to you sometimes when I can do so without being followed or found out. Don't let the fellows think too mean of me. Here's the one thing I've got to confess, and you tell it to Seymour. I found his pencil under the fourth bench that afternoon Beach kept me in two hours for welting Beekman with a putty-ball, and instead of giving it to Beach, as the rule is, I stuck it in my pocket and never thought of it again until next morning, just as I got to school and saw Seymour. I hunted in my pocket and it was gone. I ran home at recess and hunted everywhere, and asked the girl who makes believe do up my room, but couldn't find a trace of it. That was two weeks ago, and all this time I've been hoping to find it, or when I got the money on the watch to buy him another and tell him the whole story. Now I can't do either.

Good-by, Shorty, dear old fellow! Say good-by to Bonner and Hank and Keating and Joe Hutton. Forty's boys were always kind to us, weren't they? And if any of the class feel that I am not altogether a disgrace to them, give them a bit of love, from yours till death.

Snipe.

The little reader was almost sobbing when he got through, but

the Doctor was on his feet and listening in undisguised interest and sympathy.

"But that pencil was found among those things Mr. Park brought to the school!" he exclaimed. Then, as a sudden light seemed to flash over the case, he took the missive in his big, white hand and pored over the last two of its many pages. "You have shown this to – ?" he began.

"Nobody, sir. Nobody was at home. I brought it right to you."

"Then leave it with me and say nothing about it till I tell you. I will see your grandfather to-morrow."

CHAPTER IX

A week later the First Latin was divided against itself, – a most unusual thing. That it generally despised Hoover and hated Briggs was an old story. These two of the twenty-seven had long been excluded from the fellowship of the twenty-five; but that twenty-five was now reduced to twenty-four by the loss of Snipe, and the twenty-four was split, much to the comfort of the two outsiders. A grievous burden had been imposed on Shorty when the Doctor bade him tell no one about Snipe's letter, – that he had good reason and desired to investigate on his own account. Shorty couldn't listen to an insinuation of any kind against his chum, and there were members of the class who now couldn't help entertaining suspicion and saying so. Shorty's intentions of observing the Doctor's caution were of the best, but indignation would find vent, and so would the boy nature that impelled him to say that he had information when Snipe's accusers had not. Then he had to lose a point and admit that his knowledge was of such a character that it must be kept concealed awhile, which statement many of the class decided to accept, but not a few to deride. Turner was one of the latter, and at recess one day openly taunted Shorty with professing what he couldn't prove. Briggs was on the outskirts of the knot of excited lads at the first sign of trouble. He was still raging in his heart against Shorty because of the stinging blows that sent him reeling into

the gutter the previous Friday afternoon. Here was a chance for vicarious vengeance. Shorty was half a head smaller than his long-armed accuser. Briggs knew that Joy, Julian, any of the bigger members of the class, would pounce on him if he dared lay hand on the "little 'un," but Turner was nearer the youngster's weight. Those were the days when Heenan and Sayers were the models of the fistic art, when Charlier's boys at Wood's gymnasium or Pop's at Ottignon's were accustomed to putting on the gloves with the master, and school affairs were settled in the neighboring stable after the manner of Tom Brown and Slogger Williams in "School-Days at Rugby." Cooler heads in the little crowd counselled peace and strove to stem the angry torrent of words between the boys. Even Turner himself, seeing Shorty's rage, would probably have been willing to take back what he had said, but Briggs had other plans. Stooping underneath the elbows of the boys at Turner's back, he suddenly straightened up, giving Turner a powerful shove that sent him lunging against his fuming little antagonist, and like a flash came the first blow, the counter, an instant's clinch, and then, as the boys broke away, two stinging whacks before the elders could interpose. "Come round to the stable and finish it!" yelled Shorty, in his fury. "Come on yourself!" shouted Turner; and, despite the pleadings of those who hated to see class harmony destroyed, away went the excited crowd, Hoover and Briggs leering and grinning after them, while John, the janitor, bolted miserably up-stairs to give warning to Othello, who had determined there should be no more

stable-fights, and who came breathless into the arena just as the combatants had shed their coats and collars and, with clinched fists and flashing eyes, were facing each other for business. The ring broke and scattered pell-mell at sound of Halsey's voice, but the principals were caught. Recess was ordered suspended. The bell summoned the class in-doors, and, in sullen silence, slowly the boys obeyed. Shorty's prominent nose had suffered in the preliminary skirmish, and he had to go and stanch the blood. Turner, scowling, was sent to the foot of the class, where Hoover welcomed him with a malignant grin, and there, along its accustomed line, sat the First Latin in gloom and despond, while the head-master penned brief memoranda of the circumstance. Everybody felt there would be tragedy when the Doctor came. "The next boys I hear of as fighting around school," he had said the week before, "I'll pack 'em home to their parents." And yet the First Latin had reason to believe the Doctor had nothing but disdain for boys who quarrelled and called names and perhaps cuffed, scratched, or kicked, and couldn't or wouldn't fight "fair and square." Only a few months before, just at the close of the school-year, when the twenty-seven were still the Second Latin, there had been a laughable scuffle between two big, lanky lads in the senior class. Full ten minutes had they clinched, wrestled, slapped, and sparred in the vestibule, many of the Second Latin looking – and egging – on and indulging in satirical comment, until Beach swooped upon the surging crowd and ordered DeForest and Dominick, the principals, to their

benches. The classes recited together then in Latin Prosody, a Second Latin boy many a time "taking a fall" out of the First and getting the head of the combined array. There was no love lost between the two. Pop was unquestionably partial to the juniors, and had frequent occasion to torment the seniors with satire over the fact that the youngsters knew better Latin, if not more, than did the other class. He listened to Beach's report of the affair with frowning brows, until it transpired that full ten minutes were consumed before the combatants were separated. Then his broad features expanded in a smile of amusement. "What!" he exclaimed, as he studied the crestfallen faces of the culprits. "Ten minutes' battling and not a scratch to show for it! Scandalous! *Et tunc pugnabant pugnis*– Hold! Young gentlemen, there's a capital start on a fine, sonorous line, dactylic hexameter. Half-holiday to the class that first completes it! Half-holiday except to those wielders of the wind-stuffed cestus. Set your wits to work – and your pencils." With that he seated himself in his chair of state, his fine cambric handkerchief came forth to mop his glowing face, and, still chuckling with suppressed merriment, the massive rector looked down along the crowded ranks of his boys, forty-five in all, and then he wiped his gold-rimmed spectacles and laid them on his desk, and then little Beekman darted up to his side, a scrap of paper in his hand, and gave it hopefully to the magnate in the chair. The Doctor glanced over it, shook his head, and frowned. "No, no," said he. "What we want is sound and sense combined. You've only got the sound, like the blows of

our gladiators. There's nothing behind them. The words mean nothing. Mark the rhythm and majesty of mine. *Et tunc – pugna – bant pug*– All spondaic. And then – they were – fighting – with fists – Come, come, gentlemen, that line needs appropriate close. Ha! the versatile Second Latin again tenders a contribution!" and the big Doctor took the next youngster's slate, leaned back in his chair, read, a beaming light shot into his eyes; then the eyes closed, the massive head fell back, the capacious waistcoat began to heave and shake from internal convulsion, and the whole array of boys looked up expectant. For a full minute Pop lay back in his big chair in solitary enjoyment of his fun, and at last, bubbling over with merriment, he straightened up and began, "Listen, young gentlemen of the First Latin, to the satire of the Second. Triumph, gentlemen of the Second, in the victory of your laureate.

'Et tunc pugnabant pugnis sine sanguine nasi.'

"And then they were fighting with fists (full ten minutes understood) and not a drop of blood was drawn from the nose. Poetic license set at naught! Stern facts related! Half-holiday to the Second Latin! Take your books and go rejoicing! Gentlemen of the vanquished First, remain where you are."

That episode widened the breach between the classes and strengthened the conviction that Pop was "down on" bloodless encounters. Pop was thorough, argued the boys. He wanted no quarrelling, but if quarrels came, they were soonest ended when fought to a finish on the spot.

And so despite the frown on Halsey's dark face most of the First Latin hoped that when the Doctor came he would look with leniency on the misconduct of the belligerents. Hoover, defrauded of his smoke, pleaded for permission to go to Duncan's to get his fine silk handkerchief, which he claimed to have dropped during their brief ten minutes of recess. This was killing two birds with one stone. He needed his cigarette, and he hoped to create the impression that he was not among the crowd at the stable. There had been a solemn conference between the Doctor and Hoover senior, and solemn warning to the young man on part of both, and Hoover junior felt that he could risk nothing with the rector in his present frame of mind. The head-master, with doubtful glance in his eyes, said go, and not three minutes later wished he hadn't. There was a sound of angry altercation below-stairs. John's whining voice was uplifted in protestation. At any other time the class would have had fun out of it, but the class was in no mood for frolic now.

"Stop that noise and come up here at once!" ordered the master from the head of the stairs, and sullen and swollen-faced, the janitor came.

"I couldn't help it, sir," he began at once. "I ain't going to be cursed for obeying orders by any such sneak as that."

And when Halsey could check the angry torrent of his words, it transpired that Hoover had taken occasion, with much blasphemy and bad language, to abuse him for having told about the fight. Hoover came in ten minutes later, glancing shiftingly

around. "Say, did that cur tell on me?" he whispered to Turner, as he sidled into his seat, and Turner turned his back and bade him go to Halifax, but Briggs nodded yes. It is an ill wind that blows nobody good. The Doctor came with gloom in his eye and thunder on his tongue. Things had been going amiss. Not another word had been heard of Snipe. A favorite pupil had disappeared because of troubles brought to light at school, and the Doctor felt that his system, his methods, his discipline and supervision were all being challenged and dissected by his rivals and opponents, and, like every successful man, he was the target for the shafts of all the envious. A high authority at faculty meeting that day had demanded news of the missing boy and particulars as to the causes of his going, had intimated that such things ought not to be in a well-regulated school, and the rector came down ruffled and wrathful. The first thing to attract his eyes was the sight of Shorty sitting ruefully on the "mourners' bench," as the boys called the settee at the foot of the class. Hoover, Turner, and Briggs were the other occupants.

"Hiyee!" he exclaimed, as he halted at the doorway. "The lad of the long tongue has let it run away with him again, I suppose! What's he been saying, Mr. Halsey?"

"Nothing, sir," said Halsey, briefly. "Fighting again."

"What! And after my prohibition! Here, you, sir!" he exclaimed, with indignation in his tone. "Take your books and pack yourself out of school, at once!"

Slowly Shorty found his legs and, uttering no word, went

drearily to the bookcase, obeying the pointing, menacing cane in the rector's hand, and trembling and with heavily beating heart began to gather and strap his few possessions. For a moment there was dead silence. Pop still standing at the doorway, glaring at the culprit, perhaps wishing the boy would speak. But Shorty's spirits were crushed by the sorrows of the past ten days, and he didn't much care what happened. It was Bertram who broke the silence.

"May I say a word, sir?" he asked, as he rose respectfully.

"Not unless you wish to quit the school the same way, sir. Young people will speak when spoken to and not before. Come, you, sir," he continued, turning again on Shorty, "I am waiting for you to go."

"So'm I, sir," said the youngster, desperately, "but I can't – till you get out of the way."

For an instant the silence was intense. The Doctor stared, then dropped his threatening cane, closed his eyes and began to shake. In another instant the room rang with a shout of laughter, even the saturnine features of Halsey relaxing in a grin.

"Who's the other belligerent, Mr. Halsey?" asked Pop, as soon as he could regain severity of mien. "The illustrious Turner, I apprehend. What did you wish to say, Bertram?"

"Nothing, sir, in view of the penalty," was the prompt answer.

"It wasn't his fault, I suppose you wish to imply," said the Doctor. "Go back to the bench, sir," was his stern order to Shorty. "Remain after school, both of you, until I investigate this and

send you home with a letter apiece. Any other enormities to report, Mr. Halsey?"

"Yes, sir, – Hoover. The janitor says that he cursed and abused him at recess for obeying your orders."

The Doctor's face had mellowed a moment before; now it hardened. He stood with his cane tucked under his arm, his top-hat in one hand, the polishing handkerchief in the other, flicking away the dust and smoothing the glossy crown. Foul language on part of boy or man was something he abhorred, and Hoover had been reported more than once. For John, the janitor, the Doctor had but faint regard. He was a blundering booby, said he. But that in no wise relieved Hoover. Watching his angering face, the silent boys could almost foretell the words they saw framing on his compressed lips. "Out of my school, sir," were beyond doubt the first he would have spoken, but there sat two other culprits who deserved the temporary expulsion that was at the time his favorite method of punishment. If Hoover went, they too must go, or Hoover senior would hear and ask the reason, and the Doctor hated to be cross-questioned about his school. His methods were his own; one might almost say the boys were too.

"Using blasphemous and profane language again!" he finally began, as he stood and glared at the scowling pupil. "Gentlemen never abuse a servant for obeying orders. Gentlemen avoid the use of profanity. We must have a new name, – a more descriptive title for our *monstrum horrendum*, our roaring Polyphemus. What say you, Bertram, Imperator? What say you, Joy? Come,

wake your nimble wits, young gentlemen. The astute head of the class is silent, the second is dumb, the third sits mute," and now the great but shapely white hand, with its taper index, points to one after another, "the fourth, the fifth, the sixth. What? Have we no wits left to-day? You, Beekman; you, Satterlee; the iconoclastic Bagshot, the epicurean Doremus" (a titter now, for Doremus's taste for cream-puffs is proverbial). Speak up, Van Sandtvoordt. Gihon, Post, Dix, Bliss, Seymour, Grayson, next, next, next; the late belligerent Mr. Turner, the benignant Briggs, Hoover we'll skip, and now the other gladiator, Loquax. *What?*"

"Polyblasphemous!" says Shorty, with twitching lips, the Irish in him coming to the top despite his weight of woe.

An instant of silence, then, shaking from head to foot, the tears fairly starting from his eyes, unable for the moment to speak at all, laughing himself to the verge of apoplexy, the Doctor motions the youngster from the foot to the head of the class, and it is a full minute before order is restored and the laughter of the First Latin subsides. Even then, every little while some boy bursts out into a chuckle of merriment, and Hoover glares at him with new malevolence. Every little while the Doctor settles back in his chair and shakes anew. That *jeu d'esprit* saves three culprits from deserved suspension and brings sunshine through the storm-clouds for the day at least. But it thickens the hide of Hoover's hate.

"You think you were smart this afternoon" (with an adjective to the smart), sneers Hoover to the youngster after school. "You'll

find out where the smart comes in before you're a month older, young feller."

And Hoover means it.

CHAPTER X

Another month had come and not another word from Snipe. All the Doctor's explorations were in vain. There was grief at the Lawrences', for the poor mother had been visiting her sister, imploring full particulars in one minute and denouncing her informants in the next. The most yielding and self-forgetful of women ordinarily, she had risen in rebellion against those whom she believed had wronged her boy. There was a rupture at Rhinebeck, where George Lawton's step-father was given to understand by George Lawton's mother that she would never believe that her boy had stolen. That he had sold the books and the gun and might have sold the watch was probably true. He had to do it to buy even the coarsest clothes to hide his nakedness. She had come to Shorty's home, and, with that sad-hearted youngster as her guide, had been conducted to the Doctor's study, and there she was permitted to read and to weep over Snipe's pathetic letter. She drew from Shorty all the details of the boy's effort to get along on his scanty allowance, to spare her, and to make his worn shoes and shabby, outgrown garments answer for another year. The interview between the now roused and indignant woman and her husband on her return to Rhinebeck must have been a source of amaze to him as well as discomfiture. In forty-eight hours she was back at Mrs. Lawrence's. "Do not put yourself out for me any more than you did for George,"

she said to her sister, with a tinge of irrepressible bitterness. "I will sleep in his little hall bedroom and sit at his corner of your table – when you are not entertaining." And Mrs. Lawrence made no reply. She knew well there had been much to warrant the mother's accusation. George might indeed be the culprit her husband, her brother-in-law, and her butler asserted, but he might not, probably would not, have been but for the indifference or neglect which had been his portion. Down at the bottom of her heart Aunt Lawrence was a sympathetic woman, and not entirely unjust, for after the first few days of excitement, at which times those at fault are sure to strive to fix the blame on others, she realized that what she had said of George's playmate and his people, even of George's misguided methods of spending his recreation hours, was something she would gladly recall.

But all this time the search for the absent boy had gone on unremittingly. Shorty had promised faithfully that if another letter came from Snipe he would bring it to the mother at once, and Pop had given his sanction. He refused to promise to come every day to see her, as she had at first almost demanded. He told her frankly that after what Mrs. Lawrence had said of him and his leading George astray, he couldn't come. The Doctor had certain theories about the missing jewelry, and had, on his own account, employed detective aid, and abandoned his theory more perplexed than ever. Privately he let it be known to the police that he would pay a handsome reward for the recovery of Joy's watch and information that would lead to the apprehension

of the thief, but not a trace of it had been found. School work had to be kept up, but Shorty's standing suffered. The weekly reports that so often bore in Pop's remarkable chirography the word "*Imperator*," in Halsey's big, round hand the inscription "*Nulli Secundus*," and over the sign manuals of the other teachers some tribute to his scholarship and industry, now spoke of him as "falling off," "losing ground," etc., and a gentle hand was laid on his troubled head at home ere it signed the receipt, and kind and sympathetic words would send him hurrying away to his own little den, there to give way to a passion of tears. It was bad enough to lose Snipe. It was cruel to think of the boy's loneliness and suffering, but it was getting to be worst of all at school, where, true to the old, old saying, the absent was sure to be wrong. Little by little sneer, rumor, and insinuation had done their work, and, with no one to defend but Shorty, Snipe's name had become clouded with suspicion that was verging into certainty. If innocent of all the misdeeds laid at his door, why had he run away? Why did he not come home to face his accusers?

And so it happened that Shorty saw less of his schoolmates and more of his and Snipe's old friends, the firemen, than ever before. At home this was looked upon as decidedly unfortunate, but the lad was so unhappy and restless that no active opposition was made. "No good can ever come from such association," said the one oracular and dogmatic member of the household. But that prophecy was destined to be put to the blush.

Quarter day had come at Pop's, – a day marked in the

annals of the school and celebrated in its traditions. More stories centred on that momentous date than on all the other school-days combined. On the Friday of the last week of the expiring quarter each of the Doctor's pupils would be handed an envelope addressed to his responsible parent or guardian, and each envelope so addressed contained the school bill for the ensuing quarter, filled out in the Doctor's unique and dainty hand. No writing was ever like it. Pop had a system of penmanship, as he had of punishment, of instruction, and school discipline, peculiarly his own. His capital letters were always large, clear, and well formed. His small letters, except those extending above and below the line, were indicated by tiny, back-handed dashes that individually conveyed no idea and collectively were unmistakable. Not a word of instruction accompanied the presentation of the missive, but every boy knew infallibly what to expect. From time immemorial in the history of the school the unwritten law had been that every boy appearing with the cash or check in payment of the bill early on the following Monday morning might go his way on whole holiday. If the money came on Tuesday the bearer was released at twelve o'clock; but if it failed to come on Wednesday the pupil found himself drifting from one scrape into another until it did come, and old boys used to declare that pretexts were never lacking, when they were of the school, to warrant the Doctor in flogging, every day until the money came, the hapless lad whose parents failed to meet the demand on time. Small wonder that Pop's boys developed

phenomenal powers as bill collectors and that Pop himself had no dunning letters to write.

The late autumn had given way to early winter, sharp and frosty. A great presidential election had been held some weeks before. The East was excited and the South enraged over the victory of a far Western candidate, almost unknown to Gotham. Rumors more and more alarming of Southern force and fury flew from lip to lip as November drew to its close, and December, frosty but kindly, was ushered in. The boys had separated Friday afternoon, taking the bills with them, and early Monday morning Othello sat "for such occasions only" at the Doctor's desk, in readiness to receipt for checks or cash before the opening hours of school. A dozen at least of the First Latin had gleefully gone their way. Another dozen, less fortunate, lolled dejectedly on the benches, devoutly wishing their *paters* were as well to do as those of the holiday-makers (which many were, but held to a theory that Pop found too many excuses for holidays). Shorty was neither with one nor the other. Nine o'clock came and two of the First Latin had not reported; Hoover was the other. The bell rang. Beach was told off to put the supposedly derelict through their paces in Sallust, while Halsey went on signing receipts, shoving money into the drawer, and saying, "You may go," briefly as possible, to the boys who came provided. The rule held good for the entire school, and by quarter-past nine the rector's drawer was stored with something over a thousand dollars in checks, bank-notes, and coin. It was fully half-past nine when Hoover came

slowly and sullenly up the stairs and entered the room. Briggs, sitting at the foot of the incarcerated dozen, jocularly hailed him with, "Hullo! for once in his life Hoover won't have to sit on the mourners' bench."

"Go there yourself, sir!" said Beach, sternly, bringing Briggs instantly to his feet with whining expostulation. "Why, what did I say, sir?" And it takes more fines and much frowning to settle him, Othello never interposing, for this money taking and changing is his bane. He has to do it in the Doctor's absence, but he hates it. He counts over every penny slowly and carefully, for the rector requires account to the uttermost farthing, and small boys waiting for their receipt fidget impatiently.

Hoover, mean time, is removing coat, gloves, and muffler with exaggerated deliberation, and seizes the opportunity when Beach turns to the head with a question, and while the stove-pipe hides Othello's eyes, to administer a fervent kick to Briggs and send that sandy-haired young fellow's Sallust flying to mid-floor, Briggs, of course, lending unnecessary and additional centrifugal impetus to his belongings, and in the midst of the acrimonious debate that follows a bounding step is heard on the stair and in comes Shorty, flushed, panting a bit, and filled with suppressed excitement and evident importance. He squeezes in between Hoover and the rack to hang up his top-coat, Hoover swaying backward, of course, to make it as difficult and disagreeable a process as possible.

"Come out of that, Hoover, and take your seat," orders Beach,

sternly. But "Polyblasphemous" is ugly and rebellious. Not until Shorty has a second time squeezed by is Hoover made to obey. Even then he turns back and rummages among the coat pockets, claiming that he has left his handkerchief therein. Hoover's handkerchief, like charity, is made to cover a multitude of sins. He feels in a dozen pockets, apparently, before he finds it. So engrossed is the class, or what is left of it, in the effort to bring order out of chaos at the foot of the room – and Hoover from among the overcoats – that few see that Shorty has handed Othello a note before silently taking his seat. Hoover is presently settled below Briggs, fined five marks for being late and another five for trifling, and the recitation goes on, Beach evidently ruffled. Then Othello looks up and beckons to Shorty, who silently goes to his side.

"When did the Doctor give you this?" he asks, in low tone; but now the boys are still as mice and listening intently.

"Just at nine, sir, up at his house. I caught him going up to college and gave him the letter, and he turned back and wrote that." Shorty never could explain a thing in few words.

There is a sound as of shouting and excitement on the avenue above the school and of swift-running feet, but at the moment no attention is paid. "The Doctor says you are to have whole holiday," continues Halsey, in his monotonous tones. The noise without is increasing.

"I – don't care to go, sir," says Shorty, hesitating, and the class looks up in astonishment. The noise has spread to the rooms to

the east, – the nursery, – where the small boys are; a banging of windows and shades, a rush of many feet, and all of a sudden the leaden-colored door flies open and Meeker appears, pale and excited.

"Mr. Halsey!" he cries, "a house right back of us is all in a blaze. Shall I dismiss my class?"

"Wait a moment," answers the head-master, ever deliberate, and away he goes, long striding, the First Latin, despite Beach's effort, tearing after him. Then Beach follows the tide. The house in flames is not just back of them, but near enough to prove a source of tremendous interest and excitement, if not of danger. It faces on Twenty-fifth Street, just beyond the stable, and backs up into the grape-vined, fence-crossed rectangle at the back. Smoke in thick volumes is pouring out of the back windows. A tongue of flame licks out under the narrow gallery at the rear of the main floor as Halsey forces his way through a mob of shouting small boys to the open window. The First Latin comes tumbling after him, shoving Meeker aside. Borne on the breath of the rising east wind, a single, solemn "bong" of the Twenty-third Street tower tells that the watcher has quickly descried the unusual smoke-cloud billowing up from the doomed dwelling. People in adjoining houses are throwing open blinds and shouting unintelligible things. Boys and men come clambering over fences from adjoining yards. Cooks and housemaids gather on back galleries, huddling together with shawls over their heads and red arms wrapped in flimsy aprons. A pile of bedding comes hurtling

down through the smoke from a third-story window, followed by a lot of books. Somebody has fetched a ladder, and a dozen boys and men have scrambled to the tar and pebble roof of the stable, and there they dance and shout and run hither and yon, but still no firemen appear. The nearest hook and ladder company "lies" seven blocks away. The school is down at the foot of the First (fire) District. The jangling bells of 61 Hose can be heard coming on the jump down the avenue, and every boy knows Pacific Engine can't be a block behind. But now the "hot black breath" rushing from the basement and first-floor windows bursts all at once into furious red flames, and Halsey says resignedly, "School's dismissed till the fire's out." The boys go tumbling over each other's heels in mad dash for the door, and the thunder of feet, as they go leaping down the narrow stairway, shakes and scandalizes the watchmakers in the little shop below, and Mr. Foley, rushing out at the first boy he can lay hands on, shakes him in turn until, amazed and wrathful, the young fellow breaks loose, whirls about, and lands a stunning left-and-right full in Foley's angry face, and turns it even redder, while every other big boy springs to the aid of "28," just lowering her long side levers and "taking the butt" from "61," while two or three stalwart, black-helmeted fellows dart up the brownstone steps and into the smoke-vomiting doorway, glistening pipe in hand, the copper-riveted, black leather hose trailing behind them. Before the water gushes from the corner hydrant and swells the snake-like coils that connect with the engine, the pipemen come reeling out

before the jetting flames, and everybody knows that that fire will burn itself out and not succumb to water. In their haste, many lads have left their overcoats on the rack, and from the midst of these emerges Hoover, twisting the silken muffler about his throat, the only pupil left in the main school room, as Halsey suddenly recollects himself – and the cash in the Doctor's drawer – and comes hurrying back to that abandoned desk. The drawer is half-way open, the checks and bank-notes seem undisturbed, but Halsey knows there were a number of ten-dollar gold pieces in the lot, and now there isn't one. Long before that lively blaze is out and only bare burned walls are left standing, the Doctor himself arrives upon the scene, and the head-master, with rueful face, reports himself about one hundred dollars short.

CHAPTER XI

When the order "Take up" was finally given that afternoon to the array of fire companies that covered the first and second fire districts, most of Pop's boys were still among the swarm of spectators. The fire had broken out soon after nine o'clock, and not until one were some of the companies sent home. Under the system existing in those days every engine, hose, and hook and ladder company whose station was north of Twenty-second or south of Sixtieth Street had had to answer that alarm, – old "Black Joke," Engine Company 33, having to drag their heavy "Carson" machine all the way from the neighborhood of Fifty-ninth Street and Broadway. There was nothing left of the house in which the fire started, and neighboring buildings were badly scorched in places and more or less damaged by water. There were no "chemicals" then. The stable had been in danger several times, and Pop's boys had performed prodigies of valor early in the affair, leading out the affrighted horses and wheeling buggies and wagons into the street. The cars on Fourth Avenue had to stop for over an hour, so numerous were the lines of hose, and both that avenue and Twenty-fifth Street and the roofs and windows of adjoining buildings were thronged with lookers-on. The Doctor was much displeased on his arrival to find his back windows occupied on both floors by total strangers, who made themselves perfectly at home and couldn't be induced to

leave by any intimation of the janitor that the principal would like to close up. The Doctor was more than displeased when he heard from Halsey of the filching of the gold. No pupil saw that interview. A few of the smaller boys were at the back widows, but only John noted the two in their grave consultation, and he was promptly ordered to leave the room, and could only guess what was going on until the following day. As the firemen stretched their drag-ropes and started for home Halsey suggested summoning the boys back to their seats and studies, but Pop said no, – it was too late in the day. He wished to think, and, tucking the cash and checks in an inside pocket and his cane under his arm, leaving Halsey to see to the closing up of the rooms, the Doctor went slowly down-stairs and out upon the crowded street. He had had to thread his way through the jam at Twenty-fifth Street, and wanted no more of that. A line of hose stretched along the sidewalk from the hydrant at the corner below, and he looked upon it with stern and scholastic disapproval, but followed its lead and came upon a familiar face. It being a "neighborhood" fire, the Metamora Hose had run over from Fifth Avenue and Twenty-first Street, being almost as soon upon the scene as 61. Taking the hydrant at Twenty-fourth Street, her men had unreeled up the avenue and around the stable, giving their "butt" to Lexington 7, who, with their big double-decker, came speeding over from Third Avenue. And now the prettily painted hose carriage was drawn up close to the curb at Twenty-fourth Street, and half a dozen young fellows were lolling about

the wheels and tongue, smoking and talking loudly, with much exaggerated imitation of the Bowery dialect of the day. But the slangy, swaggering talk came to sudden stop. Two cigars, at least, were tossed or dropped into the flooded gutters, and two or three hats were lifted as Hoover, Briggs, and a "horsey" young man, whose specialties were cock-fights and "canine sports," suddenly recognized the Doctor. With grave dignity Pop lifted his beaver, and his stern eyes gazed in disapprobation upon the party. He knew the others, as he did his own black sheep, at a glance. There were the Hulkers, the flashiest of New York youths, the objects of his especial dislike. He had known their father, a worthy man despite his swiftly acquired wealth, and the boys, too, had spent six months within the Doctor's walls before the death of that lamented financier. But a doting mother had long since withdrawn them from the tyranny and oppression to which her beloved sons were there subjected. The Doctor had his regular habits and his regular route. No boy there had ever known him to turn southward from his school door before this day, and his coming suddenly upon them was a shock so severe that it dashed for the moment even Briggs's effrontery. Hoover turned a sickly yellow, and looked as though he would have been glad to crawl under the hose carriage. Briggs "made a sneak" to get the reel between him and the Doctor's glowering eyes, but Pop halted short and stood with pointed cane, and Briggs saw it was useless and crawled out again. "Smoking!" said the rector, comprehending the sextette in general condemnation. "Idling!

Wasting the substance of honest men in forbidden and stolen indulgence. Here, you, sir!" to Briggs, "get you gone out of this. Go home and study, and if you miss a line of to-morrow's lessons I'll pack you out of school." "Pack" as a verb and "copious" as an adjective were pets in the rector's school vocabulary. "The same to you, my horsey young friend, Mr. Brodrick. As for you," he continued, addressing the Hulkers and their companion, who, with hands in pockets and hats tipped back, were striving to keep up appearance of bravado, "I shall reach you through another channel." Then, his manner suddenly changing, he turned on Hoover, now blinking and sidling away through the quickly gathering knot of inquisitive folk. "Hoover, come with me," he said, and Hoover, who looked as though he would give a year of his life to get out of the way, meekly slunk along at the Doctor's side.

Majestically the rector strode across the street and went on southward, vouchsafing no word to the culprit on his left. There were still curious knots of loungers along the avenue. One or two companies were manning the brakes in Twenty-fourth Street, the hose of their engines being carried through the basements of the red brick houses to the rear of the wrecked premises. Furtively Briggs and Brodrick watched the pair until lost to sight, all but the Doctor's hat, in the throngs along the walk. Then an anxious, nervous glance was exchanged, and Brodrick whispered to his freckle-faced schoolmate. "What's he heard, d'you s'pose?" was his query.

"We'd better look up 61 and see what the other fellows know," said Briggs, in low tone, while the Hulkers, now that the rector was well away, resumed their loud laughter. "You go, Brod; I can't show up in that crowd just now." The memory of the assault on Snipe was still fresh in the minds of some of the lads. Very possibly it was this that held the Hulkers and their henchmen so far away from the fire itself and from the spot where, over a block away, 61's white hose-reel and silver lamps could be seen above the crowd. Even now that shame and suspicion attached to George Lawton's name, those fellows, lately his accusers, if not indeed his active assailants, felt it unsafe to venture among a lot of the First Latin.

Brodrick peered up the street and shook his head. "Not if the court knows herself," he said, with the Bowery drawl; then, turning to Hulker, "Sa-ay, Skinny, gimme 'nother seegar." But the Hulker apostrophized as "Skinny" declined.

"You've cleaned me out of the last one. Go buy some if you want 'em."

"I ain't got a dime. Hope to drop dead next minute if I have. Sa-ay, lend me five dollars till Christmas on that watch-chain?" he pleaded, lifting a clumsy production from a waistcoat-pocket. But the next minute he thrust it back in haste and confusion. Beach, with observing eye, came sweeping down upon them. "Mr. Halsey wishes to see you both at once," said he, with scant ceremony. "Lose no time," and, though the message filled them both with uneasiness, neither dare disregard it.

Halsey sat at the old table as they slunk into the schoolroom. Two or three First Latin men and Second Latin boys were grouped about him; John, the janitor, was dodging about the door. Every boy in the number had on his overcoat, but at least half a dozen others had left theirs hanging on the rack.

"Yes, sir, I know whose they are," Doremus was saying. "There's Beekman's, and there's Bagshot's, and that's Prime's, and those are Second Latin coats," he added, with proper indifference to the infant garments. Halsey thought a moment.

"They must still be somewhere about," he said, tentatively, as Briggs and Brodrick ranged up behind the smaller lads. "Where's Hoover?" he questioned. "He was with you a moment ago."

"Gone with the Doctor, sir," said Briggs, glad enough to have no harder question to answer.

A long hook-and-ladder truck that had been standing for some hours in front of the school was being reloaded with its ladders, and its gong was sounding to recall scattered members of the company. Some small boys had tiptoed to the window to feast their eyes on the unaccustomed sight. "There's some of our fellows over by 61's Hose now, sir," piped a junior, and John was bidden to go and again summon all stragglers into school. Ringing of his bell had only resulted in derisive comment among the firemen. Some company just starting for home was receiving the customary "hi, hi" of the hangers-on about the other machines, and John's mandates produced no immediate effect. At last, however, the boys came straggling up in knots of

two or three, and presently perhaps a dozen were added to the group about the master's table. He was listening rather absently to the excited talk. No less than six or eight of the youngsters had personally rescued as many horses apiece, despite the fact that there never were more than twenty of those quadrupeds, all told, in the adjoining stable. Halsey made Briggs repeat his statement as to Hoover and seemed disappointed. "Is this all you can find?" he finally said to the janitor, and John declared it was.

"Didn't you tell me Prime was down there, somewhere?" asked Halsey of Doremus.

"He's sure to be, sir. His coat's here yet."

So again the janitor was sent forth, and again came back to say he could see nothing of the lad, and at last the master decided to keep the others no longer. Bagshot took his coat and left. There were only two remaining on the rack when the usual hour for closing school drew nigh. The occupants of the rear windows by this time had satisfied their curiosity and departed, and John had been ordered to keep the doors closed and to admit no more. For some reason Halsey seemed to hang on to Briggs to the very last, and he and Brodrick were still fretting about the benches, awaiting the master's permission to retire and glancing apprehensively at each other from time to time.

At last Halsey beckoned them to his side.

"Where were you when the class followed me into the other room?" asked he of Briggs.

"*With* 'em, sir!" said Briggs, with eagerness. "Wasn't I,

Brodrick? We were among the first to follow."

"Yes, sir," asseverated Brodrick as positively. "We chased right in after you."

"How long did you stay in there?" asked Halsey. "I'm told you were among the first to bolt down-stairs – before school was dismissed."

"A minute or two, anyhow," declared Briggs. "I thought school was dismissed or I wouldn't 'a' run."

"Did the whole class follow? Did any remain?" he asked, searching the anxious features before him. He and Beach had already talked this over among themselves. John, too, had been examined, but further testimony was needed. Briggs reflected.

"Hoover was there, sir, and Shorty Prime."

"When you came out, do you mean?"

"Ye-ye-yes, sir. 't least Prime was. I didn't see Hoover."

"Where was Prime? Are you sure he was there?"

"Right up at the Doctor's desk, sir, where you were sitting."

"He was there still when you came out?"

"Ye-yes, sir. Wasn't he, Brodrick?"

Brodrick thought so, but couldn't be sure. He had "grabbed his cap and run." "They were all rushing down from the English department up-stairs."

Halsey's dark face was very dark now. His eyes were full of doubt and dread. "I want you to be very careful of what you say, Briggs, and to say nothing to anybody of what you have said." And while they were still in conference steps were heard upon the

stairs, and presently in came the two pony members of the First Latin, Prime and Beekman, and Prime was a sight to behold.

"What on earth have you been doing with yourself?" queried Halsey, as he half turned and looked the youngster over from head to foot. Shorty's clothes were wet and bedraggled, his face smudged with soot, but his eyes sparkling with life and animation. He had not looked so much like his old self since Lawton's disappearance.

"Had 28's pipe, sir, the last hour," said the boy, with a grin of pride. "They were only pumping easy to soak down the ruins, and their fellows were tired out and let me and Julian have it."

"Where's Julian?"

"Gone home, sir. He's wet through."

"So are you, but – don't go just yet. That's all, you others," said Halsey, whereat the three slowly vanished, leaving only the janitor staring at the door.

"Go out and shut that door, and keep it shut," said Halsey, shortly, to the open-mouthed servitor, and then he turned on the boy, now warming his hands at the big stove. "Prime," said he, "you were with me at the desk when that alarm came. What became of you? What did you do?"

"I, sir? I went like a streak for 61."

"At once, do you mean? – right after the class ran after me into Mr. Meeker's room?"

"*Before* the class ran after you," said Shorty, with an injured air. No fireman would waste so many valuable seconds. "I was

down-stairs and out of the school before they were fairly off the benches."

"How could you get your cap, sir?"

"Didn't take it, sir! I ran bare-headed to Twenty-sixth Street, hoping to be the first to give 'em a still before I saw 'em coming."

"Give them a still! What's that?"

"A still alarm, sir. Give them a tip to the fire. But it must have been going some minutes. They were spinning down the avenue by the time I got half-way. Then I came back for my cap, and school was coming out."

"Did you speak to any of them? What boys saw you coming back?" asked Halsey, thoughtfully.

"Oh, I don't know, sir," answered the youngster. "Everybody was excited, I suppose, but me. I've always run to fires since I was knee-high. They were all shouting. You were just coming out of Mr. Meeker's room, and I nearly ran into you."

"Do you mean you ran to Twenty-sixth Street and back in that time?"

"*More*'n that, sir. I ran half-way to Twenty-seventh and out into the street and grabbed hold of 61's rope. There were only six or seven fellows on her, and I ran with 'em to the corner hydrant."

Something of the master's trouble was now reflecting in the pupil's face. Something in the minuteness of Halsey's questioning suggested graver trouble. "I hope nothing's wrong, sir," said Prime, anxiously. "I know I oughtn't to have run when I did without permission, but – we don't have a fire next door every

day."

Halsey rose and placed the long, lean hand on the little fellow's shoulder. Two years and more he had known him. He and "Tut" had given him the first touches in Latin and Greek, and, as head-master, Halsey had had many an occasion to reprove or reprimand, for high spirits or mischief led to many a scrape, yet there was kindness, there was even a touch of tenderness, in the master's tone as he answered.

"Perhaps you ought not to have run when you did," said he, "but, as it is, I'm thankful."

And Shorty could have sworn Othello's swarthy hand was trembling.

Two minutes later the master had taken the names of two of 61's men who were on the rope when Shorty joined them. Then, bidding him say nothing of this conversation to any schoolmate until after the Doctor's coming on the morrow, Halsey bade him hurry home and get a rub-down and dry clothes. As Shorty turned to the rack for his overcoat a sudden thought struck the master.

"Where was the letter written – Lawton's letter – that you took to the Doctor this morning?"

"It didn't say, sir. It was postmarked Bridgeport, but – that don't prove anything. Somebody else could have put it in for him there."

Jerking the overcoat from its peg and tossing it carelessly over his arm, something bright came spinning out of the pocket, bounded to the floor, and rolled in easy circle up in front of the

master's table, where it struck a crack, spun on edge a second, and then settled with a metallic buzz and bur-r-r, and then lay still and shining opposite the middle bench. Halsey started and stared, with a gleam in his eyes. Shorty, surprised, sped after it, stooped and picked it up, then held it between his thumb and forefinger, gazing at it in astonishment. "Why, Mr. Halsey," he cried, "it's a ten-dollar gold piece!"

"Yes," said Halsey, "I know. See if there are any more."

CHAPTER XII

When school reassembled the following day the First Latin knew to a man by nine o'clock that the cause of Shorty's "late" the previous day was a letter from Lawton. Warned by Jim Hulker that the rector had taken Hoover to the Clarendon, Briggs scouted miserably down the avenue on their trail, filled with no one knew what nervous apprehension of trouble to come, and, dodging in at the office a moment later, ascertained from a bell boy that they had gone into a parlor on the second floor. Briggs knew what that meant. The Doctor was cross-questioning his sullen pupil, and there were all manner of things Hoover might be driven into confessing if closely and scientifically pressed, and what might that not mean for Briggs? Not five minutes later, down they came, the Doctor erect, stately, and deliberate as ever, Hoover slinking wretchedly alongside. A carriage had been called, and into this Hoover was practically hustled by his preceptor, and together they were driven away towards Fourteenth Street, and Briggs was left behind. They were going to see Hoover's father, was the apparent explanation, and it boded ill. A ten-minute walk took Briggs over to the house of the Metamora. The hose carriage had just returned, and was being washed. The Hulkers had dropped off at a certain billiard-hall, said one of the firemen, and thither sped Briggs. It was a resort much frequented by certain of the Columbia students in those

days, and there were a dozen or more scattered about the big room at the moment. Over in a corner, whispering together, were the two Hulkers with a brace of followers. Over against them, across the room, ostensibly – even ostentatiously – engaged in a game of billiards, were Joy and Julian, and all the little pluck that Briggs had left went oozing out of his finger-tips at the sight. Quickly he slunk back into the vestibule and crouched there, peering through the glazed doors, uncertain what to do. A bar-boy, coming up from below at the moment with cigars and mixed drinks on a tray, found him peering in through the crack, and knew him at once.

"Sa-ay," whispered Briggs, the moment he discovered who had come. "Tell Mr. Hulker I want to speak to him out here a minute, will you?"

The boy looked hard at him, made no reply, went deliberately in with his tray-load, deposited the glasses on little tables near the big ones, where a jovial party of Columbians were playing, collected his pay, counted it carefully over, then with exaggerated impudence of manner dawdled over to where the Hulker set were in eager conference in their corner, and said something to them. Briggs saw, and so did Joy and Julian, the backward toss of the head, the over-the-shoulder jerk of the thumb towards the entrance, saw the four young fellows start and glance questioningly thither; then presently, hands in pockets and head in air, Hulker major came sauntering out, just as Julian caught sight of a carroty head ducking behind the framework of

the doorway.

"There's that sneak Briggs now," he quickly whispered to his chum. "What are those fellows planning, do you s'pose?"

There was a brief confabulation in the hallway without, and then back came Hulker, – no loitering now, – said a word or two to his fellows, and the four picked up their canes and overcoats and started for the door. The bar-boy went running after them.

"I'll pay you to-morrow," Hulker major answered, impatiently; and Julian heard it. The boy was importunate, and glanced at the desk. The clerk came out from behind his barricade.

"I'm sorry, Mr. Hulker, but the manager left strict orders that that account must be settled before you could be served again. You told the boy you would settle everything before you left, and to get those cigars. Now, I've got to take the money out of the till and pay for 'em if you don't."

Angrily, and with ugly words, the elder Hulker turned on the clerk. "I haven't any money just now, I tell you. We've been at that fire all the morning. It's too late to get a check cashed. I'll bring you the money to-night, Billy, I'll swear to – "

But the controversy was cut short by the sudden entrance of the manager himself. He was a man who prided himself on the "respectability" of his place. Order and decorum were things he insisted on. Even the mildest of sherry-cobblers, for which the bar was famous, was forbidden to the student or youth who showed the faintest symptom of over-stimulation. Case-hardened politicians and men about town avoided Martigny's, for

the reason that they could never get enough there. Student trade was something he catered to only so long as it came through the well-bred and well-behaved of their number. The Hulker set he much disapproved of and had frequently cautioned, but money was an object, and for a time those young fellows had it and spent it in abundance. Of late there had come a change. Something had occurred to limit their supplies, and within a month they had run up bills at every neighboring bar or billiard-room where they could get credit, and now Martigny, after thrice presenting his account, had drawn the line. Quietly but firmly he told the elder that that bill must be settled then and there or it would be sent by a messenger to his mother at once. It was impossible for the players at the tables not to hear what was going on. There were sly winks and quizzical glances. Columbiads, old or young, fought shy of the Hulkers, but even they were unprepared for the scene that followed.

"I haven't got a cent with me, Johnny," protested the elder, while the others crowded about in indignant chorus. "I swear I'll fetch it to you to-night, or in two hours, if you must have it."

"You've sworn to the same effect twice before, Mr. Hulker," said the manager, calmly, "and I cannot trust you. I was down in the bar-room when your orders came for this round of drinks and cigars, and the boy declared that you showed him gold, and declared further that you'd settle the whole account. It's fourteen dollars and seventy-five cents, and I want that money now."

"It ain't mine, Johnny. It was given me for a particular

purpose," protested Hulker. "That was just bluffing. I didn't think he'd take it in earnest."

"But he did, Mr. Hulker, and so did I, and so will your mother when my messenger gets there ten minutes from now. Get your coat, Mr. Tracy," he said, turning to his assistant. "I'll send you around with the message. That's all, gentlemen. I won't detain you further than to say that you will not be allowed in this room hereafter."

"Sa-ay, stop! Hold on!" cried Hulker. "Here, I'll – I'll pay it now. But of all the dash, dash, dashed mean – "

"No bad language, Mr. Hulker," said Martigny, calmly. "A special policeman is at the door." He glanced at the coin tendered by the trembling hand of the leader. "Give Mr. Hulker five dollars and twenty-five cents," said he, calmly, to the desk. "There's a friend of yours peeking in at the door. You might inquire now what he wants." And with unruffled civility the manager led the way to the door, closed it after the crestfallen quartette, and came back thoughtfully chinking the coins, just as Joy and Julian, laying aside their cues, hurried to the desk to pay for their game.

"Was that red-headed specimen there yet when you came up, Martigny?" asked Julian.

"Yes, sir; but he scuttled away down-stairs as soon as he saw me. Who is he?"

"One of the Hulker set, and none of ours," was the brief answer, as Julian's keen eyes took in the two coins Martigny

was still mechanically passing back and forth from the fingers of one hand to the other. "Ten-dollar gold pieces," said he to Joy, as the two hurried down the stairs and out on the busy street. There, "scooting" along in the keen December wind, heads bowed and half hidden in high coat-collars, and huddling together, the discomfited quartette, reinforced at the corner by Briggs, were just turning to cross Broadway when a carriage came driving rapidly by. Seated therein, erect and majestic, was the Doctor, apparently lost in thought. By his side a pasty-faced young fellow, with flitting, beady black eyes, glanced furtively out and recognized his fellows, made some quick signal with the hand, waved it from the window, and pointed towards the northeast corner of Madison Square.

"I'll bet I know what that means," said Julian, as the five halted, irresolute, and gazed after the carriage. "Pop's had him in limbo for over an hour, and the moment he gets out he wants those fellows to meet him. We could find something worth knowing, old man, if we could see them together again." But not until long after did Julian dream how much.

The Doctor left Hoover at the steps of the brownstone mansion, saw him safely within-doors, summoned the grave butler to his carriage, said a few words in low tone, and was about to order "drive on," when he was aware of two young gentlemen running up, panting a bit and red in the face.

"Ha, Joy! Julian!" he cried, as they raised their caps. "What brings you here?"

"What news of Lawton, sir? Doremus just told us there was a letter." And to substantiate the story, Doremus himself came puffing after the pair.

"Where'd you hear it?" asked the Doctor of the third youngster, desirous first of ascertaining where the leak occurred.

"I was over at the school a few minutes ago. The janitor told me, and Mr. Halsey and Prime were just going away together."

"Just going away together! Why, I supposed everybody had left the building an hour ago."

"So did I, sir, but John said Mr. Halsey had kept Prime. He was having a long talk with him 'bout something, and John heard him say that now they had proof it wasn't Lawton that took Joy's watch, and that they'd have him back in less than a week."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Pop, now well-nigh as vehemently interested as his pupils. "Then you young gentlemen will be wise to go direct to your respective rooms and get to work on the lessons for to-morrow. It's almost dark now. Be off with you!" and, with exaggerated sternness, the cane was displayed.

"But was it so, sir? Have you heard of Lawton?"

"Yes," said the Doctor, instantly relapsing into the confidential manner known only to the boys he trusted and liked. "He writes that he had been ill, but is strong again, and we are going to try and fetch him back. Now, no more until to-morrow. Off to your books!"

If John, the janitor, had not been in such a hurry to get home, he might have given out some news that would have surprised

them, and that was that when Mr. Halsey and Shorty Prime left the school together they went up the avenue instead of down, and, of all places in Gotham, Halsey led straight to the house of 61 Hose. Out in front on the cobble-stones the dainty white Zephyr was being sponged off and rubbed dry by three or four red-shirted experts, who glanced up and grinned affably at "the little 'un" and looked critically but in no surprise at the master. A New York fireman of the late '50s thought it bad form to be unprepared for anything. "Here are two who can back up my statements," said the boy, with confident eyes, as he beckoned to the nearest member of the Zephyr. "Will you tell Mr. Halsey where I met you on the way to the fire this morning, and what we said?"

The hoseman straightened up and squeezed the dirty water out of a huge sponge, shifted a quid in his cheek, thought a moment, and answered, "Why, cert'nly, Shorty; right down there opposite the Harlem depot. We'd hardly gone a block when I see this little fellow come a-running. 'What's a-fire, Shorty?' says I. 'Big house next the stable,' says he. 'Where's your cap?' says I. And he just kind a' nodded at the school as he grabbed the rope. You ain't going to do nothing to him for coming to give us a still on a fire, are you?" he asked, with something like menace in his eye.

"No," said Halsey, with one of his rare smiles. "We're glad to know it. That'll do, Prime. Come on." And Halsey, who never wasted a second of time, touched his hat to the Zephyrs and went streaking off down the avenue again, the tails of his worn black

frock-coat streaming in the breeze, Shorty, much disappointed because he wasn't called upon to produce further evidence of prowess as a fireman, skipping along after him. The lad's heart was bounding with excitement and joy. Another day, and if successful in the quest on which she had already started, Mrs. Park, George Lawton's mother, would have Snipe once more back in school, and his accusers would stand confounded. Not for days had Shorty seemed so like his old self, bright, buoyant, and chatting like a parrot, to the discomfiture of a most tolerant home circle.

Morning came and all the school was early "on deck," and the news of Snipe went buzzing from lip to lip, and Briggs nervously flitted from group to group, swallowing snubs as though they were sugar. Meeker came wearily in, his pale face paler than ever, his eyes seeking Halsey, who glanced up and gravely shook his head, whereat the junior master made a despondent gesture with both hands and went on into his own room. Beach, his ruddy skin glowing with the exercise of a long, vigorous walk, swung out of his top-coat and into his seat as though lessons were to begin at the instant. He and Halsey merely exchanged nods. They were on civil – not confidential – terms. The janitor came and reached for the bell, lifted it by the handle from the table, and was turning with it when, unaccountably, it was jerked from his grasp and went clanging and clattering to the floor. The news of Snipe had restored heart to the First Latin, and as one boy the class turned on John in voluble sympathy. John dove for the bell, straightened

up, and started anew, when there was a jerk to the table, a snap, and the little clapper of the bell shot half-way across the room. Turner dashed upon it and held it up to public view, a fine steel wire firmly attached to it and stretching to the leg of the table.

"Awe, see here, Mr. Beach, any boy that would play such a trick as that ought to be packed out of school. I move you, sir, that it is the sense of the First Latin – "

But Beach is in no mood for trifling. Bang! comes the heavy ruler on the desk. "To your seat!" he orders. "Ten marks off for Turner," and the class subsides, while John speeds away to borrow the bell from the shop below, and the master mentally calls the roll. "One absentee, Hoover," he notes; instantly calls Bertram to his feet and begins the work of the day. Poor work it proves to be, for between yesterday's fire and the morning's tidings the First Latin has neglected its studies. Poorer it proves after ten o'clock, at which hour a policeman appears at the door and asks for the rector. Poorer still after a recess at twelve, at which time Mr. Hoover himself drives up in his carriage, Halsey comes down to meet him, and together they drive away. At any other time the fact that Halsey was away from his post at the reassembly after recess would lead to a riot, but the sight of the face of Hoover, *pater*, is more than enough for the class. "He looks like a ghost," says Bliss. "What's coming next?"

Nothing came – ahead of the Doctor. At the usual moment he appeared, and as usual levelled his stick at the boy at the foot. "No message – telegraphic?" he asked of Beach, after brief

glance at the missives on his desk. A shake of the head, an inaudible "no" framed by the lips were the answers. A look of grave concern spread over the Doctor's face. He glanced at his watch, turned to the window, then back to the door, for the rustle of skirts, most unusual sound, could be heard on the stairs. Another moment and there entered Mrs. Park, George Lawton's mother. She reached the chair the Doctor promptly placed for her, sank into it, limp and despairing, and burst into tears. "Doctor, Doctor!" she wailed. "My boy has not been near Bridgeport. I couldn't find a trace of him – or of any one who knew anything about him."

CHAPTER XIII

There was a change in the composition of the First Latin when the Christmas holidays came on, and the erstwhile "band of brothers" broke up for a fortnight of frolic at home. Hoover had not reappeared at school at all. He had been sent South to visit relatives in Mobile "for the benefit of his health," the rector said to the class, but there was no twinkle of merriment in his eye as he spoke, and no responsive laugh along the line of young faces. Strange interviews had occurred between the Doctor, Joy, and Julian, from which "the senate" came forth with sealed lips. Long conferences had taken place between the Doctor, Halsey, and Beach, and twice had Briggs been bidden to stay after school. "They wanted me to tell on lots of you fellows," was his explanation to the class. "Pop and Halsey tried to get me to tell where you spent your time and your money out of school, and threatened to dismiss me if I didn't." But the First Latin answered unanimously that Briggs was a liar. All the same they did wish they knew what was really the matter with Hoover. There was one lad who could have given a new direction to their theories had he not promised both the Doctor and Halsey to say nothing whatever about that ten-dollar gold piece, and a hard time he had keeping his word, and that was Shorty. Neither from the Doctor nor any one, until long after, did he learn nor did the school know that at least one hundred dollars had disappeared

from the drawer of the Doctor's desk the eventful morning of the fire. Yet what made it strange was that rumors of such a thing had been heard, and they came from outside the school. Columbia students heard it whispered at Martigny's. Martigny himself admitted, when cornered, that he had had an interview with the rector at the residence of a gentleman in Madison Avenue, by request, but he would say no more. One thing was certain. None of the Hulker set reappeared at Martigny's. Another thing was announced, that Mrs. Hulker, who for the years that followed her husband's death had followed his example and consulted Hoover senior in all her investments, etc., had turned against that substantial citizen and was filling the ears of society with tales of his treachery, tales to which Mrs. Lawrence and her coterie listened with bated breath. Then, as has been said, the Hulker boys, too, went South, "visiting relatives in Savannah," and the widow followed a fortnight later. Ten days before Christmas, the so-called Hulker gang was without head, foot, or finances, both Hulker and Hoover having disappeared. There were "no more cakes and ale," no more cigars and tobacco for the few hangers-on about the quarters of Metamora Hose. But, after all, the matter over which Pop's boys talked and wondered most was: Where was Snipe Lawton and why did nothing further come from him?

There was a mystery about the letter that had taken Shorty up to the Doctor's early that December morning and sent an eager, anxious, loving-hearted woman out on the New Haven

Railway by the noon train. It had come by post to Shorty just as he was starting for school, and he had run first to the Lawrences' and then, after five minutes' eager, excited talk with Mrs. Park, nearly all the way to Murray Hill, and caught the Doctor on his customary tramp to college before he reached the reservoir. It was only a little note. It said that Snipe had been ill of some kind of fever, that he had found work and was feeling independent and happy, hoping soon to make enough to send five dollars to Seymour, when he was taken ill. Snipe thought he "must have been flighty a few days," but people had been very kind to him. He had helped two boys – his employer's sons – with their arithmetic every night until his prostration, and it had pleased their mother and father both, but he had let out something about his own mother, and now they were telling him how cruel he had been to her and how he ought to go back to her and put an end to her suffering. Snipe said he couldn't go back to Rhinebeck and wouldn't go back to Aunt Lawrence, but if Shorty would send the enclosed note to his mother she would know that he loved her and thought of her constantly; and then he asked Shorty to write to him how the boys were and whether they missed him, and what Seymour said. "Address your letter care Massasoit House, Bridgeport, and I'll get it safely, only don't tell anybody." And, instead of writing, Shorty had run to Pop and Pop had turned back with him, had sent notes by him to Mrs. Park and to Halsey, bidding the latter give Shorty whole holiday, which, to the astonishment of the school, he had declined.

"Why did you do that?" Halsey had asked him during their memorable conference after the discovery of the gold in his overcoat-pocket, and Halsey was thinking how, unconsciously, the boy was weaving a strong thread in the net of suspicion that would have been thrown about him but for the lucky accident of the afternoon. "Beyond all question," said Halsey to himself and to the Doctor, "it was the intention of the thief to cast suspicion on Prime and divert it from himself," and there were just three lads, so far as Halsey could figure, who besides "Loquax" were in the room during his few minutes' absence, and had opportunity to rob that till, – Briggs, Hoover, and the janitor. The later discovery of the gold at Martigny's narrowed the number to Briggs and Hoover, with the chances in favor of the latter. And all these facts combined had led to that solemn conference between the Doctor and Hoover senior, and, despite all his protests of innocence, to the withdrawal of the ill-favored and unfortunate young fellow from the school. There was to be no scandal, – no allegation of crime. Pop would have dropped a thousand dollars rather than have it openly said that such things had happened among his boys. His own suspicions for months past had centred on his hulking, clumsy janitor, and for weeks the detectives had dogged and dogged in vain. What confounded and troubled the Doctor was young Hoover's vehement and persistent denial of guilt, and Hoover senior's prompt assertion that on the Saturday afternoon previous to quarter day, when giving his son the check for his school bill, he had also given him twenty-five dollars in gold and

silver to pay certain debts the young man had confessed to him, and he was certain there were two ten-dollar pieces in the lot.

Those were solemn days for the elder Hoover and rueful days for the son. There were conferences, crossexaminations, and almost inquisitions at the solemn old mansion, Pop, Halsey, Martigny (most unwillingly), and Beach taking part. But the boy stood firm to his first statement. He had had no more money from any source than that twenty-five dollars. He long refused to say what he had done with it, as only a little silver remained, but at last owned that he had given the two tens "for safe-keeping" to the elder of the Hulker brothers as they stood there by the hose carriage. There was an unsettled account between them, covering only a few dollars, Hoover claimed, but the Hulkers said a great deal more, and while they were trying to straighten it out the Doctor swooped down on him and bore him away. This, if true, would account for the money Hulker gave Martigny. But who took the money from the Doctor's drawer? Who put that ten-dollar piece in Shorty's overcoat-pocket? Why didn't Shorty wish to take the whole holiday with the other boys as proffered by the Doctor? Halsey had to ask him, and it was plain the little fellow hated to answer, but answer he did. He was being educated at the expense of his relatives. They had made occasional criticism of the Doctor's proclivity as to half-holidays, and when this quarter day came Shorty had been not unkindly told that the money expended in payment for those school bills was for his instruction, not his amusement, that Saturday and Sunday were

holidays enough in the week, and, finally, that he should have his check on Wednesday, and meantime they expected him to attend school.

One more question had Halsey to ask, and over it the youngster pondered long, though he answered instantly. "It was not four minutes – not much more than three – between the time you came in and the moment of the announcement of the fire. Was there no sign of it when you crossed Twenty-fifth Street? Didn't you know that the alarm would be given in a minute?"

"No, sir, there wasn't a sign or a sound of it on the avenue; besides, I came through Twenty-fourth Street, from the direction of the Lawrences';" and that ended Halsey's cross-examination. To clinch matters, he had taken Shorty with him, as has been told, and questioned a fireman of 61 Hose, then sent him home for dry clothing, happy in the importance of having held 28's pipe a whole half-hour, and hungry as a bear. Small wonder that the family decided after dinner that evening that it was time to call a halt on this craze for running to fires on the part of their junior member. But events were looming up that were soon to spare them further care in that direction.

What the First Latin and Pop and Halsey and Beach now longed to know, however, was, where was Snipe, and why had Mrs. Park failed in her mission? The rector and his head-master had now good reason to know that whether Lawton had anything to do with the disappearance of Joy's watch (which none of them could really believe), he was not the only thief in the school,

for the loss of the hundred dollars long after his disappearance conclusively settled that. There were now not more than half a dozen lads who believed that Snipe was dishonest to the extent of stealing a watch, not more than a dozen who doubted his integrity at all, and as for his saying in his letter that he could be reached through the Massasoit at Bridgeport, there were theories in abundance to explain the fact that neither in person nor by letter had Snipe "reported." He never said where he had found work; he had not given the address of his benefactors; he still, it seemed, dreaded that his step-father would enforce his return to a life that was torment to a boy of his character and spirit. He had merely told Shorty that a letter addressed care of the Massasoit, Bridgeport, would reach him; and, learning this through the admissions wrung from his sorely badgered "chum," and never waiting to write, the impulsive woman had gone at once in person, and the Massasoit people knew nothing whatever of the son. No one answering his description had been there, and as for letters being sent in care of the house, they showed her a bundle of missives so addressed. Every day guests would arrive, register, ask if letters had come for them, ransack the packet, select their own, and toss the others back. Some they showed her had been waiting a month for claimants. If she were to leave a letter addressed in their care for her son and if he were to call for it, they would telegraph to her, but that was all they could promise, and, after consulting the city authorities and, of course, the minister of the church to whose doctrines she had pinned her

faith, and all without hearing of a lad who in the least resembled her George, the sad-hearted woman had gone miserably back to Gotham and to Pop.

Then, of course, she wrote, and so did Shorty. Both letters begged Snipe to return, but by this time Mr. Park himself had come to New York to persuade his wife to go back to her home and to promise that he himself would seek and find the wandering boy and fetch him to her arms, – the worst piece of strategy that could have been adopted, as Shorty, boy that he was, could have told her and would have told Park. Left to his mother and to his chum, the lad's heart might have relented and his stubborn pride dissolved, but there are men sublimely gifted with the faith that they alone are competent to deal with affairs, either public or personal, – that without their aid and guidance everything is sure to go amiss. Park sped away to the Massasoit on the heels of the letters, and when George Lawton drove in with the hope of finding the longed-for messages from home, and went from the stable where they had put up the sleigh straight and eager to the Massasoit, there, with his back to the huge, red-hot stove and facing the office desk, as though to guard that package of letters, there, grim, unbending, repellent as ever, stood George Lawton's step-father, and the lad, scenting treachery, turned and fled.

When the school assembled for the eventful year of '61, the First Latin found itself reduced to twenty-five. Hoover, it was announced, would spend some months in Mobile with a private

tutor and rejoin after Easter. From Snipe Lawton there came neither message, missive, nor token. A rumor flew from lip to lip one April morning that a lad answering every description of the missing boy had fallen from the steps of a New Haven train through a gap between the beams of the Harlem bridge and was lost in the murky waters. The brakeman who saw the accident was well known to members of the school who lived at New Rochelle, and so impressed the Doctor with his story that reward was offered for the body, and men dragged the river for several days. "What you need," said one of the wiseacres of the First Latin, "is to fire cannon over the stream, and that'll bring him up if anything will," and the words were recalled when, within another day, the guns of Sumter boomed from shore to shore, rousing a nation from its lethargy, bringing many a man and boy to vivid life and action such as they had never known or dreamed before.

CHAPTER XIV

The great city had gone wild. Not a month before many of Pop's boys had ridiculed the lads of a rival school who had employed a drill-master from the Ninth Regiment and met two evenings a week. But Shorty, after vainly trying to start a rival company among his own mates, had gone over and enlisted in the ranks at Mulholland's. As a drum-boy he was not allowed to handle a musket and "fall in" with the famous regiment to which he was attached. Indeed, he would have had to stand on a step-ladder to load "according to tactics" the long, glistening musket with which the troops were at that time armed. Mulholland's boys had hired a lot of old-fashioned cadet musquetoons, heavy and cumbrous, but they were marvellous weapons in the eyes of the lads. Officers on duty at Governor's Island were frequent visitors at the Primes' at Fourteenth Street, and Shorty could not but hear of the preparations at the arsenal, the effort to send reinforcements and provisions to Major Anderson at Fort Sumter. All the world knew at this time how the "Star of the West" was fired on and forced to put back to sea, but still not one man in five would admit there should be war, and, in the great Democratic community, hundreds and hundreds of people and not a few papers almost openly took sides with the South. Two lads at Pop's actually came to school wearing the colors of South Carolina in their waistcoats, and in the First Latin the Ballous,

whose father had embarked his capital in steamships trading with Charleston and Savannah, and Seymour, whose relatives were nearly all Southern, and the Graysons, who were Northerners by birth, but had many kindred in Virginia and Alabama, were all openly "secesh" in their talk. And still lessons went on, and the boys even had time to talk of Snipe and wish him back, and of Hoover and wish him in Jericho. Long ere this, now that there were two absent and Briggs had not a friend or a believer left in the school, all the First Latin had swung round into the conviction that poor Snipe was the victim of circumstances and conspiracy, and that Hoover was the cause of all his woes. The story of the hundred-dollar stealing had begun to be accepted as a fact, though Pop and his assistants could never be got to admit it. The further fact that Hoover and those notorious scamps, the Hulkers, had not been seen in New York since the Christmas holidays had set afloat a story that they had been discovered to be connected in many a piece of rascality. Everything missing at school for over a year was now attributed to Hoover. He had been able, said the boys, to dispose of his plunder through those Hulker fellows, who, despite the money lavished on them by their foolish mother, had debts in many a bar-, billiard-, and pool-room, and were known to have pawned valuable jewelry from time to time. She was with them somewhere in the South, and the gloomy old house in Twenty-first Street was cared for by the servants, who were glad enough to have their young masters away and suspicion attaching to themselves at last removed. But

still that watch of Joy's and certain valuables of Aunt Lawrence's remained unaccounted for. Still the police were baffled. Still there came no news as to Snipe's whereabouts, and his mother, deeply distressed, had gone home to Rhinebeck and had to be content with receiving once a month a few lines saying her boy was well, working, and would return to her one of these days when he had earned enough to make him independent. Those letters bore only the date, which often differed by three days from that of the post-mark, but the post-mark helped them not at all. One letter was posted in New York, another in Boston, a third in Philadelphia. It was evident that Snipe was determined to give his step-father no further chance to find him. Once he wrote to Shorty, upbraiding him gently for being instrumental in putting "old Park" on his track, but that was all. Shorty felt it keenly, but with that poor mother and the Doctor and his home people all importuning him and telling him what was his duty, the boy had weakened and given the clue, with the result that they had gained nothing and he had lost his friend. There was little comfort in the assertions of the one whom he referred to as his "Sunday-school aunt," that he ought to be thankful to be rid of so undutiful and undesirable a companion. Shorty, to use the vernacular of the day, "couldn't see it," and fell from grace for saying so. But now the thrilling days of suspense were on the nation, and, while everybody who knew the South knew well the South meant fight, the baa lambs of the pulpit and the braying leaders of the press kept on preaching about the ties of brotherly love, the right of the

people to assemble peaceably ("even when under arms"), and the wrong of interference or intimidation, so "Let the erring sisters go in peace." As late as the 8th of April, one night when the boys were drilling in the big gymnasium on the upper floor of Mulholland's school, and quite a number of people were looking on, a venerable patron of the school stepped forward during the rest and proceeded to address them.

"Cease all this waste of time, boys. Put away your cruel weapons. Abandon this senseless strutting and marching. War is a relic of the dark ages, – of barbarism. The world has grown wise with years, and of the enlightened nations of the earth America stands foremost. Trust to the broad views of our statesmen and the good sense of the people. They will ever stand between us and the horrors of a civil war."

There was much applause among certain mothers and sisters sitting along among the spectators, but Mulholland and the boys did not join. It was significant of what the drill sergeant thought that the moment the handclapping subsided he commanded attention and then "Fix bayonet!" Within the week that followed, the broad views of many a Southern statesman were manifest in the shotted guns trained on Sumter. The good sense of the people, so far from "standing between us and the horrors of civil war," boiled over in a genuine Anglo-Saxon exuberance of battle fervor. The news that the stars and stripes were lowered in Charleston Harbor sent them to the peak of every staff throughout the North, and men, women, and children swarmed

upon the streets, decked with the badges of red, white, and blue. All Gotham had caught the war fever. The President's call for the services of the State militia to defend the capital until the volunteers could be enrolled sent the Sixth Massachusetts through the city the very next morning, the famous New York Seventh following by special train late the following day, and the Eighth Massachusetts marched down Fifth Avenue the same evening the Seventh went away. The best blood and brawn of the metropolis and of the Bay State were the first to respond. The Sixty-ninth, Seventy-first, and Seventy-ninth, Irish, American, and Scotch regiments of the great city, followed within the week, the jaunty Frenchmen of the Fifty-fifth, the Grays of the Eighth, the Blues of the Twelfth were promptly under arms. Every able-bodied man of the tribe of Prime was in uniform and away to the front before the month of May was ushered in, and Shorty, with breaking heart, had shut himself in his room and sobbed himself sick because he was forbidden to even think of going. He listened to the thrilling strains of the Seventh's splendid band until the last sound of their favorite "Skyrockets" was drowned in the hoarse cheers of the crowds that saw them off. He went to school as ordered and got "flunked" in every lesson. He sat on the mourners' bench in utter misery and despond all through the week that followed the going of the city troops, after having deliberately absented himself from every session during which a regiment happened to be marching away, and in all the two weeks that followed the coming of the news from Sumter only once had

there come into his life a moment of joy and comfort, and that was the day following the departure of the Seventy-first (red-jacketed drum corps and all, – all except poor Shorty), when, as the First Latin bustled out into the street at recess, and Shorty, last of all, came drearily down with his hands in his pockets, ordered out, in fact, by Mr. Beach, he was greeted on the sidewalk by a jeering laugh and Briggs's taunting, sneering words. "Hullo, drummer! So you thought you'd better stay home where there wasn't going to be any show of fighting, did you?" and Briggs might have known what would happen. Just as before, in a sudden whirl of fury, the youngster flew at him, landed both fists on the freckled "mug" before Briggs could either dodge or guard; bore him backward in the full force of the instant attack; the carroty head banged on the curb and knocked him stupid, and then the peace-makers really might have been less deliberate in pulling Shorty off. Briggs was a wreck when his raging assailant was dragged away, and Halsey, wild-eyed, came rushing out to stop the fray. "Prime, Prime!" he said, as he held him by the collar. "You've tried the rector's patience to the utmost this last week, and I fear this will end it all."

"I don't care if it does!" panted Shorty. "I'd rather be killed than kept here any longer. I hope he *will* expel me. Then perhaps they'll let me go where I belong!" And in a torrent of wrath the youngster's swelling heart burst over all bounds, and he was led sobbing away.

Still dazed, half blind, and bleeding, Briggs was lifted to his

feet. "It served you right, you hulking coward," said Joy, as he and Bertram led the battered object to the horse-trough in the stable. "You couldn't have insulted him more brutally."

"It's of no use," said the Doctor that evening, gravely, to a gray-haired grandsire, who was himself burning with longing to go to the front. "That boy can't study now. You see he was regularly enlisted as a drummer. He fully believed that when his regiment was called out that nothing could keep him back, and, boy-like, he has said so among his fellows, – probably bragged of it a little. He who had been so boastfully confident now has to stay and face the sneers of the school, while big boys of eighteen and nineteen like Dix and Julian have gone with the Seventh. It breaks his heart, my friend. There's no likelihood of fighting just now. The rebels won't be fools enough to attack Washington. Send him down there to his uncle. Let him have a taste of camp life. The city troops will come home as soon as the volunteers begin to arrive. In fact, if you don't there'll be incessant war right here at school."

"But there's his examination for college," said the head of the Primes, himself a don of Columbia.

"Well, didn't you assure Dix and Julian that Columbia would admit them without examination whenever they knocked at the doors? Didn't you at faculty meeting say that three seniors, who never could have got their diplomas in the world, should have their degrees without further question, despite the fact that they have dragged along at the foot of their class for the last two years,

all just because of the fact that they have gone to the front with their regiments?"

"But then he's so small for his years," was the next objection.

"All the better soldier! Those big, long giants break down. Those stocky little fellows are the stayers. Besides," says Pop, with a twinkle in his eyes, "size doesn't seem to count for much. You – ought to have seen Briggs."

"Was he well pounded?" asked the head of the house, with interest ill becoming his years and station. Perhaps he is thinking of old, old days at "Harrow on the Hill," when he, too, had been under the ban for more than one forbidden fight.

"Halsey says he looked as though he'd been mauled by a wildcat;" and to save his reputation the Doctor cannot repress a grim smile.

"The young rascal!" says the head of the house.

Shorty, meantime, remanded to his room to cool off and meditate on his sins, has done neither. The drum which was his joy and the jaunty uniform are gone. To his unspeakable grief, there had come an order for them from the adjutant the day before the regiment marched. Another boy had been accepted in his place, a bigger boy, who could hardly squeeze into either jacket or trousers, but, of course, did not return them. They were regimental property, and yet Shorty felt a sense of personal indignity that, even when he couldn't go, the adjutant should permit any other one to take his place. Of his misery when, clinging to his perch on a lamp-post above the cheering throngs,

he saw those twenty red-jacketed lads, led by the drum-major, coming proudly trudging down Broadway at the head of the splendid command, it would be impossible to tell; and now, twitted and insulted at school because he was bound to obey the decree of his grandparents, virtually suspended for resenting the insult, and, last of all, practically a prisoner in his room, poor Shorty's cup was full.

There came a step in the hallway without, a knock at the door, and the butler's boy, a stanch friend, ally, and fellow-fireman, stood and waited. There was no answer, and he stooped and hailed through the keyhole.

"Mr. Shorty, father sent me up with some dinner, – and there's a letter, looks like Mr. Snipe's writin'."

The door flew open and the letter was seized.

> "Dear Shorty," it read, – "I used to think nothing would ever make me a soldier any more than nothing could keep you from being one, but here I am, high private in the rear rank, and as big if not as broad as the rest of 'em. I swore I was eighteen and over. I have the height and looked strong. They wanted to fill the company up to a hundred, and there was no further question. Fancy my delight when we went into camp next your regiment and my surprise when I couldn't find you among the drum-boys. Billy Archer says you nearly went crazy when they came away without you. What's the matter? You *are* coming, aren't you? I saw your Uncle Hal in his captain's uniform yesterday, and stood up and saluted with the rest. I shan't tell you my regiment or

address this time, though Park couldn't take me away from Uncle Sam even if he did come. But when you get here hunt up Billy Archer, and he'll tell you where to find your old chum.

"Snipe."

That night, late, it occurred to some one that it might be well to go up and see Shorty and try to reason with him and comfort him, or "do something," as it was vaguely expressed. The room door was wide open, the dinner stood untasted on the tray, the tray was on the bed, and Shorty was gone.

CHAPTER XV

It was a starlit summer night following a day of moist, debilitating heat. It had rained at dawn, and then, as the clouds of heaven broke away and went sailing off towards the distant heights on the western horizon, the sun had poured hotly down on open fields and sodden red roads and long rows of wet, white tentage, veiling the landscape with miniature clouds from the teeming earth. All day long soldiers innumerable lolled about the camps and thronged the sentry-posts that lined the roadway, chaffing the passers-by or dickering with darky vendors of fruit, cakes, and pies, – amateur soldiers were these, as any veteran could tell at a glance, some in gayly trimmed regimentals, some in antiquated tail-coats, more in fancy jackets, few in serviceable garb, and nearly all with their hands in their pockets. A bored, jaded, time-killing lot they looked. The ground was too wet and muddy for drill. The first flush of patriotic fervor had worn away. They had rushed to the front at the earliest call, expectant of tremendous doings, and, except the street-fight of the Sixth Massachusetts in Baltimore and a few shots heard at the picket-posts, there had been no taste of battle. They were the three-months men, mainly State militia, hurried down to hold Washington against attack, while the volunteers, the "three-years men" of the war, were organizing and drilling behind them. Their three months had nearly expired, and most of them were eager

to go home so long as there was nothing going on at the front. Some, indeed, were ready to go anyhow, many with the promise of commissions in the volunteers, many with the resolve to re-enlist for the war, but all anxious to visit home and friends and families and get a more deliberate start than that initial impulse which sent them forward the latter part of April, burdened with knapsacks they knew not how to pack or wear and guns that they had never shot.

And here, along the main pike to Fairfax and Centreville, one on each side of the way, a New York and a New England regiment of militia had been swapping comments and criticisms most of the afternoon, badgering each other when there came no one else to bear the brunt of their shafts, and mischievously turning with one accord on passers-by whose lack of rank or escort suggested improbability of effective resentment.

But as the day wore on and the mud thickened in the middle of the road, and staff-officers, orderlies, and ambulances passing by began to veer out to right and left and encroach on the sentry-posts and the grinning groups that lay just back of them, "the boys" waxed more savage and sarcastic. They had occupied those camps full six weeks, and thought they owned the neighborhood. Back towards Washington, on every rising ground, the red embankments showed where earthworks had been thrown up to defend the front. Along the beautifully wooded slopes to the north and west the fair contours were scarred and defaced with freshly spaded parapets, and through gaping embrasures here

and there frowned the black muzzles of the Union guns. Over a rounded knoll half a mile to the northwest of the camp of the New-Yorkers the stars and stripes hung lazily from a white staff, and there were the quarters of a division commander, whose aides and orderlies had been oddly busy all day long, responding, according to rank, with a frown of annoyance or a grin of amusement, to the hail of comment or question from the loungers along the line. But at four in the afternoon a whole squadron of regular cavalry, with high-collared, yellow-trimmed jackets and jaunty forage-caps, came silently squashing by, taking the mud and the middle of the road as a matter of course, and the chaff and comment as of no consequence whatever. Hardly had their flapping silken guidons disappeared around a bend of the pike three hundred yards farther to the west than there came jogging into view from the rear a long column of horses, gun-carriages, and caissons, the cannoneers sitting motionless on the chests, the drivers carefully guiding their powerful teams. A wiry captain, followed by his bugler, came trotting forward, surveyed the mud that interposed along the defile between the two camps, nodded cheerily to the "Going out ahead, Cap?" sung out to him by the nearest New-Yorkers, and signalled with gauntleted hand to the leading chief of section to incline to the right and take the turf at the roadside; and so they, too, went clinking steadily by, twelve long teams of six horses each, hauling six bronze "Napoleon" guns, heavy fellows, and six loaded caissons. Behind them came their forge and battery wagon, a mule-drawn

baggage-wagon or two, and one of the famous light batteries of the regular army had passed through the thronging lines of the State militia, who emptied their tents to see the procession and to hurl question after question as to the meaning of it all. And this was only a beginning, for right behind it came the flaunting red silk guidon of another battery, differing from the first only in that the men wore red-trimmed jackets instead of dark-blue blouses, and that the cannoneers were skipping along the roadside or squashing through the mud, their captain holding sternly, even on a short march, to one of the rules of the light artillery, that the horses should have to pull as little weight as possible. And no sooner was he fairly by and his men well within the lane of the militia camps than the storm of fun and chaff rose to uproar, silenced only when the tail of the column had passed beyond. By this time, too, the officers were coming out to take a look. Then there rose a burst of martial music and a sound of cheering up the roadway, and, preceded by a band, there rode into sight some mounted officers, behind whom gleamed the sloping barrels of the arms of a battalion of infantry; and now New York and New England dropped cards, checkers, or chat, and the last laggards of both regiments come streaming to line the roadway and scan these bold invaders. Even the colonels mount their horses and ride in among their men, and as the music ceases and the regiment picks its way gingerly through the mud, the cry goes up from the eastward skirts of camp, "The Fire Zouaves!" and that cry is taken up and passed from lip to lip,

and order and discipline, even of these primitive war days, all are forgotten, and as the long column comes winding down the gentle slope in the afternoon sunshine, and bright bits of scarlet glow through the sombre tone of gray, and the old familiar fire shirts are recognized, as one man the New-Yorkers set up the welcoming fireman chorus of the streets of Gotham, and the welkin rings with shouts of "Hi, hi, hi!" mingled with rapturous cheers. Prompt comes the answer from a thousand lusty throats. Caps and hats are tossed in air, ay, and, as the column and the colors mingle, canteens, tossed from bystanders to marchers, are pressed to thirsty lips and passed from hand to hand. Officers and men alike, militia and volunteers, the soldiers of Manhattan are shouting greeting and rejoicing, and the next moment, despite all efforts of the senior officers to stop it, the Zouaves are forcibly seized and dragged from the marching ranks, hugged and hauled and slapped on arm and chest and leg and shoulder, wherever knapsack, blanket, and cartridge-box do not interpose below the neck, and men come running with more canteens, and Zouaves are lugged bodily away to the neighboring sutler's tent, and when, finally, the last unmolested files of the Fire Zouaves have gone, cap-waving and cheering, on in the trail of the batteries, the camp of their fellow-townsmen is filled with stragglers who are only recovered an hour later through the medium of strong patrols.

But meantime the batteries have "gone into park," unhitched and unharnessed back of the Virginia farm-house just beyond the bend. The Zouaves have trailed off into an open field

between them and the tents of the New-Yorkers. Staff-officers have conducted the commanders to the designated spots for their bivouac. Two other regiments of the new volunteers have followed, marching somewhat wearily past the now thoroughly roused camps of the militia, and as the sun sinks to the west and heavy knapsacks are unslung and arms stacked in the fields and sentry-posts established, everybody begins to realize among the tents of the earlier comers that a move to the front is in contemplation, just when they were counting on a homeward move to the rear.

And now as the tattoo drums are bracing up, a score of officers are gathered about the tents of the New York colonel, chatting over the probabilities. With them are two of the New England officers, one a grave, taciturn captain who has listened for half an hour without a word. By several officers the idea has been advanced that if a forward move is intended in response to the "on to Richmond" cry of the press, many of the men will demur. They were called into service in mid-April; it is now mid-July. Many of them are clerks who will lose their positions, married men who have made no provision for their families, staid citizens who from sense of duty sprang to the front at the first summons, so as to help hold the fort until the nation could organize its army of volunteers. Of regulars at the time there were less than ten thousand, scattered from Maine to Oregon, from Mackinaw to the Gulf of Mexico. Now the first levies of the volunteers were pouring in. Here already in front of Washington were regiments

from New York, New Jersey, Michigan, Ohio, even far away Wisconsin. Why should the government require of the State militia, rallied at the capital solely to defend, that it should march away southward to attack an enemy in position? Similar views were being expressed in other militia camps, said the speaker, and the colonel looked worried.

At last he turned to the stalwart, silent captain from the regiment over the way.

"What do your people say, Captain Stark?" he asks.

"Nothing," is the answer, as the tall, bearded man puffs meditatively at the brier-root pipe, his head resting on his hand, his elbow on his knee.

"Well, you were mustered in about the same date we were. Don't some of your boys talk of going home, and wanting to?"

"Not – audibly," says Stark.

"Well, they must be thinking a lot. They are fixed pretty much as ours are," hazards a field-officer.

"Possibly," says Stark, tapping out the ashes on the leg of the camp-stool. "But we made no stipulation as to the duty to be required of us. We tendered our services and expect to take our chances."

"Do you mean your boys would all go, no matter how far south they were ordered?" asks a young officer who has already had much to say about his own.

"My men will go wherever they're ordered," answers Stark, briefly. "I haven't any boys, except one, and he's so much of a

man I never found him out till we got here."

"That brown-eyed young fellow I've seen round your tent?" queries the colonel, deeming it wise to change the tenor of the talk.

"The very one."

"How'd you come to take him? He's too light built for heavy work. He's outgrown his strength and he don't look eighteen," says the major, glad enough to shift implied criticism to the rival regiment.

"Well, his employers said he was worth three men around the shop, and he was bound to go. The inspectors passed him, and there he was in my company."

"Looks all legs," hazards the colonel.

"And is all head," says Stark. "That's why he's always studying tactics and regulations round my tent instead of fooling away time with the company. There goes tattoo. Good-night, gentlemen," and the New-Englander rises and presently strides away.

Over within the lines of his own regiment Stark passes line after line of company streets where the men are skylarking or chatting, waiting for the "fall in" signal at the close of the sounding of tattoo. The drums and fifes are hammering noisily down along the color line as he reaches his own company and his first sergeant comes forward and, saluting, says, "Did young Lawton find you, sir?"

"No. What did he want?"

"Permission to go out of camp, sir. Said he knew an officer in

the Fire Zouaves. The lieutenant signed a pass, and he took it to the colonel, but he wished the captain should know."

"Very well. Form your company," says the captain.

The long wailing notes of the tattoo and the roll of the drums came abruptly to an end. The silent, shadowy double rank stood to attention, and, lantern in hand, the sergeant called his roll. Two names met with no response besides those of men on guard. Two men were reported absent. One of them came on the run as the company broke ranks.

"I was with Lawton, sir," said he, to his soldierly commander. "They let us into the Zouave camp all right, but didn't want to let us out. Lawton couldn't get away at all. As many as twenty of those red-shirted fellows nabbed him, and there he is a prisoner."

"In fun, I suppose?"

"Why, yes. They seem to know him well and be mighty glad to see him. I told my brother, who is in one of their companies, that Lawton must come home with me or he'd get into trouble, but the crowd just laughed."

"Very well. Go to your tent," said Stark, and went to his own. There on the little camp-desk was a note which he tore open and read. Briefly it said that Lawton had recognized some old friends among the Fire Zouaves, and had sought the captain to get permission to go and see them early in the evening. Even though the lieutenant took the responsibility and signed the pass, and the colonel too, he wanted his captain to know whither he had gone and that he would be back at tattoo.

But he wasn't back at tattoo, nor at taps. Not until eleven o'clock did Stark hear the sound of the young soldier's voice. Lawton was scratching at the tent-flap.

"What is it?" shouted the captain.

"It's Lawton, sir, – come to report return. I was held by those men, quite a lot of them, and simply couldn't make them understand about our discipline."

"Never mind," interposed Stark. "Go to bed now and get all the sleep you can. You may need it;" and the captain rolled over on his cot, anxious to try his own prescription.

But the late comer hesitated. For a moment he stood irresolute. Plainly there was something which he wanted to say to his commander. The officer of the day, lantern in hand, came along at the moment, his red sash crossed upon his broad chest. He raised the lantern and peered at the tall young soldier, whose coat and trousers looked as though they had been made for a shorter lad, and the face that was revealed seemed white and full of trouble.

"I was just speaking to my captain, sir," explained the young soldier, and the officer of the day went briskly one way, the soldier, dejectedly, another.

"Homesick, and wants to go and see his mother," said the officer of the day to himself. "Well, he needn't waste time pleading with Stark. Might as well talk to a stone."

CHAPTER XVI

"On to Richmond," said the Northern papers. "Sweep the flag of rebellion to the Gulf!" And obedient to popular clamor, and in defiance of common sense, the Government ordered its little army – a handful of regulars and marines, three dozen regiments of State militia, or of half-drilled, unseasoned volunteers – to advance and attack an army of equal size, made up of enthusiastic Southerners as undrilled as the Northern volunteers, but the flower of their manhood, defending their own soil, in their chosen position. The July sun beat hotly down on the long column, plodding south-westward through Fairfax. Many a poor fellow fell by the wayside, unable to keep up the pace and carry his heavy burden. Many a regiment broke ranks at sight of a farm well or at mention of a spring, and scores of stragglers stopped to pick blackberries by the way, defiant of the pleadings of their officers. Some Pennsylvania militiamen, at the last moment, refused to go farther than Centreville, and, with a New York militia battery, demanded their discharge on the plea that their time had expired. Some others succeeded in persuading the authorities in individual cases, and, to the scandal of those who tried and did not succeed, turned back to Washington. Those jaunty red jackets of the drum-boys in Shorty's old regiment looked worn and tawdry by this time, and the youngster whose wrists protruded far beyond the limit of the sleeves designed for

the "little un" had more than once wished the original occupant back in his old place and his successor out of it. But that drum corps had seen the last of their smallest member, and he of them, for many a day. Billy Archer, he who was to tell Shorty when he came where to find Snipe, had been sent home sick at the end of the first month, and only seven of the biggest and strongest remained to beat the old "six-eights" and "two-fours" when the regiment marched for Manassas. There had come a letter from Shorty to Billy Archer with an enclosure to Snipe, but Snipe and his regiment disappeared the night before, and Archer didn't know enough to have it forwarded. He thought they would meet again within a day or two, when, in point of fact, they did not meet at all. Shorty's old regiment was assigned to a brigade on the north side of the Potomac, and Snipe's new-comers were marched over the Long Bridge to the sacred soil of Virginia and brigaded with troops from three different States, and there, as the grave, big Captain Stark had said, the representative of the First Latin spent hours at his commander's tent, studying tactics and regulations and a little book called "Mahan's Outposts," when Stark wasn't using them, and twice it had happened that when the New England regiment was called upon to furnish the details for grand guard and picket, the tall, slender, brown-eyed boy in Company "C" was able to tell corporals and sergeants things about their duties they never had dreamed of. So, too, on battalion drill, Snipe, who used to hate such things, and even now bent under the weight of his long musket, had a more intelligent

idea of the purpose of each formation and movement than most of the file-closers, some lieutenants not excepted. Before they had been a month in Virginia Captain Stark had taken a strong fancy to the youngster, and was seriously thinking of decorating his arms with chevrons when the order for the advance and Stark's promotion came together. The lieutenant-colonel, finding that his health could not stand the climate and exposure, had resigned and gone home, and just the very morning after the incident described in the last chapter a batch of new commissions reached the New-Englanders. Stark became major, vice Proctor, promoted lieutenant-colonel, and turned his company over to its new captain, the former first lieutenant. Stark's first act, after taking the oath and signing his acceptance, was to send for Lawton. The regiment, with much glee and excitement, was packing knapsacks for the move, and the lad came, pale and troubled.

"Are you ill, Lawton?" demanded Major Stark.

"No, sir. I just – got some bad news."

"Folks ill?"

"No, sir; it's something a sergeant in the Fire Zouaves told me."

"You don't wish to go home, do you?"

"I do, sir; but I won't. I'm going with the company."

"Lawton," said the major, after a moment's scrutiny of the lad's solemn face, "you've never told me where you live and I've never asked. I believed in you, and that's enough. The colonel has

given me permission to choose my orderly from my old company. I have bought Colonel Poague's horses. The orderly will ride my spare horse and look after both. I want you, if you care to take the place."

"Yes, sir; I do."

"It leaves you out of the race for vacancies among the corporals."

"No matter, sir. That'll come when we reorganize for three years."

And so Snipe turned his long musket and heavy cartridge-box over to the first sergeant, dumped his knapsack and blanket into the field-officer's wagon, and straddled the major's spare horse. At any other time he might have felt the sense of exaltation that is inevitable to the boy or man who knows how to ride, but the young soldier's spirits were dashed and drooping. There was no time for brooding, however. The New-Englanders were on the march for Manassas. The dusty roads were thronged with troops, trudging buoyantly ahead, confident in the strength of their numbers and counting upon a conqueror's entrance into Richmond within ten days. Somewhere about noon, midway between Fairfax and Centreville, the "route march" was suddenly changed to silence and to cadence step. A staff-officer had accosted the colonel. The commands "halt" and "front" brought them into line facing the left; then the regiment was dressed back to the right until it stood aligned at the roadside, and Snipe found himself seated in saddle just to the left rear of his major, who

had reined up at the left of the line. Looking back along the dust-covered route, the lad could see that the regiments following them in column were also halting and "fronting," as soon as closed to proper distance, and then, with ordered arms, standing at ease and wondering what was coming. Presently, far back towards Fairfax, there uprose a cheer that was taken up along the line, and Lawton and his major, craning their necks, could see a body of horsemen coming through the slowly settling dust-clouds, following the lead of a soldierly-looking man on a big gray. A band struck up "Hail Columbia;" the regiment directly to their left began to take up the shout of acclaim, beginning away down at the tenth company, and the handsome horseman raised his forage-cap and spurred rapidly on. Again he raised it as he passed the colors, and the shout of greeting rolled into the right wing; and now the New England lads could see the yellow sash and the gold-embroidered belt, and knew a general officer was coming, and they, too, prepared to relieve their dusty lungs and overflowing spirits with a cheer. But all on a sudden the old colonel's shrill voice was heard, "Attentio-o-on battalion!" and talk and laughter ceased. "Shoulder-r-r *homps*!" and every musket jumped from the ground. "Prese-e-e-nt *homps*!" and nine hundred glistening barrels bounced out in front of nine hundred martial noses. The silken colors, State and National, drooped forward in homage to the coming dignitary. The major sat bolt upright and looking straight over his horse's ears, his sword lowered to the salute, and Snipe's hand went up to the

visor of his grimy cap, and the major-general smiled affably as he came trotting by, his horse shying sidewise with eyes and ears attent, and the grizzled colonel got a word of soldierly praise from the cap-tipping commander as he sped swiftly on, the staff trying hard to look dignified and keep their seats and distance at the same time, which several of them, being new to the business, found it hard to do. Behind them jogged a troop of regular cavalry, – the general's escort, – veterans who had spent years in saddle and showed it; and then with gratified pride that he and his regiment had given proper and soldierly recognition to the chief, "instead of yelling like a town-meeting," said the colonel, that veteran of the Mexican war days permitted his men once more to "order" and rest and await developments. They were not long in coming. Away down to the left, over the shouts and greetings of other commands, could be heard the characteristic "Hi! hi! hi!" of the Fire Zouaves, and presently in long column of pieces, cannoneers mounted, two business-like batteries of the regulars came clinking along, their powerful, mettlesome horses moving like so much perfect machinery at steady walk, their drivers responding to the chaff and cheers and comments of the militia and volunteers by occasional droll wink or thrust of tongue into the nearest cheek, their nimble gun detachments grinning exuberantly, but rarely uttering a word. And then at last, when even their baggage-wagons had trundled by, a band was heard along the thoroughfare behind them, and through the dust came stalking a superb drum-major, his baton

swinging in one hand, his huge bear-skin shako dangling from the other arm; and then the halted column coughed and sneezed as a strong regiment of infantry marched silently by in column of fours, determined, evidently, to impress upon the rest of the division their martial appearance and discipline. And then, in vivid contrast, right behind them, came the loose gray jackets and trousers, the red shirts and faces of the Fire Zouaves, grinning, chaffing, "hi, hiing" every foot of the way, and Major Stark turned and signalled to his orderly, and the lad rode up alongside.

"These are your old friends, I take it, Lawton. Sit here where you can see them."

The colors went sweeping by, flaunting in the sunshine despite the besmirching dust, and the seventh company came swinging along, and all of a sudden a wiry-looking sergeant file-closer glanced up and shouted, "Hullo, Snipey! How are *you*?" after the Bowery fashion of the day. "Hullo, Snipey!" came the greeting from half a dozen brawny throats. "Say, sonny, did you git square with that Metamora gang before you come away?" "Hullo, Snipe! Where's Shorty all dis time?" "Say, boy, what deestrick d'you run to now?" And before anybody could say a word to prevent it, half a dozen laughing, rollicking fellows sprang from the ranks and were crowding about Lawton as he sat blushing, half pleased, half ashamed, and shaking the lad by the hand. "Come over and see us when we git to camp," they cried in chorus, as, clamping their heavy sword-bayonets to their sides with the left hand, and trailing the brown barrels of their "special" rifles, they hurried

on to catch their company. It was all over in a minute, but the New-Englanders looked curiously at the major's orderly, and that quiet-mannered, taciturn officer finally turned, with something like a smile.

"One would hardly say those fellows could have brought you ill news, Lawton. They seem like old friends."

"I knew them well when at school in New York, sir."

"Who is Shorty?"

"He was my chum, sir. I thought he'd be here long ago. He was a drummer in the Seventy-first New York. His relatives wouldn't let him come, I suppose."

"Would yours, do you think, – if they knew?"

"No, sir. But my father's been dead a long time. My mother married again, and – I've been shifting for myself of late."

"I understand," said the major, inclining his head; "but does your mother know now?"

"I write to her every month, sir. She knows I'm with the army. They would get me out if they knew where to find me, but I should enlist in another regiment under another name, so what would be the use?"

And then once more came the command attention. Again the dusty march was resumed. Again the column alternately tramped and halted. Other generals and staff-officers rode to and fro, and were curiously inspected by the rank and file. Again the New-Englanders were led off into an open field some distance from the pike, and, late in the afternoon, stacked arms and unslung

knapsacks in a skirt of woods. Pots, kettles, and canteens were filled from the cisterns and wells of the neighboring farm-house, whose inmates looked on in silent disapproval, and just as the sun was sinking toward a distant line of heights some twenty miles away to the west, that a school-master in the color company said were called the Bull Run Mountains, somebody held up a warning hand and said "Listen!" There was a throb and pulsation in the heavy, heated, breathless air. A dull booming sound at irregular intervals came floating from the distant front. Men sprang to their feet from under the trees and listened eagerly, their faces paling a little; some lips uncontrollably twitching. It was the first note of the grand overture so soon to burst in the magnificence of its volume on their unaccustomed ears. Somewhere out toward that winding fringe of timber in the low ground five miles away to the south a field battery had sighted the enemy in sufficient force to warrant unlimbering and letting drive. The hostile armies were within striking distance.

For a moment the men from the land of the Puritan listened in awed silence. There had been a sharp encounter down that way two days before between the leading division and a concealed enemy, and rumor had it that many were killed and wounded, but the ambulances had been sent another way, and this brigade saw none of them. Over toward the roofs of Centreville a Western regiment sent up a cheer. Somewhere through the woods, down toward the right, the uproarious "Hi, hi" of the Zouaves, like the yelp of a pack of prairie wolves, rose swift from wing to wing,

and in the midst of the distant clamor the major's quiet voice fell on Snipe's listening ears, and the lad started, gulped down some strange feeling as of faintness and nausea that had stolen over him, and pulled himself together.

"The horses? Yes, sir, they'll be through feeding in ten minutes."

"Very well. I'm to go forward with four companies at dusk. You needn't, if you wish to write – or anything."

But when the major led that silent detachment into the winding bridle-path through the trees, following the lead of a young staff-officer who rode jauntily ahead, Snipe Lawton followed close at his commander's heels.

CHAPTER XVII

In more than a dozen regiments of raw soldiery camping in the fields about Centreville that hot July evening were lads no older than George Lawton. Among the seasoned regulars, few as they were, serving either as fifers or drummers in the infantry and marines, buglers in the batteries or trumpeters in the cavalry, were some who were even younger, – boys born in the army far out on the frontier, perhaps, or at the few garrisoned forts on the Atlantic coast, – sons of soldiers who knew no other life and who would have felt awkward in any dress but the uniform. But there were few who did not at first feel, as Snipe felt, a nervous tremor about the knees at sound of those swift banging guns. Veteran soldiers soon learn that cannon may boom all day and little damage be done, and that the real sound that tells of deadly battle is the sustained crackle and crash of musketry. All through the excited army the news had gone that there had been a "meeting" Thursday down at Blackburn's Ford to the left front, "a reconnoissance in force," a staff-officer described it to silent, serious Major Stark, "merely to develop the enemy." But that reconnoissance had developed something else, – the fact that some of the raw regiments, bursting with eagerness to march to Richmond ten days earlier, couldn't stand fire to-day, for the moment the screaming shells from the Confederate guns on the southern bank of Bull Run came crashing through the timber

on the north side, a new volunteer command, shoved in there to support a battery, scurried out of it in most undignified haste. Others, no older in service, but better led, stood their ground like men, despite their pale, anxious faces, and roundly jeered the "salt-workers." One thing was settled to the satisfaction of General McDowell, commanding the Union force, and that was that the routes to Manassas Junction, either by way of the Stone Bridge straight ahead on the broad pike, or more directly by the several fords farther down-stream, were vigilantly guarded, so that "the longest way round" would probably be the shortest way to that centre of rebel activity. There at Manassas the railways from the South and from the Shenandoah joined. There were the stores and supplies. There was the strategic point, and scattered along the wooded bluffs that hemmed the stream on the southern side, all along for nearly eight miles were stationed the Southern brigades. With Manassas at their backs five miles away, with Bull Run directly in their front, with only one broad road and four or five bridle-paths or wagon-tracks leading down to it, the Southern general felt well assured in his position and equally confident of his men.

On the other hand, the Union leader was schooled in strategy and grand tactics and quick to see his opportunities. Bull Run was as "crooked as a ram's horn," said the staff-officers sent forward to reconnoitre, but its general course below the Stone Bridge was southeastward, despite its deep bends and twists, while above the bridge, within four miles or so, from the neighborhood of

Sudley Springs, it had three sharp elbows, and flowed alternately east and south. Below the bridge the woods were thick on both banks; above it, toward Sudley Church, were many open fields and patches. All Friday and Saturday the Union troops were closing up on Centreville, bringing with them, worse luck, a gang of curious spectators in carriages and buggies, – people coming out the twenty-five miles from Washington as though to a picnic, – and all this motley crowd was scattered through the fields and orchards and shady groves and swarming through the farm enclosures about the once placid, sleepy little Virginia village this still Saturday afternoon that preceded the momentous Sunday of the first real battle of the civil war.

It was seven o'clock by the major's watch as the rear of his silent column swung clear of the bivouac where comrade soldiers stood and longed to cheer them off, but for the caution of their officers passed company by company down the line of stacked rifles. There had been a brief conference between the gray-haired, shrill-voiced colonel and his junior field-officer. The latter had received his orders direct from the commanding general. That accomplished soldier had keenly looked the major over, and, as the latter remounted and rode silently away, had turned to his adjutant-general with the comprehensive remark, "He'll do!" And now, as the twilight deepened and the stars began to twinkle in the eastern skies, through a winding wood-path the column moved, snake-like, swiftly, confidently, yet noiselessly, on. There was barely a farm-wagon track along the springy turf.

Each man carried his knapsack, blanket, and his forty rounds. Light marching order would have been welcome after the heat and heavy burdens of the past few days. Route step was the command when clear of the sentry lines, but silence the caution. Quarter of a mile out, and in a little grove, the leaders came upon a company of infantry clustered about their stacked rifles. The wood road forked here, one branch going straight on north, the other bearing farther to the west. A word from the young lieutenant of regulars, riding side by side with Major Stark, and the commander of the picket reserves stood back, and, without a moment's pause, the battalion swung steadily on, taking the right-hand path. A few hundred yards and there was momentary check. A subaltern officer and some twenty or thirty soldiers stood under arms at a bend in the path, and now the light was so dim that the stars directly overhead were beginning to peep down at the drowsing world beneath. The two lieutenants, the professional of the staff, the volunteer of the infantry, held brief parley, while Major Stark looked back toward his coming battalion, signalled to the foremost captain marching sturdily by the side of his first sergeant, and that officer stepped out a yard or two, faced back toward the long column, and, first waving his sword aloft to attract attention, took it in both hands, the left near the point, held it horizontally over his head an instant, and then suddenly lowered it; whereat, without a sound, all who saw as quickly halted short, softly placing the shod butts of the rifles on the ground, and all others almost instantly followed the example.

It was part of a silent drill the New-Englanders had been taught for just such emergencies.

With beating heart Snipe listened to the low-toned colloquy. The lieutenant of the picket-guard, a trifle excitedly, was dictating some report just received from the outposts.

"No, I didn't see 'em myself," he replied, in answer to question, "but Sergeant Holman says he couldn't be mistaken. The outermost sentries, three of them, all say the same. There were at least twenty-five horsemen. They forded the Run right down here to the southwest of us, and rode northward so as to cross this slanting path, if they kept on in the same direction, just about a mile from here. Holman's with the outposts now, sir."

The staff-officer turned to Major Stark. "They may have been sent to destroy the very bridge we are ordered to guard," said he, in low tone. "It isn't two miles ahead."

"Then the sooner we get there the better," was the prompt answer, and, glancing over his shoulder, the major signalled again, his right hand high in air at first, then pointing to the front, but in the gathering darkness the gesture was not fully understood. "Ride back, Lawton, and tell Captain Flint to follow with the battalion," and the two mounted officers rode rapidly ahead, and in a moment were lost to sight among the shadowy trees.

It was Snipe's first mission as an orderly, and well he remembered it. Whirling his horse about, he trotted back to where the head of the column stood silently with ordered arms,

the men leaning on their muskets. "Major Stark says to follow with the battalion, sir," he promptly announced to the alert captain, using as nearly as possible, as he had read was the duty of staff-officers and messengers, the exact words of the commander; and then, seeing the column instantly obeying, he again turned, rode sharply past the silent picket-post, and, straining his eyes for a sight of his major, while threading the dim vista of the wood path, he soon overtook the two again, halted once more and in earnest converse with a bearded, sturdy-looking sergeant, who, with a little squad of dark-uniformed infantry, formed the outpost.

"The sentinels are not a hundred yards beyond us," he heard him say. "All three saw them. The ground slopes gradually to the south and west. It's quite open. They crossed the Run down yonder, and rode straight away northward," and the sergeant pointed to a distant ridge. "None of 'em came within range. They didn't seem to think anybody would be out here at all."

The staff-officer sat listening quietly and attentively until the sergeant finished. Then he turned to the major. "I chose this ground myself," he said. "The sentries are hidden by bushes from the front, and have a clear view for nearly a mile, by day at least, and looking back you could see the roofs of Centreville on the high ground to the east. I reconnoitred all through here yesterday and came across that bridge about three o'clock. There's a deep wide ditch, marshy in places, wet and miry everywhere for a mile either way, and the banks are steep. Foot troops and cavalry

can cross all right, but we've got to keep that bridge for the guns, especially that big thirty-pound Parrott General Hunter's to bring along. I wish we'd been sent out earlier, though of course we might have been seen crossing the open fields. Look!" and Lieutenant Upton led a few paces to the edge of the scattered trees, and there the whole westward firmament was visible, even down to the black lines of the Bull Run Mountains, just setting its own "sentinel stars" for the long night-watch.

"I wish so, too," said the major. "Lawton, ride back and guide the column. It may lose the way."

Again the lad turned and trotted away, but before he had gone a hundred yards he could see the faint gleam of steel come dancing through the glade, and almost instantly there followed the stern, sharp, low-voiced challenge. "It's Lawton," he answered quickly. "The major feared you might lose the way, and told me to guide you."

The men were panting a little now, for Flint was forcing the pace. Something told them there was work ahead. "Know what's up, orderly?" muttered the captain.

"No, sir. The pickets say some rebel cavalry crossed the front just before dark, somewhere about two dozen of 'em." And as Snipe now rode along, with over three hundred stalwart fellows trudging at his back, despite all the excitement of the moment his thoughts went back to the school-days and the First Latin, and he wondered what the fellows would think to see him now, guiding a whole battalion to its post of duty, perhaps to its place in battle.

He wondered with clinching teeth and quickening breath who could have made those fellows he had so sworn by believe that he, Snipe Lawton, was a common thief. Was that the reason Shorty never wrote again? Was that why no one now seemed to care where he was or what had become of him? The boy's wounded heart beat vehemently in protest and in indignation, and there in the darkness of that 'cross country wood path his lips murmured a prayer for guidance and protection, that he might live to give the lie to that slander, – might so live as to win honor and credit for the name his enemies had besmirched. Two nights before, following his major through a dark lane when visiting sentries, the boy's heart had bounded uncontrollably, and his knees had trembled so hard that his horse, too, seemed to shake, all because a nervous raw recruit had fancied he saw a rebel stealing on him through the blackness of the night, and after vainly challenging a wandering mule, had roused the whole division and nearly killed his major with a single wildly aimed shot. To-night as Snipe thought of the story he had wrung from the unwilling lips of Sergeant Keating, of the Fire Zouaves, one of 40's old "bunkers," the sense of pride and indignation bore down all thought of fear, and Snipe Lawton, who the year before hated drill and wouldn't be a soldier for anything, even now in the dark, where Napoleon himself had said most men were cowards, was praying that the rebels might be there at the bridge, and that he might be foremost in the dash upon them.

On past the peering, shadowy knots of soldiers of Sergeant

Holman's party he led them, the hard-breathing, swift-striding Yankees swinging along behind. Out over the starlit open to where, well across the field, he could dimly descry the forms of two horsemen. "Well done, orderly," muttered the regular. "You've lost not a second. Now, major, we'll push ahead. Better caution them not to make a sound."

"They won't," said Stark, in answer, and resumed the northward way. Five minutes and they were skirting an old snake-fence, well out beyond the hail of the last sentry or vedette of the Union lines. Any moment now they might meet scouting parties of the rebel horse, and here Lieutenant Upton warned the major to keep with his command, while he himself, bending low on his horse's neck, pushed out ahead. Ten minutes more they went without halt of any kind, but now Stark noted how hard the men were breathing, and ordered Flint to take it easy. "Soldiers need their wind if it comes to fighting," said he. Fifteen minutes, and there was a long fringe of timber ahead, and farther off to the north a light was shining, like a candle, in a farm-house window, but still the dim cart-track led on, and the young staff-officer kept out ahead. Little by little they drew closer to the trees, and eyes and ears were strained for sight or sound. The major, too, was bending low by this time, and eagerly, anxiously, scanning the shadowy line ahead. Presently he drew rein and muttered a call to Snipe, and the lad spurred up alongside. Both horses were pricking up their ears. "This horse acts as though there were others ahead there," whispered Stark. "It may be only the

lieutenant's. Here he comes now!"

It was Lieutenant Upton, riding cautiously back. "Major," he muttered, "that bridge is just across the next field, and I could hear voices and the sound of horses' hoofs on the planks. If it's that patrol, we've got 'em. We can't deploy yet. We must creep through these woods and deploy beyond them. I know the ground."

The column had not even halted, for the moment the staff-officer joined the leader he reined about and rode on, talking eagerly in low tone as he rode, then once more pushed cautiously ahead, the hoof-beats hardly audible on the springy turf, and was soon lost among the trees. Five minutes more and the major and his faithful orderly emerged again under the open starlight, and there they found their alert guide. "Let them halt in the timber a moment," whispered Upton. "Look at that light." And while the head of column abruptly ordered arms, and each succeeding set of fours almost bumped up against that which preceded it before it could do likewise, the aide-de-camp pointed southward.

Upon some dark height full three miles away toward the Junction, and evidently some distance beyond the stream, a bright light, as of a lantern with brilliant reflector at its back, was shining steadily. "There was another a mile to the north of us as we crossed the last open common," said Stark. "Why, look! There it is again, yet it was dark just now."

And then, suddenly as that northern light appeared, it was extinguished or hidden. Then, before any one could speak, again

it flamed. Again it disappeared, and the explanation occurred to all three at the same instant. "Signalling, of course," muttered Upton. "Now get two companies into line, facing west; then we'll leave our horses with them and creep out toward the bridge."

Another moment, and while Flint was noiselessly leading the foremost two into line, the major and the staff-officer had dismounted, handed their reins to silent Snipe, and out they went, crouching low, into the westward darkness, while every man breathed hard and listened. Then the southern light began to flash and disappear alternately. "We are far out to the west of Centreville," murmured Flint. "Those windows are hidden from that point. They doubtless think no one can see them here."

Five minutes, and still no sound came from their venturesome scouts. They had had time to go all the way across if need be. "What d'you s'pose they signal for?" whispered a young soldier in the leading set, whereupon the sergeant turned and muttered, "Hush!" and men began to realize that it was a time to listen – not to talk.

All of a sudden, low, clear, and distinct, a whistle was sounded not four hundred yards away. The first thought to strike every man was, the major! but the major had gone straight to the west; this sound came from across the wide field well to the northward of the supposed position of the bridge. Before there was time to comment the answer was given straight out ahead, soft, yet just as distinct. Then all three horses left with Snipe pricked up their ears and whirled toward the northwest, for from that quarter

came the sound of hoof-beats, the low thud and rumble of horses moving at lively lope. Swift, invisible, they swooped down from the northward across the front. Then came sudden check, then silence, then the next minute the hollow sound of iron-shod hoofs upon resounding boards. First one horse, at a walk, then two, three, half a dozen together, and then silence again.

Two minutes later, back from the front, running, came the major. "Forward, just as you are!" he muttered to Flint. "The bridge is safe," and, swinging into saddle and bidding Snipe come on with the lieutenant's horse, he sped swiftly away across the field. At its western limit, at the edge of a deep, black trench that stretched away southward toward Bull Run, they found the staff-officer, standing at the old wooden bridge.

"They've left it intact," murmured Upton, gleefully, "and they've been scouting around our right flank for indication of any attack from this direction, and have missed us entirely. Now let 'em come back and get it if they can!"

In ten minutes three of Stark's strong companies had stacked arms among the timber to the west of the clumsy yet precious structure. The fourth was chosen for guard and picket duty, and, under the guidance of the energetic young staff-officer, every approach was covered. Wary sentries were stationed five hundred yards away, up and down the unsightly trough and well out toward the winding run, with supports and small reserves intervening between them and the main body. Even the open field to the east was guarded, for Major Stark meant that no enemy should come

upon him unawares. Finally, deep in the shelter of the grove, they struck a light and consulted their watches. "Just half-past nine," said Upton, "and at midnight the move begins. Now I'll ride back and report. What splendid luck thus far!"

"You have no orderly, lieutenant," said Major Stark. "Let Lawton ride back with you until you reach our lines. I'd be better satisfied."

"There is no need, thank you, major. There is no likelihood of my meeting rebel patrols between this and our pickets. Those fellows are back across Bull Run by this time and riding away to tell Beauregard the Yanks have no idea of reaching round him this way."

Snipe, listening in silence, hoped, despite the brave resolution of the earlier evening, that nothing would happen to change the lieutenant's mind. It wasn't the riding back with him that he dreaded to think of, it was the solitary trot to rejoin the major after seeing Upton safely to the lines. There on the distant heights the lights around Centreville were twinkling, and, even while the officers were consulting a moment before, the lad noted that while they could no longer see the gleam on the high ground south of the Run, the men were again whispering together about that signal to the north of them.

Then the staff-officer held out his hand. "Good-night, Major Stark. I shall take pleasure in telling the general how prompt and soldierly your command has been. After all the go-as-you-please business I have had to note on the march it is good to

see a regiment behave like regulars. Good-night to you, too, my lad. If I ever get a regiment I'd like to have a hundred young fellows of your calibre," said he, and to Snipe's surprise and delight Lieutenant Upton was grasping his hand too.

But just as the young officer turned away a thought occurred to him. "The general will be anxiously awaiting my report, and I must hurry. If it weren't for that I'd find out what's going on where that light is up yonder. Good-night again. Look for us along about two o'clock."

The muffled sound of the hoof-beats died away across the open field. The men close at hand unrolled their blankets and stretched themselves upon the turf. No fires were allowed, but many a pipe was lighted well within the shelter of the trees, and, too excited to sleep, they lay chatting in low tones. Several of the officers grouping about had heard the young regular's closing words. "That light can't be more'n a mile off," said Captain Flint. "I would like to know what's going on there myself."

The major had dismounted, and by the gleam of a little folding lantern was jotting down some memoranda at the moment in the note-book he always carried. Method was second nature to Stark. Not until he had finished his writing did he reply. Then, even while glancing over his lines, he quietly said, —

"You shall. Bring twenty men and come along."

Quarter of an hour later, with the senior captain left in command at the bridge, Major Stark, Lawton as ever riding close behind him, was leading slowly and cautiously out of the shadows

and across an open field that sloped gradually toward a low ridge against the northern sky. Behind them, treading softly, came Flint, a lieutenant, and twenty men. The latter had fixed bayonets and discarded anything about their equipment that would rattle. The north star gleamed right over what seemed to be a little grove along the ridge, and on the edge of the dark patch stood, against the sky, regular and square in outline, an object like a house. Not five minutes back a light was shining in the midst of it, but now that was gone. Slowly, cautiously, the little party continued its silent move, rising gradually with every rod, and at last the leader came to another snake-fence, and three or four stout fellows sprang forward and threw down a panel or two. While this was being done the major looked back, and there, shining over the low ground from the distant heights beyond Bull Run, that clear, steady light was gleaming again, powerful, almost, as the head-light of a locomotive. Away to the southeast, grouped about Centreville, the camp-fires of the Union troops were blazing, and from along this ridge their position was plainly visible. No wonder Virginia sympathizers chose the spot from which to signal! Now what message might they not be sending two hours later when the army began to move? It was after ten o'clock, and that house had been dark for over ten minutes, yet Stark felt confident their stealthy approach was unsuspected. Then comes the stifled cry, "Ha! there it is again! – the light in the upper window, well under the eaves!" Snipe's heart bounds almost into his throat in his excitement, for now it is barely

long pistol-shot away, and he is the proud possessor of a new Colt's revolver, much handier, he thinks, than the long, cumbrous musket. And now it's out again; and now, five seconds later, shines anew, and so it goes, – darkness alternating with light three times, then all is black and unbroken. A sergeant is somewhere ahead looking for the next fence. The little party scrambles on up the steeper slope. If only there are no dogs about! Hear them baying over there toward Centreville? and over there yonder to the west toward Sudley Church? Surely if there are dogs here they would be out and baying their reply. Bigger and blacker looms the house ahead, and still no challenge from dog or man. Can it be that the farm folk have deserted it, and that only lurking scouts or spies are here?

And now they come upon a dilapidated picket-fence; beyond it a row of bushes. The sergeant in advance turns back and tells the major there's a wide open gateway at the east, and into this he cautiously rides, Snipe still following. But, oh, how the boy heart is thumping! The roadway is soft Virginia earth, and the hoofs strike no pebbles. Presently the major dismounts, and, handing his reins up to Snipe, bids him wait there in a little open space. Then, noiselessly, he and Flint lead on with the men, and Snipe feels, rather than sees, that they are surrounding the house and stationing soldiers at every door and under every window. All these now are dark save two on the lower floor in front. There are thick shades within, but they show a dull light, as from a table-lamp. Not a sound beyond a creaking of a shoe or plank is heard.

The men move like kittens, but it is their first experience of the kind, and most of them are excited, even nervous. As for Snipe, he rages to see how he is trembling.

And then all of a sudden the major's horse, rejoicing that the weight is gone, gives himself a thorough shake, rattling housing and stirrups and accompanying the shake with a loud b'r-r-r-r of satisfaction. All too late Snipe springs from saddle and seizes both horses by the nostrils. Almost instantly booted heels are heard within, and manly, ringing voices. Somebody comes striding to the door and throws it open. A tall, slender, shapely fellow is outlined against the dim light within, and a voice hails cordially, —

"Hullo! What brings you back? Anything the matter over yawnduh?" And that "yawnduh" betrays the Virginian.

"Nothing," is the answer, in Stark's quiet tone. "But your house is surrounded by the troops of the United States and I'll trouble you to come out."

For answer, out goes the light in the room, slam goes the door, and then there is dead silence just about five seconds. Then the order, "Break it in!"

Up the low steps spring a sergeant and two men. Crash goes the door before their heavy rifle-butts, and then, bayonets advanced, in they go. The major, following coolly, strikes a light, and holds aloft his little lantern. The candles on the table are still smoking, and are quickly again ablaze. "Come in here, three or four more of you," orders Stark, while Flint comes

hurrying round to the front. There is a rush of feet on the upper floor, a back window is hurled open. "Head 'em off there!" shouts Flint, as again he runs back. There is a sound of sudden scuffle, and some stern order within. Then Snipe can stand it no longer and leads his excited horses closer to the house. He hears the rifle-butts go banging at the doors up-stairs and more men hurrying into the hall. He hears Flint repeat the cry, "Watch every window!" And now he shifts the bight of both reins into the left hand and whips out his revolver, still towing his suspicious and reluctant steeds, and just as he nears the front, almost at his feet, the doors of a cellarway, hitherto unseen and unsuspected, fly open. Two dark figures burst forth. He feels again, rather than sees, that a murderous blow is aimed at his head, and even as he ducks out of the way a revolver flashes and barks just at his ear, and, now instinctively, he pulls trigger. At the flash and bang of the pistols the startled horses both jerk back, pulling him with them. One rein is torn from his grasp, but the captor gains nothing, for before he can reach pommel or stirrup, two long-legged Yankees are on him, and he is dragged back into the light. A third stumbles over a prostrate form writhing in the road, as Snipe quickly finds his feet; and, as Major Stark comes striding out and brings his lantern to bear upon the scene, the lad, pale, breathing hard, but with flashing eyes and that revolver grasped in his clinching hand, is standing over his stricken prisoner, – first capture of the advancing arms of the Union, – a young Confederate officer, whose brand-new uniform is richly laced

with gold, but whose face is now white as death as he swoons away.

CHAPTER XVIII

War was a new, strange, and terrible thing to George Lawton. For a few minutes after his thrilling adventure, while the soldiers were binding with bed-cords the wrists of the three unscathed captives, and Stark and Flint were ministering to the wounded officer, Snipe leaned against a tree, the same feeling of nausea and faintness overcoming him now as it did one day when he saw the brutal beating of an Irish wagoner on Fourth Avenue. Others of the New England men were searching the premises from garret to cellar, finding no human beings but two trembling old negroes, who had never been allowed to regard themselves as possessed of any rights a white man was bound to respect. The prisoners, sullen, scowling, and very much amazed that such a thing could happen on the sacred soil of Virginia, refused to answer questions as to the owners of the place. The young officer was only just recovering from the swoon that followed upon the shock of his wound, but the darkies humbly told all they knew. They were household servants, – slaves, of course. The farm was owned by a wealthy resident of Alexandria. The farmer and his family had gone. The young officer was "Marse Grayson," a nephew of the owner. The other gentlemen belonged to his troop in the cavalry, and there were four more of them somewhere over toward Centreville. They had been round there for several days, and signalling to their comrades over where "Marse Henry"

and "Marse Robinson" lived, on the heights beyond Bull Run. Up in the attic the New-Englanders found candles, a polished tin reflector, and a flat board screen that just fitted in the window. A fine telescope and smaller field-glass were also there. A bountiful spread was on the table in the dining-room. The larder and cellar were well stocked, and the men from the land of steady habits did not disdain to "sample" the fluid refreshment found in the cool depths below the house or the delicacies in the pantry. Out in a wooden shed were four fine horses, with new saddles and bridles. Opulence was the rule in the Confederacy the first few months of the war; and now the sergeant and half a dozen men moved out to the front gate to look for those four troopers who were supposed to interpose between their feasting comrades and the possibility of surprise from the direction of the Yankees, and who, so early in the war, had not dreamed of foemen coming from the south. Possibly they had heard the sound of shots at the farm-house and would come galloping back to ascertain the cause. The young officer was reviving. The flow of blood was stanched. He was laid upon a mattress and, with six men to carry him, was started down the slope toward the main body at the bridge. Stark then ordered the party to bring the horses, captives, arms, – everything that could be considered legitimate spoil of war, – and follow at once. The signal outfit was smashed, and Flint, a veteran of the old Covenanter type, was for burning the house, which Stark forbade, if for no other reason than that it would instantly bring patrols of Southern cavalry out to inquire

the cause. Indeed, it was a problem with him what to do about the signals. Through the powerful glass he was able to see that the light still burned on the distant heights to the south, and at any moment it might brightly blaze again, asking some question and demanding reply. "Better let them waste time in endeavors to extract an answer than lose none in galloping over to investigate a fire," he reasoned, and then turned to where his young orderly stood, again silently holding the reins of the horses.

"We will push ahead," he said, as he mounted. A few minutes of search and they found the gap in the rail-fence, and overtook the party carrying the wounded Confederate. His youth and gentle breeding had both impressed the taciturn major, and now the fortitude which enabled him without a moan to bear the pain of this swaying motion roused the major's admiration. "Gently, men. There's no hurry. We'll have a surgeon for you in a short time, lieutenant," he said, encouragingly, then spurred on to rejoin his battalion at the bridge. Sharp and clear came the "Halt! Who goes there?" of the northernmost sentry, and Stark reined back instantly as he answered, "Friends, – Major Stark and orderly." "Dismount, both," was the order, as from a dew-dripping clump of blackberry-bushes the rifle-barrel glinted in the starlight. A dark form came running up from the rear, bayonet advanced, and peered searchingly into the major's face. They had no countersign, but those lads had learned their duty from a veteran colonel who had practised it before the Seminoles, the Sioux, and Mexicans, too, and Stark could not forbear a

word of praise to both sentry and corporal as he bade the latter summon the officer of the guard. In ten minutes the entire detachment, with its prisoners, was safe within the wakeful lines, and the whole battalion roused up as one man to welcome and rejoice. A year later the incident would have been too trivial to stir a man from sleep. Now it was of tremendous importance. Eagerly Flint's men were detailing their share in the exploit, some of them, exhilarated both by the event and the potent apple-jack, telling rather more than their share. Gently the bearers laid the young officer under the trees. Stark motioned back the inquisitive circle that promptly formed, gave his patient a long pull at a flask and another of cool spring water from a canteen, and then gently asked him which he would prefer, – to be carried into Centreville or wait there until a surgeon could come out.

"I do not care," said the wounded boy, with a sigh. "Can't you suppress this somehow?"

"The bleeding?" asked Stark, anxiously. "Why, I thought I had."

"No, – the whole business. I don't want mother to know I'm hurt."

Stark scratched a match and looked at his watch. Just twenty-five minutes past eleven. In half an hour, as Upton said, the army would be astir and moving. There would be many another name added to the list before the setting of another sun. Already, North and South, the papers were ablaze with tidings of that misguided "reconnoissance in force" toward Blackburn's Ford,

which had felled some sixty men on each side, sent Tyler's men back to Centreville disgusted, and inspired those of Longstreet and Ewell with a craze of undeserved triumph. By two o'clock in the morning the column of Hunter and Heintzelman would be crossing that guarded bridge on the way to the upper ford, but they would not wish to be burdened with wounded and prisoners when going into action. The battalion would undoubtedly be ordered to join its own regiment as it came tramping along. The general might extract from these prisoners information which would be of value. Stark's mind was made up quickly. A lieutenant and half a dozen men were selected as guards, another six to carry the mattress and wounded prisoner. Lieutenant Payne was given his choice of the captured horses while Stark wrote brief report of the affair. In ten minutes everybody was ready. Still bound with bed-cords, the three silent rebs were bidden to fall in, and then for the first time did Stark open his lips to his orderly since the brief words at the farm. In the hearing of half his little command, the major turned to where the latter stood, silent and a trifle awed and wearied.

"Lawton," said he, "I send you back to the general with this party for two reasons: first, because you know the way and can guide them; second, because you made to-night the most important capture of the campaign thus far, and I mean that you shall have full credit."

For a minute there wasn't a sound. Snipe felt dizzy with the sense of instant elation, following as it did the languor and

depression of the moment before. Then some sympathetic soul among the listeners began a soft clapping of the hands. The example was contagious. Before a repressing word could be heard, the New-Englanders gave vent to their feelings in a volley of hearty, if suppressed applause. The major had to order silence and caution. Then handing a folded paper to his orderly, with a grim smile and a friendly pat on the shoulder, bade him mount and be off, and like a boy in some wild dream, incredulous, unrealizing, yet with a heart throbbing with thankfulness, George Lawton remounted and rode out into the starlight, over the echoing bridge, and took the front of the little detachment, his cheeks, so pale awhile ago, burning now with pride and hope, his thoughts drifting back to mother and the boys. What wouldn't Shorty give to be in his place this night?

An hour later a knot of newspaper correspondents, orderlies, stragglers, and servants clustered about the party as it rested in the starlight in front of an old Virginia homestead. On a bed in the rear room the surgeons had laid the wounded Confederate. In the main room, with two or three of his staff and half a dozen correspondents pencil-driving about him, sat the commanding general. Before him, silent and respectful, stood brown-eyed, long-legged Snipe. The camp lanterns burned brightly on mantel and table. The sound of many voices, low-toned but impatient, came from without. Something had blocked the road in front, and the march of the rear divisions was stayed. The general was vexed, as all could see, – impatient and indignant. But as he

read the pencilled lines, handed him by the adjutant-general, something like pleasure shone on his florid, soldierly face.

"You chose the right man, Burnside," he suddenly exclaimed, as he turned to a stalwart, heavily whiskered officer who entered at the moment, clad in a pleated flannel blouse, with heavy riding-boots and breeches. "Look at this," he added, handing up the brief despatch. "I wish I could inject as much sense into some – generals." Then he turned on Snipe, his stern face relaxing:

"You have done admirably, my lad. How old are you?"

For a moment the light went out of Lawton's eyes, giving way to trouble and embarrassment. He twisted his forage-cap in his trembling fingers. At last, huskily, but with reviving hope, he answered.

"I told them I was eighteen. To-night I tried to prove I was as good as my word."

A smile went round the room. The general beamed.

"You answer well, sir, and you do well. Major Stark probably can't spare you or you should join my head-quarters' party and wear the chevrons of a sergeant. Look after this young gentleman, captain, and see that he has coffee and supper before he starts back," he said to one of his aides, who had been silently gazing at the orderly's face. "Your regiment's time expires next week. Perhaps you would like to come to me then. If so, there'll be a place for you, and meanwhile the home people will be proud when they read in Monday's papers how their boy captured the first rebel officer at Bull Run."

And with these words ringing in his ears, the lad was marched away to a shed outside where aides and officers of every rank were snatching a hurried bite from a camp-table, and here he was regaled with sandwiches and coffee, and plied with questions by men whose pencils sped like mad over their pads of paper, and they noted instantly his embarrassment when they asked him about home and parents.

"I have no home," he said, simply. "My father has been dead some years. My mother remarried. I've been making my own way, and that's all there is to it." But more they would have. His name, of course, was known. "George Lawton, private, Company 'C,' First New England, orderly to Major Stark," and at last the lad said his mother lived in Rhinebeck, her name was Park, and then he broke away in search of the young captain to whose care the general had committed him. There was something oddly familiar about that officer's face as he greeted Snipe again.

"Come in here," said he, leading the way within the hall, and thence to a little bedroom. Then he turned and faced the wondering lad. "Haven't I seen you at the Primes' in Fourteenth Street," said he, "and aren't you Regy Prime's – Shorty's – chum whom they called Snipe?"

There was no answer for a moment, but out came both the young captain's hands in cordial clasp. "Why, of course you are! I was sure I had seen your face before. I'm one of Pop's old boys myself, and there are more of them round here. Shorty's

uncle isn't a mile away at this minute. Lots more of the tribe are somewhere with the army. Why, your teacher, Beach, is with General Wilcox. He was a classmate of mine, and we're all proud of you, Snipe. Now you've got to get back to your major to-night, and I suppose all of us will be fighting to-morrow. However, don't you forget what the general said. Come to him when your regiment goes home next week it you want to stay in service, and go on to Richmond with us."

Alas for soldier hope and projects! Long before the midnight hour came again all the general's army, some of it in mad panic, was rolling back on Washington. The Monday morning papers, indeed, gave thrilling account of the heroism of Private George Lawton in capturing at the risk of his life a daring young rebel officer of the famous Black Horse Cavalry. Then there were details of Lawton's prospective promotion, and of the general's complimentary remarks, and Monday morning's papers teemed, too, with tremendous tales of battle, and all Gotham cheered itself hoarse over the vivid reports of the annihilation of the rebel cavalry by the terrific fighters of the Fire Zouaves. But by noon came other tidings and a turn in the tide, – by afternoon details of fell disaster. "The Fire Zouaves annihilated by the cavalry!" was the way it read now. "Our splendid batteries swallowed up and gone." "Our army cut to pieces." Many generals, colonels, and captains killed. Hosts of gallant soldiers slain, and at last, when full reports – authentic reports – were published a long week later, among the wounded and missing were the names of

Major James Stark and Corporal George Lawton, of the First New England, and Sergeant Keating, of the famous Fire Zouaves.

CHAPTER XIX

Back again through the starlit night, through dew-dripping aisles of shrubbery, through dark, leafy groves, with the glint of the picket's rifle ever before his eyes, the cautious yet excited challenge falling constantly upon his alert ear, time and again had Snipe to dismount and account for himself before he reached the outposts along the pathway to the north, and finally, after finding its junction with the wood road along which Upton had led the battalion at dusk, the lad came upon officers and sentries who were obdurate. Oh, yes; they believed him to be the young feller that twice had gone through the lines, once with the major and Lieutenant Upton and once with prisoners; but now he was alone, and how'd they know he wasn't going with information to the enemy, or going to be a deserter? Snipe argued and pleaded. Major Stark was waiting for him away out toward Sudley Ford. General McDowell himself and General Burnside told him he might rejoin his command. Then why didn't they give him a pass through the lines? was the question. The countersign didn't amount to shucks out along the pickets, said they. Anybody could get the countersign, – which wasn't altogether an exaggeration, – and, well, he might be all right, and then again he might be all wrong. It was now nearly two o'clock, the hour Upton said they might expect the head of column at the farm bridge, and Snipe, whose heart was full of glory and elation an hour before, found

himself compelled either to wait there or retrace his weary way past all those inner posts again to the now crowded turnpike.

He chose the latter, and after an almost perilous ride, for more than one raw sentinel took him for a rebel army and wanted to shoot, he reached the broad thoroughfare about a quarter of three, to find it still blocked by troops of the same general who had made the mistaken move on Blackburn's Ford, who was ordered to have his division on the road to the stone bridge and well out of the way two hours before, – the same fellows that "broke ranks at every blackberry-bush and spring and well along the route from Washington," and before the first crash of the shells on Thursday afternoon. Now they seemed to be lost in the darkness when routed out at midnight, and not until long after the proper time – three hours at least – could the guns of Hunter's division get the road; not until nearly dawn did they cross that old suspension bridge across Cub Run and then, turning to the right, march off into the fields along that guarded wood path. Not until broad daylight did the head of column reach the farm bridge. Then, as the sun came up hot and strong, and Snipe, after a long night in saddle, was able to rejoin his anxiously waiting major, and Stark's battalion fell in once more with the left wing of the New-Englanders and followed in the wake of Burnside's Rhode Island battery, the long column moved on, snake-like, through fields wherein the dew too soon gave way to dust, and not until nine o'clock, heated, weary, hungry, after nine hours of exasperating delays, of alternate halt and march, were the

leading files plashing through Sudley Ford. There stood the little church, and this was Sunday morning, and these silent, solemn fellows who came plodding up the southern bank on the trail of the gun-wheels were of the old Puritan stock, but there was no halt or time for worship. McDowell himself, commander of the army, had accompanied the turning column that by this long, circuitous path had essayed to make safe crossing of Bull Run and bear down on the rebel left, while the rest of the army waited in front of the stone bridge. Only twenty-eight thousand men all told, with twenty-nine guns and a single battalion of cavalry, had the Union general with which to assault in their chosen position thirty-two thousand enthusiastic Southerners with fifty-seven guns.

No wonder there was anxiety in the wearied eyes of the Union leaders, as at last the little division of General Hunter deployed in the fields south of Sudley Ford and came cautiously feeling its way onward, Porter's brigade on the right of the road, Burnside's on the left, the Rhode Island battery jogging along the dirt track and watching for a chance to form forward into line. After the battery rode the grizzled old colonel of the New-Englanders, and after him trudged the long column of his silent men; and with the left wing rode Major Stark, and ever at his heels rode Snipe. How slow seemed the advance! how tedious the incessant halts and waits while somebody reconnoitred! and at last, issuing from the woods, they saw before them a long ridge running east and west between the road on which they were marching and the

winding stream away off to the east, and out in the intervening open were two of Burnside's regiments in line of battle, slowly moving southward, and on the west side Porter's infantry was filing into the fields, and in regimental succession facing south and following the general move. Nearly a mile ahead, until lost behind that ridge, they could see the trees and walls and fences bordering a straight line across their front that they knew must be the turnpike they had quit a mile or so west of Centreville, and now, having left it behind them there, here they were facing it again with four regiments, at least, in battle line parallel with its general direction. Off to the right front it gently rose and was lost among groves and trees. Directly ahead it dipped into a sort of hollow where a little stream came purling out from the wooded uplands farther on. "Young's Branch, they call that," Snipe heard the major say to Captain Flint. There were a few farm-houses and enclosures down near the crossing of the pike. Then the road they had been following could be seen red and dry rising toward the south, running straight away for Manassas Junction, until it disappeared over the wooded crest another mile beyond the pike. East of this road the ground rose abruptly to a broad open plateau, skirted east, southeast, and south by a semi-circular fringe of thick woods. At the edge of the plateau, and near the bold, bluff-like slopes leading up to it, were two roomy houses of brick and stone, surrounded by fruit-trees and gardens, – one away up almost overhanging the pike, the other well down to the south, closer to the wood road they had been

following from Sudley Springs, – the first the Robinson, the other the Henry house. From which of these were they signalling last night? was the question that went from lip to lip. Eleven o'clock, and though there had been some sound of musketry down toward the stone bridge, and the big thirty-pounder gun had let drive a shell or two into the woods, and there had been some popping of rifles among the skirmishers well ahead, not a uniformed force of rebels had the New-Englanders seen, unless some scattering horsemen galloping through distant lanes could be so regarded. Out in front of Burnside's ranks a long thin line of skirmishers was now making for the curtaining ridge in front of the pike, and all on a sudden a pale blue smoke-cloud, like a long string of cotton wool, flew along that crest as though the command fire was given from the far right, and the nervous, waiting fingers pulled trigger as the order came, borne on the hot, sluggish, summer air. Snipe's heart gave a great leap as he saw the dust fly up in a hundred places just back of the distant skirmish line and the skirmishers themselves, with much alacrity, come sprinting back to the line, and then there was prodigious waving of swords and shouting of orders and galloping furiously about on part of field-officers who had never before smelled powder, much unnecessary exciting of their men, much whoop and hurrah on part of the advanced line, despite the efforts of the few veterans to set the example of calm and quiet. The instant the skirmishers came ducking in out of the way the long battle line opened a rattling fire upon the ridge, doing tremendous havoc along the

hill-side, if one could judge by the rising dust, but finding no lodgment among its hidden defenders. Then a field-gun banged somewhere over east of the ridge, and a shell, whizzing overhead, burst with a puff and crash among the trees back of Burnside's reserve, and hundreds of men crouched instinctively and sprang back laughing loud and nervously. And then another gun, over by the pike, west of the ridge, barked angry challenge, and sent its shell whistling over among Porter's men, and the battle lines broke anew into rattling, crashing fusillade, known as the "fire at will," and then, instead of pushing straight onward as they would be doing another year, the two brigades halted short and took to long-range shooting. Then Snipe saw the battery ahead of them beginning to joggle, and the next thing "Forward, double quick," was repeated along the column, and off to the left front across the fields the snorting teams went galloping, the guns bounding, the cannoneers racing after them, and the adjutant came running back afoot to shout something to Major Stark, who still rode, grim and silent, along the advancing column. Up to this moment the only thing Snipe had heard him say since the first volley was. "Steady, men. Keep quiet. Listen for orders." Now he turned round. "Ride back, Lawton; find the ammunition-wagon and bring it up. It's the colonel's order."

They are half across the field at the moment. The air is ringing with the blare of battery bugles and the sputter of file-firing. Smoke is drifting across the eager column of New-Englanders, and there are queer whistlings on the wind as Snipe, digging spurs

into his tired horse's ribs, whirls about and goes darting back to the Sudley road. But there he has to draw rein. The narrow track is blocked. With set faces, but flashing eyes, a battalion of regulars is hastening forward. Then, with cracking whips and straining traces, strong, mettlesome horses prancing in the fulness of their strength and spirit, Griffin's West Point battery comes tearing through the lane. Wagons, either of ammunition or rations, or even ambulances, are cut off somewhere far to the rear. Able only to move at the trot, halted every now and then, and forced aside, sometimes even compelled by over-zealous officers to halt and explain why he is going to the rear, Snipe is full half an hour passing the batteries and battalions of Heintzelman's division pressing forward into action. Well-nigh another half-hour is he in finding the needed wagon and compelling its reluctant negro drivers to whip their startled mules out into the track. It is after one o'clock when at last he comes spurring out upon the open field again, and now, what a change in the picture! General Hunter has been borne to the rear, wounded, but the thin line of the rebels has fallen back to the plateau beyond the Robinson place, the splendid regular batteries are far over on an open field near the Dogan house, to the north of the turnpike, hurling shell upon the retiring rebel lines. Some of Burnside's command, still halted, are apparently repairing damages, but one regiment has gone on, and with tumultuous cheers the Union men are pressing up the slopes at both the Robinson and Henry houses, the New-Englanders somewhere with them.

The road is blocked in front, the fields are strewn here and there with little groups hanging about prostrate soldiers, killed or wounded, and Snipe nibbles at a hardtack to still that queer feeling of faintness that again assails him when he recognizes among the pallid wounded a lieutenant of his own company. Before he can find words to speak he hears the voice of the adjutant, and that young officer has a handkerchief bound about his head and blood is trickling down his neck. "Ride forward," he says. "The regiment is straight ahead over that first ridge, and the major needs his horse. Yonder lies the other. I'll bring up the wagon."

There is a lull in the fight as Snipe goes riding along in rear of the battle line, seeking the New-Englanders. Other brigades have crossed the run, and now the Fire Zouaves are marching in column toward the regular batteries, and right at the edge of the pike Snipe finds his old regiment, with Stark in rear of the right wing. Lieutenant-Colonel Proctor is gone, shot dead, say the rearmost men, as they were crossing the ridge behind them, though that, happily, turns out later to be untrue. The major, however, has secured his late superior's horse, and gravely bids his orderly welcome with the other. Far over along that semicircular fringe of woods to the southeast an exultant chorus of yells is rising, and a staff-officer, riding by, says something about the rebs trying to keep their spirits up. But the dust is rolling in heavy clouds along the Manassas road, and the captured wounded, and prisoners overhauled during the

triumphant forward movement of the Union line, long delayed though it was, say that they are of Johnston's army from the Shenandoah. Then all Beauregard's must be yet to come. Are they the ones now doing all this cheering? Snipe, dismounted and holding both drooping horses, stands watching the faces of his gray-haired colonel and his beloved major, now in earnest, low-voiced conference, and it is plain to see, if not to hear, that the former is far from satisfied at the way things have gone. Over an hour passes without another forward movement, although long columns continue arriving from the direction of the fords just above Bull Run, the fords discovered by General Sherman. Many of the regiments right and left are tossing caps and hats in air, cheering like mad, and demanding the word to advance and finish up the rebels. The steady cannonade of the Union guns has been stopped. The batteries suddenly limber up and move deliberately out upon the pike, then turn southward into that road leading toward Manassas, and next are seen breasting the slopes to their left, marching up the height, Ricketts well in front, Griffin some distance in rear, and when they disappear over the edge of the plateau south of the Henry house, the Zouaves and some other regiment following rather slowly in support, the colonel ventures to say that those batteries will be in mischief before they are quarter of an hour older. Twenty minutes more and they are heard again, reopening in fury upon the enemy unseen by the halted battalions here under the Robinson bluff. And now it is after two, long after, and brigades from Tyler's first division,

fording the run above the stone bridge, are strengthening the attack. Sherman, Howard, Wilcox, all are there. Victory seems assured if only the line may advance, crown those heights, sweep the plateau where now the batteries stand almost alone, and drive the yelling rebels from the woods. A dense smoke-cloud rises over the thundering guns. Who can withstand so fierce a cannonade? Snipe, too, wants to toss his cap in air and cheer, but the anxiety in his colonel's face forbids. Thicker grows that shrouding smoke-cloud, heavier the thunder, but louder, clearer, and nearer the crash of musketry, the chorus of exultant yells. Surely there should be an infantry division, at least, to line that crest and support those guns, say veteran soldiers, and all too late the order comes. Out from the woods to the right of the twin batteries issues a long, well-ordered line of troops, commanded by a general who knows his trade. Straight, swift, and silent, in through the hanging smoke, he drives them. Instantly at sight of them the nearest battery commander whirls his muzzles around to deluge them with canister. Instantly from his misguided senior comes the order, "Don't fire. Those are our friends." Quick the reply, "They are Confederates! As sure as the world, they are Confederates!" But Griffin, certain as he is, can but obey when Barry sternly says, "They are our own supports. You must not fire!" Already half of Ricketts's horses and many of his men are down when that menacing line suddenly halts, aims, and at short range pours in one fearful volley that rips through the batteries like a flash of lightning. Down go dozens more, – officers,

gunners, drivers, cannoneers, horses, – and then, in wild panic, what are left of the poor, affrighted beasts turn short about, and, snorting with terror, despite every effort of the drivers, come tearing down the slopes, limbers and caissons bounding after them, straight through the ranks of the startled supports; the precious, priceless guns, the stricken wounded, the heroic dead, the gallant officers, abandoned to their fate. Brave as they were in face of fire at home, this was something the Zouaves had never dreamed of. No Ellsworth raged among them now, holding them to their duty. One wild volley they fire, mostly in the air, and down, too, they come, streaming like sheep along the hill-side, leaping the stone wall and scattering for shelter. The panic of Bull Run has begun. Down among the scary mules of the wagons tear the riderless battery horses, and away go darky drivers, mules, and all. Vain the dash of generals to the front, ordering regiments and brigades to charge and retake the guns, now being dragged to the woods. The rebel lines are mad with joy, drunk with triumph, invincible against the half-hearted assaults that follow. No longer is there any concerted effort on the Northern side. Some Union regiments, indeed, charge home, only to find themselves isolated, abandoned right and left by less disciplined comrades. Twice the New-Englanders breast that fire-flashing slope, their gray-haired old colonel cheering them on. Twice they come drifting back, bringing their scores of wounded with them; but when, at last, with tears coursing down his powder-blackened cheeks, Burnside tells them all is over, and to follow the retreat, it is the old

Covenanter, Flint, who leads the remnant from the field. Their colonel, limp and senseless from loss of blood, is borne away on the muskets of a squad of wearied men. The major, pinned under his dying horse close to the Henry house, is surrounded by a throng of rebels when the right gives way. If not dead, he and Snipe are prisoners, for the last seen of the youngster he is trying to drag the major out and get him on another horse, even while the rebels are swarming all about them.

CHAPTER XX

In the month that followed the panic and disaster of Bull Run the nation seemed to realize at last what was before it. "Little Mac," the idol of the soldiery, had been summoned to Washington to organize and command the rapidly arriving regiments of volunteers, – splendid regiments from all over the Northland, and though the flag of rebellion waved on Munson's Hill, in full view of the unfinished dome of the Capitol, and every afternoon the Southern bands played "Dixie," in full hearing of the guards to the approaches of the Long Bridge, the Southern generals were wise and refrained from farther advance.

Within that month, too, almost all the officers and many of the men reported missing after the battle were accounted for. Many turned up safe and sound, if much "demoralized." Many were heard of as at Libby and Belle Isle, the Richmond prisons, but not one word of any kind came from Major Stark, not a thing could be learned of his devoted orderly, appointed corporal, said the survivors of Stark's battalion, the very morning of the battle. The New-Englanders had gone home with the thanks of the President and Secretary of War for their gallant conduct at the battle, and their faithful service days after their time had expired. The gray-haired colonel, though still unable to remount and take command in the field, had been made a brigadier-general. Flint reappeared at the front as lieutenant-colonel of the reorganized

regiment. Everybody said that Major Stark would have been made its colonel had he survived.

In Gotham there was grief in many a household, but there was trouble in the Lawrences'. Poor Mrs. Park, as was to be expected, could give them little peace. "Everybody" now knew that the youthful captor, so lauded in the papers, of the young Confederate cavalryman was the George Lawton who had fled from Aunt Lawrence's roof rather than listen to more upbraidings. Mrs. Park had first gone wild with pride, exultation, and delight when the Monday morning *Herald* reached her, – and then to New York and Aunt Lawrence the very next day. And there she learned the later news, and stayed a dreadful fortnight, dreadful for herself and everybody else. One thing, at least, was comfort to the younger sister, and comfort she certainly needed now, – the mother steadfastly refused to believe her boy was dead. What she wished to do and what perhaps she would have done, but that her husband came and forbade, was to go to Washington and lay siege to the War Department. Mrs. Park could see no just reason why the government should not send forth a strong column to scour and scourge Virginia until "the Mother of the Presidents" surrendered her boy. School was closed for the summer. The First Latin had passed its examinations, matriculated at Columbia, and was to start as freshmen in the fall, minus two members at least, Hoover, who had apparently abandoned his academic career, and had not been seen around New York, and Briggs, ignominiously "flunked" at

the examination. Two others of its list were spoken of as duly admitted should they return to the fold in time to enter with the class, – Snipe Lawton and Shorty Prime. Where the first was no one could conjecture. Where the second was everybody knew, as Shorty took good care they should, if letters could accomplish it. There wasn't a happier lad in all the lines around Washington as August wore on, and the army "got its second wind" – and reinforcements. Short and small as he was, he rode as big a horse as anybody, and had reached almost the pinnacle of his boyish ambitions. He had been made mounted orderly at brigade headquarters, and could ask no more, except that Snipe should know, and Snipe should turn up safe and sound.

The Doctor's wisdom had prevailed. The scare that followed Shorty's disappearance was short as he. Ellsworth was organizing the Fire Zouaves at the time, and the lad, in longing and misery and in envy of Snipe's inches, had stolen away to the old haunt at "40's" house down in Elm Street to beg the boys to tell their enthusiastic young colonel how well he could drum and how mad he was to go. He was home again by midnight, and late to school and lax in conduct and lessons the following day. It was all settled within a week, and as the Doctor had advised, and almost crazy with joy the youngster was hurried on to the capital to join his soldier kindred, was welcomed and set to work to teach other and bigger boys the army calls and beats for the snare-drum, and then, along in August, the general, for whom he had run many an errand and delivered many a message, ordered him to duty at

head-quarters and set him in saddle.

Then presently McClellan found himself strong enough to risk a slight forward movement, and two brigades crossed the Potomac one night in face of the pickets at Chain Bridge, and, hardly waiting for dawn, began tossing up earthworks on the heights beyond, and here the saucy rebels came and "felt" the pickets and, riding through the wood lanes, made some effort to dislodge them, but there was evidently heavy force behind those strong picket-posts, and though rifles and revolvers were popping day and night all along the guarded lines from the Potomac below Alexandria to the Potomac above Chain Bridge, no real attempt was made by the "Johnnies" to push through at any point. Night after night, at first, gay young gallants from the Southern lines would mount their horses and ride out ahead just to "stir up the Yanks," and then there would be no end of a bobbery along the front, picket firing in every direction and the long roll in every camp, and everybody would turn out under arms and form line on the designated parade-ground, and stand and shiver and say unpublishable and improper things for an hour or more, and then go back to bed disgusted. After a week or so at this the colonels would no longer form line, but let the companies muster in their respective streets in camp, and the long waits were reduced to an hour, and then to a half, and in course of a fortnight it became difficult even to rouse a drummer when the long roll was actually ordered. And when the sputter and crackle of musketry began far out at the picket-posts in the dead hours of the night, men

in camp would roll over and grunt something to the effect that those fellows were making dashed fools of themselves again. And so by the end of August it became a sign of "scare" or "nerves" when pickets began firing at night, and when Shorty's brigade took post along those densely wooded heights and had got fairly shaken down to business, matters at the front, out toward the hamlet of Lewinsville and the lanes to Vienna and Ball's Cross-Roads, became almost professionally placid and disciplined, and the lad was in a sort of military seventh heaven, trotting about with orders and despatches, recognized and passed without check at almost all the posts of the main guards, where even officers below certain grades had to show their permits, welcomed at every regimental camp for the news and gossip he could bring, – ay, and it must be owned, for items much more stimulating than even the latest rumors from the War Department, for Shorty was many a time the bearer of despatches to McClellan's head-quarters or the office of some high dignitary in the city, and his saddle-bags were never inspected by provost-marshals and patrols, and, now that the sutlers were forbidden to sell the fiery liquids of the first weeks of the war, many a flask of forbidden "commissary" found its way to some favored tent among the brigade lines, and in return, when Sergeant This or Corporal That was out on picket, the lad was sure of friends at court when he strove for a peep outside the lines, and one of his absorbing crazes was to ascertain what might be going on around that mysterious hamlet, nearly two miles out there in the lovely Virginia slopes

beyond the pickets.

The fact is that Shorty was consumed with ambition to "do something" like Snipe. He envied his former chum the distinction of that capture of Lieutenant Grayson infinitely more than he envied "Little Mac" the command of the army. Just to think that the first Confederate officer caught in front of Washington should turn out to be a first cousin of the very Graysons who were with them at school! Just to think that it should be Snipe of all others – Snipe, a First Latin boy – to make the capture! Just to think that Snipe should have been all through Bull Run, while he, Shorty, was far to the rear where he could only hear the thunder of the guns and the tales of the stragglers! Just to think that the old men in the reorganized New-Englanders declared that Snipe was the best soldier in the ranks of Company "C" if he was the youngest! – Snipe who couldn't shoot a gun six months ago without shutting his eyes, and who would rather fish all day or figure out equations than follow the band of the Seventh itself! Just to think that the old colonel's written report of Bull Run should include among the few names of those deserving especial credit and commendation that of Corporal George Lawton, Company "C," "who sacrificed himself in the heroic effort to save Major Stark from death or capture, and was last seen fighting hard over his prostrate body," – Snipe who used to turn sick at sight of a fist fight, even though he was the "bulliest" first baseman the Uncas ever had.

Time and again the general's diminutive orderly would ride

to Colonel Flint to inquire if any news had been heard, and to talk with the old men of Company "C" about his chum. There were two drawbacks to this. It began to bore Flint, who felt a trifle jealous of the praises sung of Stark, and it gave the New-Englanders abundant opportunity to chaff the lad about his old friends, the Fire Zouaves, whose conduct or misconduct at Bull Run was the subject of the derision of the "steady" regiments of the army. It wasn't that the "b'hoys" lacked nerve, stamina, courage. They had lost their soldierly little colonel, shot dead by a fanatic the very day they entered Alexandria. There was no one to discipline them, with Ellsworth gone, and the bravest men in the world are of no account in battle except when acting in disciplined unison. Other regiments ran down that hill as hard as did the Fire Zouaves, and without half the provocation; but everybody pitched on the red shirts and made them the scapegoats because they had come with such a tremendous swagger and had boasted so much. Shorty believed in his old friends and stood up for them, and lost his temper and said things to the New-Englanders in turn that they didn't like. "How came it that you could stand and see your major down with a dozen rebs around him and make no effort at rescue?" he demanded, and this was a home thrust that made many men wince, and at last it leaked out somehow, as such things will, that none of the left wing saw or heard of it until too late. The smoke was thick. They were falling back as ordered, but the senior captain had been wounded and sent to the rear. Flint was acting as wing

commander, and when two companies on the right begged their officers, after the confusion, to let them rush back and bring off the major, Flint himself refused. "We have lost far more now than our share," he said, "and the general orders us back."

And still there lived among the New-Englanders that abiding faith that the honored major was not dead and would yet be heard from. "And when he is," said Shorty, "you can bet your buttons Snipe and Sergeant Keating will prove to be the ones that pulled him out, and they were firemen."

The fact of the matter is that Shorty was getting "too big for his boots," as Colonel Flint began to say. He was indulged and spoiled to such an extent by guards and sentries around Chain Bridge, greeted so cordially by generals and colonels, and hailed with such confident familiarity by the line, that the youngster's head was probably not a little inflated. He was getting "cheeky," said a spectacled adjutant-general of a neighboring brigade. "He talks too much," said staff-officers about their own head-quarters. "He'll run up against somebody some day that'll take the shine off him if he isn't more careful with that big horse of his," said a certain few, who hated a horseman on general principles; and this proved a true prediction.

The big bay ridden by Shorty had a very hard mouth, and when once he got going it was a most difficult thing to stop him. Galloping about the neighborhood of Chain Bridge, where almost everybody knew the youngster as the general's orderly, it made little difference (although an irate Green Mountain boy

of Baldy Smith's brigade did threaten to bayonet him if he ever galloped over his post again); so, too, on the road to Washington, where permanent guards were placed at different points. But, to put an end to straggling and visiting town without authority, the provost-marshal had taken to sending patrols here, there, and everywhere in Georgetown and Washington with orders to halt every soldier and examine his pass. The regular infantry, now recruited to a war footing, were assigned, much to their disgust, to patrol duty. A number of new regiments of regulars were being raised. A number of the New York Seventh and other crack regiments of the militia reappeared at the front with the uniforms and commissions of lieutenants in the regular army. It even happened that not a few young fellows who had never even served in the militia, and who knew nothing whatever of duty or discipline of any kind, had secured through family or political influence, which the administration was glad to cultivate, commissions denied to better men, and these young fellows were now wearing their first swords, sashes, and shoulder-straps in the onerous duty of running down the merry-makers from surrounding camps, who, dodging the guards, had managed to make a way to town.

One night there came a heavy storm, and down went the telegraph line. Morning broke, radiant after the deluge. The Potomac had risen in its might and swept away some bridge and crib work as well as certain pontoons. The general wrote a despatch to army head-quarters, and called up Shorty. "Gallop

with that," said he, "and don't stop for anything."

What the general meant was, don't stop for breakfast or nonsense, but the lad took it literally. He and "Badger" were a sight to behold when they came tearing into the main street of Georgetown about eight o'clock. Badger was blowing a bit, after laboring through nearly five miles of thick mud, but, once he struck the cobble-stones and sent the last lumps of clay flying behind him, he took a new grip on the bit and lunged ahead as though on a race for his life, Shorty sitting him close and riding "hands down" and head too, his uniform besmeared, but his grit and wind untouched.

"Come down aff the top o' dthat harrse!" shouted a Milesian veteran who knew his trade.

"Despatches for General McClellan! Most important!" panted Shorty. "Ordered not to lose a minute – "

"Ah-h-h! none av yer guff! Who'd be sendin' anything 'portant by the likes av you? Tumble off, Tom Thumb!" and the sergeant had seized the official envelope and was trying to lug it away.

"Don't you dare touch that!" almost screamed the lad. "I tell you, I'm a general's orderly!"

But for answer the sergeant thrust a brawny hand under the hooded stirrup, and with sudden hoist sent Shorty tumbling over to the other side. Furious at the indignity, he grasped the mane and let drive a skilful and well-aimed kick at the Irishman's head, which the latter ducked and dodged only in the nick of time. More patrolmen came running to the spot, – corporals

and sergeants whose orders had been defied, – and in less than a minute the bumptious youngster was dragged from his horse and led fuming to the sidewalk, just as there appeared at the doorway of the corner building the spruce and dapper figure of the youthful officer of the guard, his uniform spick and span, his sash and sword and gloves of the daintiest make.

"Now, then, you young tarrier, make yer manners an' tell yer lies to yer betthers!" said the big sergeant, half grinning as he spoke, his hand on Shorty's collar all the time. The throng of soldiers gave way right and left, their white-gloved left hands striking the promptly shouldered muskets in salute to their young superior, and then, covered with mud, flushed with wrath and the sense of his wrongs, writhing in the grasp of his captor, Shorty Prime stood staring into the pallid features, the shifting, beady eyes, the twitching, bluish lips of the butt of the First Latin and the whole school, – Polyblasphemous in the garb of a second lieutenant of the regular infantry.

Dead silence for a moment, then, —

"Put him in the cell," said Hoover, and turned loftily away.

CHAPTER XXI

There is not room in this brief chronicle to tell the story of Shorty Prime's sensations this eventful day. Wrath, amazement, burning shame, and indignation, all were struggling for utterance, but, above all, at the moment the youngster felt the importance of the despatch of which he was bearer, the need for its immediate forwarding to general head-quarters. His steaming, hard-panting horse had been led one way and he himself, to his unspeakable rage, had been hustled, protesting, through a grimy hall, past groups of grinning soldiery, a burly sergeant fairly rushing him into the square court beyond, never loosing his hold on the collar, and then, as Shorty still kicked, struggled, and protested, reinforcing that grasp by nipping the boy's left ear with thumb and forefinger of the other hand. The precious despatch had been torn from his grasp, despite his stout resistance. Even in his rage he had sense enough to refrain from any denunciation of the lieutenant, but against the laughing Irishman who had dared to address him as Tom Thumb Shorty launched a torrent of threat and invective. It was only with the utmost difficulty that he could repress the flood of passionate tears that a year before would have overcome him. The storm of sobs that seemed imminent would only have made him ridiculous and rejoiced his captors the more, so with all his strength he fought against it. He demanded his release. He declared again that he had only obeyed his orders.

He gave his name and that of his general, and insisted that every man who had treated him with indignity would suffer for it. At first they only laughed the more, as he was led across the stone-flagged, sunlit court, on three sides of which were heavily barred and latticed "cells," or rather alcoves, many of them occupied by disconsolate stragglers. But, even as a corporal was unlocking one of these and throwing open the gate, there came stalking majestically over from a little office on the east side a tall man whose upper lip, chin, and cheeks were shaved after the fashion of the Mexican war days, who still wore the high black leather stock at the throat, whose buttons glistened, every one in its place, and whose sleeves were decorated with the chevrons of a first sergeant.

"Let go that ear," he said, in quiet tone, and jeer and laughter ceased. "Who ordered this?" he asked.

"The lieutenant, sir," answered Shorty's conductor, obeying instantly, and speaking with a deference much exceeding that which he had shown to the suckling subaltern commanding the guard.

"Who did you say you were?" asked the veteran regular, professionally grave, his steely blue eyes seeming to penetrate beneath the mud with which Shorty's face and dress were smeared.

"Mounted orderly at brigade head-quarters, Chain Bridge," came Shorty's quick answer, as he stifled his rising sobs. "Ordered to get my despatches to General McClellan and stop

for nothing. The river's washed away the pontoons – "

"Where is the despatch? Let go that collar, Sergeant Hanley," and Shorty stood released.

"Stolen from me by these – " And Shorty gulps. Even now he knows it won't do to call names. "I told them my orders. I begged them, and the officer of the guard, to let me – "

"What did you do with them?" interrupted the sergeant, glowering at Hanley.

"Sure I don't know, sergeant. The lootenent ordered him into the cells. He was sassin' everybody."

"I never said a wrong word to the lieutenant," burst in Shorty, indignant that he should be accused of disrespectful language to an officer, no matter how much contempt he might feel for the individual.

"What became of the despatch, I say?" demanded the first sergeant, frowning around upon the now silent circle.

"Corcoran took it, sir," ventured a young soldier, presently.

"Go you and fetch Corcoran," were the sergeant's instant orders to Hanley, and the big Irishman lunged away. Here was a power indeed! the majesty of the discipline of the old army as exemplified in the first sergeant of thirty years' service. "Bring that bench, and water, soap, and towel," was the next order, short and crisp, and two young recruits jumped to obey. In a minute the bench, with a tin basin, a bucket with fresh water, and towel and soap were placed before the bedraggled lad.

"Wash," said the sergeant, and Shorty pulled off his jacket

and flannel shirt and tossed them, with his natty cap, to the pavement. "Pick those up and clean 'em," said the sergeant, and a soldier whipped them off the flags, while the lad buried his hot face in the brimming bowl. It cooled and steadied him and gave him time to think, – time to recover breath and wits and self-control. Corporal Corcoran was marched in by Hanley, looking queer. The tall sergeant gazed about at the circle of listening private soldiers. Non-commissioned officers, said the regulations, must never be rebuked in presence of the men. It weakens their authority. "Get you out of this, all of you!" was his order, and they stood not on the order of their going, but were gone in less time than it takes to tell it.

"Where's the papers you took from this – young man?"

"Sure I put 'em on the officer of the guard's table, sir."

"Where's he?"

"Gone to breakfast, sir."

If the sergeant had then and there ordered Corcoran to "go and fetch the lieutenant," Corcoran would have gone and tried, and it wouldn't have surprised Shorty. "Fetch me my cap," he said instead; then turning to the prisoner, now rubbing hard with the towel, he continued in the same crisp, curt tones.

"Obey orders. Sit in there," and he pointed to the open cage, "till I come back. I'll see to the despatches."

And though still raging over his misfortunes, measurably relieved, Shorty saw him stride away through the dark hall, saw how the soldiers' eyes followed him, how at the outer gate the

loungers stood up as he passed by. Then, without a word to the Irishmen or another word from them, Shorty stepped into the wooden-barred cage and sat him down upon the wooden bench, still rubbing with the now grimy towel. A change had come over the situation. Corcoran presently slipped away and speedily reappeared with a clean towel, which he handed to Shorty with a queer mingling of anxiety and bravado in his manner, and as silently took the soiled one away. Hanley, after a minute's perturbed pondering over the matter, scratched his head and slunk – there is no other word for it – into the neighboring barrack-room. Over in one of the other cells a drunken soldier had set up a maudlin song, and it was a relief to the big sergeant's soul to stop and tell him to shut up. Four or five other prisoners, each in his own barred cage on the west side, were standing or sitting and peering out into the court, curious spectators of the scene. The cages or cells to Shorty's right seemed to be empty. But presently there came a soft knocking and scratching on the boards that separated him from the occupant of the one on his right. Lumber was bought in a hurry that summer, much of it only half seasoned. The planks had warped and shrunk. There was a wide crack, and at that crack appeared an eye, and through that crack came the whisper of "Shorty, Shorty. Don't ye know me?"

Some of our brigade, thought the lad, as he edged up to the wooden wall. Some poor fellow overstaying pass. "Who is it?" he asked.

"Don't ye remember Desmond, 28's Engine?"

"Desmond! Of course. Why, what brought you here?"

"The same squint-eyed, pasty-faced pup that did you, I s'pose. Sa-ay, Shorty, *you*'re all right. They can't keep you 'soon as they know who you are. The officer of the day comes at nine o'clock and you'll be let off all right. But I'm in a hole. Say a good word for me. Help me out, and I can tell you things about that school you'd give a heap to know. Remember the day of the fire in Twenty-fifth Street? – the day the peeler wasn't going to let you pass, and I pulled you through?"

How could the lad forget it! A policeman had tried to drive him back when he would have worked his way up along 28's line of hose, and Desmond gave him the big nozzle to take forward to the pipeman. Of course he remembered it, and how proud he was that when it came to "soaking down," and the big nozzle was screwed on in place of the three-quarter inch, the wearied pipeman let him take hold. Of course he remembered.

"But how'd you get here?" he asked. "How'd you know me so quick?"

"Lord! I seen you every day for a week when we were camped near you up there at Kalorama. Second Fire Zouaves I'm in, – Major Moriarty. We was down here on a frolic the other night, an' could 'a' got back all right, but there was a fire on the avenue, an' we piled out onto an engine, an' when the fire was out the fellers took us round to their house and salooned us to the best in the market, an' the next thing the patrol got us, and this shanghai lieutenant out here shoved us into the cells for offerin' to lam

him in front of the guard. Sa-ay, ain't I seen that feller smokin' cigarettes round the stable next the school? If 'tain't him, it's like enough to him to be his twin brother. If 'tis him, you get me out of this and I can tell you things you and Snipe ought to know. Lay low, Shorty; here comes that big shanghai sergeant. Sa-ay, ain't he a rooster? Do what you can for us, boy, will you?"

And there was no time for more. Straight to the cage the sergeant stalked, and for the life of him Shorty couldn't help standing attention, as he did to his brigadier-general.

"I got those despatches," said the sergeant, "and sent them right on, and I've sent word to the officer of the day, and he'll be here presently. Better let me explain. You're too excited yet."

And under ordinary circumstances such might, indeed, have been the wiser course, but there were other surprises in store for Shorty and his guardians too. Even while the tall sergeant was asking certain questions there came the hoarse cry of the sentry in front of the building, "Turn out the guard! Officer of the day!" There was a scurry of feet, a banging of musket-butts, a word of command, a clash of steel, and after a moment or two of parley without there came through the dark hallway an officer whom Shorty saw to be a captain of infantry. His sash was old and weather-stained, his uniform a trifle shabby, but in every move there was the ease and swing of the old soldier. Hurrying after and ranging up beside him came another, an officer whose sash, belt, and dress were as spick and span, new and glossy as those of the officer of the guard, an officer who looked a trifle less

at home in them than did the veteran on his right, but at sight of his face the light danced up in Shorty's eyes, and, forgetful of discipline, of regulation, of martial etiquette, propriety, he sprang forward with a cry of joy. Barely four months earlier, from his perch on the lamp-post and through blinding tears, the boy had marked him striding down Broadway at the head of a famous company of a famous regiment. Now here again he appeared, in the garb of the regular army.

"Mr. Winthrop – Captain Winthrop! Don't you know me? Regy Prime!"

And another of Pop's old boys, another Columbiad, another of New York's National Guardsmen, turned regular soldier, – the new captain threw aside his book and grabbed the youngster's hands.

"In the name of all that's preposterous, Regy, what are you doing here?"

And then, unnerved and overcome at last, fearful of breaking down, the lad looked imploringly at the big sergeant, and in twenty words the story was told.

"Who ordered him confined? Who took his despatches away?" demanded the older captain, the old officer of the day, with threatening eyes.

Not for the wealth of India would Sergeant Brennan sully the unimpeachable record of thirty years by a word of even inferential disapproval of the deed of a superior officer.

"Call Sergeant Hanley," said he, and Hanley came. The

question was repeated.

"The officer of the guard, Lieutenant Hoover," said he, in answer.

"My compliments to the lieutenant, and say I wish to speak with him," said the veteran captain; and there was painful silence as, a moment later, the junior officer came clinking in, his black eyes flitting nervously about, his blue lips twitching. "This way, if you please, Mr. Hoover," said the senior captain. "Captain Winthrop, will you favor me?" And ushering them both into the little guard-room, the captain closed the door.

Less than four minutes lasted that interview. Meanwhile there was silence in the sunny court-yard. Brennan paced majestically up and down. Hanley stood uncomfortably a moment or two, then tiptoed back to the guard still standing in ranks in front of the building, and Shorty was left practically alone. There was a delighted whisper behind. "Sa-ay, Shorty, just wouldn't I rather be here than in that feller's shoes! Get us out of this now, and you'll see."

Presently the glass door opened and Hoover came forth, slinking, crestfallen, twitching, but if he had been a conquering hero Brennan could no more magnificently have saluted. Halting, facing him, his white-gloved hand snapped up to the polished visor of his cap, and there it stayed unnoticed, until the dismayed officer was swallowed up within the hall.

Two minutes more and two soldiers were sent on the run to clean the orderly's horse and equipments. A little darky was

set to work on his besplashed leggings. "I'll see you in a few minutes again," said Captain Winthrop, as he and his predecessor hastened away to report to their commanding officer. The guards changed on the pavement outside. A new lieutenant came in and looked curiously at Shorty, now being regaled with soldier coffee and a huge crust of "Capitol Bakery" bread. Fifes squeaked and drums banged on the avenue as the old guard turned off, but Hoover came no more.

When Winthrop reappeared in course of half an hour, "Badger" was ready in front and Shorty was once more in trim for a ride. A receipt for his despatches was stowed in his belt, and then as the captain would have led him forth, the lad thought of Desmond, and briefly he told the story. Winthrop nodded, went back, spoke a few words to the Zouave, and rejoined the lad. Desmond waved his hand. Winthrop grasped Shorty's and shook it warmly.

"Now don't let this mishap trouble you, Regy. No harm has been done. Good will come of it. Now, good luck to you."

How much good was to be the result of that mishap Winthrop could never have guessed at the time. How much poor Shorty had lost through that storm, that morning mud ride, that arrest and incarceration and the consequent fatigue, he was to learn within another day.

CHAPTER XXII

The general was an indignant man when, late that afternoon, he heard the details of Shorty's misadventures, but the general was just. He knew that battles had been lost and kingdoms ruined because of orders hastily or carelessly worded. He might have known, as he said to the staff when discussing the incident, that if he "told that little bunch of springs and impetuosity to stop for nothing and put him on a hard-mouthed horse of similar temperament, the provost guard wouldn't have a picnic." The general knew he could not ignore the authority of the provost-marshal, but he might have known that Shorty would be little apt to stop for sergeants, corporals, or privates when told to stop for nothing.

Only a day or two before several generals and their staffs had an amusing illustration of Shorty's immense conception of his official position. A big working party from *the* brigade was chopping trees in the woods a mile up the Potomac, and a big pleasure party from Washington was visiting General "Baldy" Smith on the opposite bank. For the entertainment and instruction of his guests this accomplished officer had ordered out a light battery, and with much precision that battery was driving shells into that very wood – and the axemen out. Bearing fragments of iron in his hands, the indignant officer in charge of the work galloped in to his general to say that his party had

had to run for their lives, and the work was at a stand. Shorty's horse stood ready saddled, so the general bade the boy orderly carry the fragments, with his compliments, to General Smith, and tell him the battery was shelling his men, and Shorty and "Badger" went off like a shot. Over the Chain Bridge they tore, to the amaze and disgust of certain sentries long accustomed to halting everybody that didn't wear a star, and straight up to the brilliant group at head-quarters they galloped, and with scant apology and only hurried salute, the youngster panted his message and exhibited his collaterals. The general listened with unruffled calm, inspected a fragment or two with professional gravity and interest, noted the fresh powder black on the fracture and concave surface, passed them on to his visitors with some placid remark about the force of the bursting charge, and, to Shorty's unspeakable wrath, appeared to be in no wise impressed with the peril to which he had subjected the men of a comrade brigade, and even less with the presence of the bearer of the message. Shorty had counted on creating a sensation, and he and "Badger" were the only ones to show the least agitation. Bethinking himself of a supplementary remark of the officer who brought in the news – and the fragments, the lad returned to the attack. "One shell burst so close to Captain Wood's head it almost stunned him, sir."

"Ah, did it?" queried the general, with provoking calm. "And was nobody hurt?"

"Nobody was *hit*, sir," answered Shorty, with temper rising

still higher. "But a dozen might have been."

"Ah, well, ride back and tell the general I'm glad nobody was hurt," was Baldy's imperturbable ultimatum, and the lad spurred back in a fury. Of course the firing was stopped, and later the generals grinned affably over the incident, but Shorty's self-esteem was ruffled, and he told the senior aide, to that officer's infinite delight, that further messages to General Smith would "better be carried by some other man on the staff," and of course that story went the rounds of both brigades, much to the merriment of many a camp-fire, but not altogether to Shorty's detriment.

Now, if such was Shorty's conception of the gravity and importance of his duties when bearing a verbal message from one brigadier to a junior, what was not his immensity when a hastily written despatch, conveying tidings of flood and disaster, was intrusted to him by the commander at the front to be delivered to the general-in-chief in town. Shorty rode like a demon that day, and even "Badger" was amazed, and that he, bearer of despatches to head-quarters of the army and ordered to stop for nothing, should have had to stop for bayonets and be lifted by the collar into the presence of the officer of the guard, – that he should find in the person of that officer the butt of the whole First Latin, – that he should be ordered by that – thing – to the common cells wherein were penned the drunkards and deserters, and led thither by the ear, and an impudently grinning Paddy if he *was* a sergeant, all this was, in truth, too much for Shorty.

No comfort Winthrop could offer would soothe his wounded soul. He went back ablaze to brigade head-quarters. The general was away up the Potomac, and didn't return till late. Even then when Shorty tried to tell his tale his excitement and wrath made him incoherent. The general was amazed to think that an officer of regulars would hold his messenger after discovering that he was actually the bearer of despatches. But Shorty's animated description of that callow soldier, and by no means guarded references to his school history, gave the general a clue. He fully intended, of course, to follow the matter up, but other and more important issues came to claim his time and attention.

That night at nine o'clock the general decided to make a personal inspection along his front. Horses for himself and two aides were ordered, and Marmion, the colored hostler, presently came round to the big tent.

"Marse Prime's horse done gone stiff, sir," he said to the adjutant-general, "and I reckon Marse Reggy don't feel much like night ridin'. He's sleepin' da' on de hay."

The officer went and took a peep. Wrapped in his blanket, his head on his arms, the youngster had curled up for a nap, worn out by the excitement and emotions of the day. "Don't wake him," was the order, and the three horsemen rode away.

It was a still, starlit night. The roads were yet heavy with mud. The horses sank to their fetlocks and squashed noisily through the mire until the little party were able to turn into the cart-tracks through the thick woods, and, joined now by the field

officer of the day, they pushed on to the outposts. It was the dark of the moon. The blackness of the groves and copses was intense. Objects, except on the open field or against the sky, could hardly be distinguished five feet away. But every now and then there would come the muffled challenge of sentries at inner posts of the guard, and it was over half an hour before they reached the outermost groups, with the line of night sentinels some distance ahead. To every inquiry at every station of officer or sergeant, the answer was the same, all quiet, all alert. There had been much shooting at patrols and pickets for over a month, a practice both sides soon abandoned, but at the time there was hazardous, nerve-trying duty at the front, and few men welcomed it except for the excitement. Somewhere in the neighborhood of ten o'clock, following in single file a winding wood track, a sergeant leading afoot, the party approached the southern edge of a strip of woods and halted while the corporal stepped ahead to assure the sentinel. Then the general rode quietly up to question the man, the sergeant assuming his watch the while, for even in presence of the commander-in-chief there must be no cessation of vigilance.

To the queries as to where the nearest sentries were posted? what were his own instructions? what he would do in certain emergencies? the soldier answered promptly, perhaps a bit impatiently, even as though he might have enjoyed the catechism at another time, but had some weightier matter in hand at the moment. He kept turning and glancing out across the open

field to the south, stooping once or twice as though to peer at something against the sky, and the general saw and questioned.

"Anything unusual about?"

"Why, yes, sir; at least I think so. The patrol that came by ten minutes ago said that they had heard horses galloping out across the fields, and I could have sworn I heard hoofs on this here bridle-path where it dips into yon woods. By day nobody can come across here without our seeing them. By night we can't see unless we lie flat and look up, and then they could get within a rod or two."

The general bent over his horse's neck and listened. There was not wind enough to rustle a leaf. The sky was almost cloudless; the fields in front were open and silent; the dark, shadowy woods, beyond, merged in the general gloom. Far off to the right front, over a mile away, a faint light gleamed in some farm-house window. Far off to the left front, the south, there was a dim, lurid tint upon the night that might have come from dozens of watch-fires. Straight away in front the cart-track dove into the darkness on its way across the field, and, over against them, there was a dent or depression in the outlines of the fringe of timber, as it stood against the southern stars, that told where the road entered the opposite grove. It was there, right there, said the sentinel, he was almost sure he had heard horses' feet, but nothing else, not another sound.

"Did the patrol stop at your outpost?" the general asked the sergeant.

"No, sir. It went right along the line of sentries. I crawled out during the afternoon and climbed a tree in the field to our right. You can see it standing there, sir" (and, indeed, its outline was faintly visible against the stars). "I could see some distance off to the south and southwest. Lewinsville and the barns are in plain view, and some scattered farm-houses."

"Did you see any troops?"

"No, sir, but some saw me, and the bullets came a-singing, and I had to quit and crawfish back. But this path leads into a road half a mile or so out there."

And while the sergeant spoke the soldier had resumed his watch, and suddenly they heard him whisper, "Hist!"

"What do you see or hear?" murmured the sergeant, springing to his side.

"There is something out there, by thunder! coming this way. These gentlemen had better get back a bit. I can't tell how many there may be."

Somebody, – some party, possibly, stealing up to feel the pickets again, and here were the general and staff-officers unescorted! What a plum for Southern cavalry to pluck, did they but know! In breathless silence the watchers waited. The general refused to retire. Not a sound could the horsemen hear, but that sentry sprawled on the ground could not be mistaken. Not an object moving was visible. Suddenly, though low and cautious, they heard the click of a gun-lock. The sentry had brought his rifle to the ready. Then, indeed, must there be something in the

wind. Ten seconds later, and low, firm, so as to be heard only a few paces away, there came the order, "Halt!" A brief pause, then, with menace in the tone, the challenge, "Who goes there?" For an instant no reply. Then in tremulous voice came an answer in the field to the right of the road.

"It's only me, suh; Marse Finlay's Brennus, suh," and there can be no doubting the Ethiopian accent.

"Who's with you, nigger? Who's back of you there?"

"Nobody, suh. I'se all alone, suh, but they's some gen'lemen way back, suh. They done give me a letter."

"Come in here, Brennus. Let's see your letter," called the sergeant, stepping warily forward, his gun, too, at the charge. And presently out from under the stars steps a tall negro boy, lithe, active, and alert. He is trembling a bit and uncertain of his whereabouts. He needs to know something before he can impart anything, and presently it comes.

"Is you gen'lemen – Yankees?"

"Yankees from the general down," answers the sergeant. "Half a dozen right here ready to hear your story." And the negro seems to recognize alien accent in the Western twang of the speaker, and to take heart at once.

"Dey done gimme a paper," he whispers, and the general interrupts.

"Bring him back to the reserve, where there's a fire. We'll examine him there, sergeant." And, turning his horse, the general leads the way.

It is nearly eleven o'clock when, a little later, half a dozen officers are grouped about the slender, tattered, weary negro, a lad barely twenty years of age, if that. To the general he has handed a roll of tin-foil, on which, as it is unfolded by the gleam of the camp-lanterns, the word "Solace" is stamped, and the thin tissue-paper it encloses bears some writing, over which the general strains his eyes and studies eagerly; bends closer to the light and studies again. Then, straightening up suddenly, he turns upon the young negro.

"Where'd you leave them? How far out?"

"'Bout two miles, suh; p'r'aps not dat much."

"Are you sure about the troops, – about the number? There are none others?"

"Ye-as, suh. Dey ain't any udder companies near."

"And you can guide us right to the spot?"

"Ye-as, suh. Certain, suh."

The general turns sharply on his senior aide. "There's not a moment to be lost. What a pity we have no cavalry! Ride straight to Colonel Connor. Tell him to rouse his regiment instantly and without a sound. Leave knapsacks and blankets in camp. Guide them here as quick as you can. Now, captain, this boy must have a rousing supper. He deserves it."

CHAPTER XXIII

And now if there is a boy reader of this story who doesn't say it is high time he is told what had become of Snipe Lawton, then the narrator never knew a thing about boys. Leaving Shorty to sleep over his injured dignity and lose another of the opportunities of his life, we will turn back the page and look again over the stirring fields thirty miles to the south. As neither Snipe nor his major nor his friend Keating, of the Zouaves, had been recognized among the dead, as they were not apparently among the prisoners, and as they certainly had not reappeared among their comrades along the Potomac, they must be looked for where last seen, close to that old brick and stone Virginia homestead, bowered in the midst of vines and fruit-trees, known as the Henry house.

Not until weeks after – long, weary, perilous weeks – was the story told, and then Snipe was not the narrator. The grave, taciturn major waxed eloquent and even diffuse for once in his life, and the burden of his song was Snipe and Sergeant Keating.

After their second brave advance along the plateau the New-Englanders found themselves unsupported on both flanks, and their men falling from the hot fire that poured in from almost every direction. The old colonel hung on to the last, but saw that to save his regiment he must withdraw, and so gave the order. They fell back fighting, closing to the centre, and only once was there anything like confusion, and that occurred close

to the Henry house, when some other regiment that had suddenly marched up the slope to the west almost as suddenly broke and came surging over the right companies, carrying two of them in the rush. It was while staying this disorder that Major Stark was suddenly dashed to earth. His horse, disembowelled by a whirring fragment of shell, reared and plunged violently, falling on his rider and crushing him in his frantic agony. Almost wild with grief and excitement, Snipe sprang from his saddle and ran to the major's aid, even though a dozen gray-clad fellows came bounding at them through the smoke. "I declare," he said, afterwards, "I thought they were coming to help me. They *did* help, – three or four of them. They pulled that poor horse off just as we've seen a crowd pull a fallen horse out of a tangle on Broadway, and they lifted the major up and stood him on one leg, and one of 'em gave him a drink from his canteen, and another, a boy like myself, actually began brushing him off. Everybody was so crazy with yelling and shouting that for a minute they didn't seem to realize the situation."

But realization came quickly enough. The major's right leg was broken below the knee. He had received severe internal hurts and was dazed and sick, and Snipe and a "reb" between them were supporting him, when some officer shouted, "Get those prisoners to the rear! Here comes another charge." Two or three men strove to carry the crippled officer, who was in great pain, and Snipe was bidden to bear a hand, which of course he did; but their progress was slow, and in the midst of it somebody

yelled, "Look out! Lie flat!" And down went everybody as a red volley flashed through the smoke veil from the west, and then, loudly cheering, another Union regiment, a big one, came charging across the plateau, and the "Johnnies" had to scramble to their feet and scurry out of the way. The regiment bounded right over them, it seemed to Snipe, and went on at the guns the rebs were dragging away, and presently it, too, was swallowed up in smoke and fire on every side, and wounded officers and men came drifting back. One of the former recognized Major Stark at once, and made some soldiers lift and carry him, and in this way they got back down behind the Henry house, where there were hundreds of stragglers, – hundreds, – and among them were a number of the Fire Zouaves, and Snipe caught sight of Keating, and the little sergeant joined them at once. "It's all up," said he. "We hain't got no dis*cipp*line, or we'd a cleaned them fellers out quick as Forty could snuff out a fire." All the same he stood by Snipe and the party carrying Major Stark, and so made a way through groups of scattered soldiery until, somewhere ahead toward the Warrenton pike, they could see blue regiments still in solid line, and ambulances and wagons, and thither they bore their officer until at last they laid him behind the shelter of a stone wall; and there they found one of Burnside's regiments waiting orders, and its surgeon hurried to their aid, and slit up the major's trousers and knocked the lid of a cracker-box into splints, and deftly set and bandaged the fractured leg while the battle raged at the front. Sherman and Wilcox and Burnside still had unbroken

and reliable regiments. The little detachment of regular cavalry was drawn up out there to the south on the heights near the Chinn house. The captured batteries might still be retaken if only some practised hand could put in a brigade or two together. But just as they were getting the major into an ambulance there came fierce, crashing volleys through the woods in the direction of the Junction, and a grand chorus of exultant cheers and yells. A fresh line of troops burst from the fringe of woods directly at the south and from the west of the Sudley Springs road. The regiments then advancing up the slope were struck in flank and rear. The cavalry came whirling down off the height with many a saddle empty, and everybody seemed to realize at once that more of Johnston's troops had arrived and turned the right of the line, and then everything seemed to melt away in earnest.

"Still," said the major, in telling of it later, "we could not realize we were badly whipped. We knew we must have punished them as hard as we were punished, all but the mishandling, perhaps, of those batteries, and all that seemed necessary was to fall back on the heights of Centreville and there stand our ground." But instead of going thither by the direct route along the pike, which would have held the commands together, through some further mischance the brigades, left finally to shift for themselves, drifted back the way they came, and this led to the further disaster to the north of Bull Run. No sooner had the retiring troops "uncovered" the stone bridge than Confederate guns and cavalry pushed forward, and one well-handled battery

found a position from which it could easily command that suspension bridge over Cub Run, some two miles farther east. And then the fun began in earnest – for the rebs. That bridge was the sole means of escape of all Union batteries and a whole menagerie of draught animals, wagons, ambulances, and even buggies and carriages of sightseers from Washington, all surging back that way. A shell exploding on the bridge killed and wounded the mules of a heavy wagon, which was instantly overturned, completely blocking the passage for other wheels. More shells burst about the ears of the now demoralized drivers and teamsters, who cut their traces, mounted their animals, and rode madly away. As darkness fell gradually upon the scene, a dozen more splendid guns and several dozen wagon-loads of stores and supplies were left, and among the abandoned vehicles was the ambulance conveying the wounded major, watched over by faithful Snipe and Sergeant Keating.

But even now the lad did not despair. At the steep bank of Cub Run, half a mile north of the fatal bridge, a two-horse, two-seated open farm wagon had been left by its terror-stricken owners, who half waded, half swam, across and scurried up the opposite slope. A bright idea struck the boy. It was impossible to get across Cub Run with a wagon. But there were the open fields to the west of it. There were those wood roads that he had traversed the night before. Why not try that way? Somehow, between them, he and Keating got that team and wagon turned about. Then they "boosted" the major to the rear seat, where Keating

supported him, while Snipe took the reins and, turning sharp to the north, with dozens of fugitives yelling caution, comment, or suggestion, he drove away from them all into the cool, dark woodland lanes that wound along east of the route the disordered column was following, and just about dusk, emerging on the other side, Snipe caught sight of the ridge and the farm-house, the scene of his exploit the night before. How changed were all conditions now! Away down on the lowlands near Bull Run, in long column of twos or fours, some regimental fragments were still strung out, trailing wearily from Sudley Ford. They still interposed, therefore, between the fugitives and the enemy. The major, though making no moan, was ashen with the agony caused by the jolting of the wagon. The sweat was starting in beads from his forehead, and Keating said they must give him rest. Huddled behind the farm-house they found the two trembling old negroes left there as caretakers. Though unnerved by the sound of battle, they had not dared desert their post. Snipe bade them bring out instantly a mattress and blankets. The seats were taken from the wagon. The mattress and blankets were spread upon the bottom. One of the old darkies cooked a substantial supper. The horses were watered and fed. Provisions, wine, and apple-jack were stowed in the wagon. The major, rested and partially revived, was lifted in. Then with Snipe and Keating trudging alongside, once more under the starlight they drove eastward on the road leading, as the old darkies said, right over to the turnpike.

But a sore trial awaited them. A mile or more they moved

cautiously along, and then began the descent of a slope, at the bottom of which Snipe felt sure they would find Cub Run. There was the Run, placid, deep, steep-banked as ever, but the vitally important bridge was cut away. Grayson's troopers, to secure themselves against surprise, had destroyed it two days before. Farther in that direction they could not go. Here they could not stay. Any moment might bring the Black Horse Cavalry, of which so much had been said and so little seen, scouting around that flank of the retreating army. Away off to the southeast, about Centreville, they could hear the confused sounds of bugle calls. Away off to the south Blenker's reserve brigade was still in line of battle, covering the Union retreat. Every now and then the rising night wind would bear the distant crackle and crash of file firing, but the bigger guns were still, and here in the pitchy darkness, with a strange team, in a strange land, were Snipe and Keating, sole guardians of a precious life, – that of the wounded and suffering major. "It's of no use, boys," said Stark, faintly. "Drive slowly back to the house and leave me with the old darkies. Then you go and make the best of your way to Fairfax. You'll be safe there."

They did turn about and drive to the farm-house and "rout out" the darkies again, but only to make one of the old servitors come as a guide, for Snipe and the sergeant both declared no rebel should lug that Yankee major off to prison so long as wit or work could save him.

All night they plodded slowly on, twisting and turning through

country lanes or bridle-tracks. Time and again they had to halt and scout, for the poor bewildered negro lost the way again and again, and when at last morning dawned, they were not nine miles on a bee-line north of Sudley church, but were hopelessly far from Fairfax. And now the rain that always follows a heavy battle began to fall. They hid in the thicket all the hours till darkness came again, drowsing by turns. They hitched in and again pushed northward at nightfall, but the stars were hidden. There was nothing to guide them. They groped into another thicket and hid another day, the rain still pouring steadily. Snipe "shinned" up a tree and took the bearings of the farm-houses within sight; took heart because he saw no signs of scouting cavalry, everything being now afar off to the eastward along the main roads to Washington, and, turning his jacket inside out, after brief conference with Keating he stole away through the dripping thickets, and lurked about the nearest farm until he succeeded in making a negro hear his cautious signals. Money was potent and the major had plenty. The darky brought grain for the horses, and chickens, eggs, and milk, and that night guided them through many a devious way until within an hour of dawn they were again hidden in the thick woods, still farther to the northwest and away from the travelled roads. The nearest village now seemed eight or ten miles away. Before the negro left them he hunted up a friend to take his place. Ten dollars for his night's work! It was a fortune, and eagerly his successor sought to earn as much.

And so, guided and fed by darkies, hiding by day and journeying occasionally by night, they kept on for nearly a week, heading for the Potomac about Edwards' Ferry, hoping to dodge all patrols meantime and to discover some way of slipping past the pickets as they neared the river. Nearer Washington every bridle-path they knew would be guarded. Through the relays of darkies they learned that General Beauregard's army had enveloped the defences of the capital on the south side of the Potomac, and that troops were passing to and fro all over the country between Leesburg and Alexandria. Major Stark said, therefore, their only chance was to lie in hiding somewhere until his leg had knit. Money he still fortunately had in sufficient quantity. Keating still had his rifle and revolver, though the major and Snipe had been bereft of their pistols. Their negro friend led them to a dense thicket in a deep ravine, far from the highways and byways. Wood and water were abundant. Shelter they made of boughs. Food and news the darkies brought them in quantities, and here they nursed their plucky major and studied the country toward the Potomac until at last the bone seemed knitting, and then, one starlit night, late in August, pushed cautiously on again, still taking their wagon, and with the dawn of the next day they were across the Leesburg road and deep in the woods toward the ferry. Here another stay became necessary. Southern pickets and patrols lined the banks of the stream, and a day or two later their new guide, a negro boy of eighteen, crept to them in terror to say he felt sure somebody must have "peached," for

"cavalry gemmen" were inquiring at every house and hamlet. A whole company had ridden out from Vienna that very day, and they were asking if any one had seen a two-horse farm wagon, with a sick man in it, and two other men driving. Troopers were beating up the wood roads then. In half an hour the wagon was in ashes, the tires and iron work hidden in the brush, and with Stark astride one horse, Snipe and Keating alternating on the other, they pushed through the forest to another hiding-place, hearing the whoops and yells and signal shots of the cavalry every hour until dusk. Then, with their negro guide, they kept on all night long, halting and dodging every little while; hid in the woods within sound of the Southern bugles all another day; stole on southeastward all another night, until their guide said Lewinsville was not a mile away to the south, and the Yankee pickets in front of Chain Bridge only a mile or so to the northeast. That day proved most eventful of all. Hungry, thirsty, and weary, they were waiting the return of Brennus, as was the classic name of their guide, when about dark he reached them empty-handed. Not a moment was to be lost, said he. The cavalry had struck their trail and were following the horse-tracks through the woods. There was an abandoned hut, a woodman's, half a mile away, and thither Stark limped painfully, leaning hard upon his friends. They managed to reach it just in time, their horses being left to shift for themselves. They were now close to the Union lines, yet the gray pickets and patrols guarded every path. They could not hope to carry Stark through such a net-work, and he could only

painfully limp and only occasionally bear a portion of his weight upon that leg. Nor could they hope to remain undiscovered another day. There was only one thing to be done. Get word through the lines to the Yankees, and beg for rescue.

Stark quickly pencilled the message on tissue-paper, torn from before a picture page in the little testament he always carried. "Major Stark, crippled, Sergeant Keating, and Corporal Lawton are hiding just south of the rebel outposts. One troop of cavalry the only force nearer than Lewinsville except usual reserves. Unless rescued to-night will surely be recaptured in the morning. The bearer can guide. If possible help." This he signed officially and rolled in "Solace" tin-foil. "Now, Brennus," said he, "crawl past the rebs; get that to the Lincoln soldiers, and it's your freedom and fifty dollars to boot."

We know the rest.

CHAPTER XXIV

Far back along the wooded shores of the Potomac, where the mist is slowly creeping from the silent stream, the sentries are pacing the beaten path bounding each regimental camp. An odd custom, originating among the volunteers, has been the rule in several commands. Each sentry marched just fifty paces along his post in common time, then the cry "About!" would go ringing from post to post in every conceivable key and pitch, girdling one battalion with a chain of petulant yelps, another with a series of mournful groans. Fun for the sentries, and, for a time, for the camps, but a foe to soldier repose. The object was to cause the sentries to march in the same direction, and thereby prevent their turning their backs to each other, in which event there would be left unwatched a long stretch of sentry-post through which marauder might creep or roisterer escape. The custom lasted but a little while, proving more of a nuisance than a benefit. But there were three new regiments in which it obtained this lovely night, and they are brigaded with a veteran command that lords it over them because it has smelled powder and shed blood, which they have not. It is a ragged regiment, a rusty regiment, for it is still clad in the relics of the gray uniform in which its proud State sent it to the field three months before. It is saucy, and slouchy and independent, individually, as rag wearers are apt to be the world over. But it is wonderful to see that regiment brace

up when it gets in line, and that is what it has done this night, without a sound beyond the low-voiced "Turn out here" of the sergeants, as they sped from tent to tent, – without confusion or even question. Ten minutes from the time the general's aide has "routed out" the colonel, he has routed out his captains and the sergeants are routing out the men. Twenty minutes, and these silent companies are elbow to elbow on the color line in front of camp. The colonel rides out on his sure-footed old charger. His field-officers join their wings. Such commands as are given are in low voice and passed down the line. "Right face! Right shoulder shift arms! Forward, march! Route step and keep your mouths shut!" Out along the winding road they go, aide and colonel riding in front, over six hundred stalwart ragamuffins swinging behind. Men murmur or whisper to each other "What's up?" Here and there a canteen clinks, and there is a dull sound of swift-moving feet. Out they go past the lines of their own sentries, some of whom shout for the corporal and want to be "relieved off post" and allowed to go with their companies. All around the wooded heights south of Chain Bridge a dozen other regiments are placidly sleeping. Maine, Vermont, New York, Indiana, and Wisconsin there are represented, but only one State or regiment appears in the stealthily marching column. On it goes down a winding slope, file-closers edging in between the sets of fours as the roadway narrows. Up the rise beyond where stand or squat wondering groups of the picket reserves. On – another quarter of a mile where they find the supports. On past

outposts and pickets, and at last, after a sharp sprint of a mile, the word "Halt!" is muttered, and the rifle-butts are lowered to the foot, and the regiment stands among the whispering trees and waits. The leading company has not long to wonder. They hear and know the low voice of their general, giving brief directions to the little colonel. They hear the words "Open field – thin woods beyond. – Rebel pickets lining opposite skirt. – Supports, etc., along the road. Deploy your skirmish line. Drive in pickets. Capture all you can, but utter not a sound. Do not fire unless you have to. Push straight ahead along this wood road, swift as you can. We go with you."

A trembling negro boy crouches by the general's stirrup. Colonel Connor's horse almost treads on him in the dark. The colonel speaks a quiet word to the captain of the foremost company, and in low tone that officer orders, "'Tention, Company 'A!' Load at will! Load!" There is a sound of fumbling at heavy cartridge-boxes, of tearing paper, the whee-ep of the rammers springing from the pipes, a phosphorescent gleam of steel as they whirl in air, a muttered malediction as some fellow's cap is knocked off by an awkward neighbor. There is a dull pounding, as the heavy bullets are driven home, a clicking of gun-locks, as the little copper caps are thrust upon the cones; then the low thud of the iron-shod butts upon the ground and all is still. The lieutenant-colonel rides back along the column until he reaches the colors, each company in succession loading as silently. The left wing is bidden to remain where it is as a

reserve, and to await orders. The leading company, with arms trailed, forms line at the edge of the wood. The second platoon steps back three paces as reserve. The first receives the low-toned command, "As skirmishers, by the right and left flanks take intervals," a thing at which these Bull Run veterans have been drilling since early in May, and can do in even thicker darkness. In a minute the long line of dispersed shadows is formed, facing southwest, and in two minutes, with officers close up to the line, the general and his aides only a few yards behind, and five companies following noiselessly along the roadway, out they go across the starlight open. Everybody seems to know the enemy's sentinels will be found along that opposite skirt of woods. Everybody listens with straining ears and thumping heart for the first challenge. Those young Southrons are no fools on picket, and even in the dark a cat-footed skirmish line cannot hope to crawl upon them unobserved. Half-way across goes the long jagged line, – two-thirds of the two hundred yards that interpose between the groves, – and now the centremost, those along the pathway, backed by half a dozen fellows from the reserve, make ready for a rush. Ten yards more, then some luckless skirmisher trips on some unseen root, stumbles forward, and swears under his breath. Instantly from the clump of trees nearest the road there comes the sharp order "Halt!" and the click of a lock, but before the challenge can follow, there is a swift rush of stooping foes along the roadway, a heavy blow, a struggle, a sharp report, a stifled cry, then "Forward! Forward! double

quick!" everywhere along the column, and with the skirmishers leaping and crashing ahead through the timber, tumbling over the startled sentinels and pickets, with occasional crackling of rifle and shouting of warning and command, with officers darting along among the men, with the general and his aides and Colonel Connor spurring close after, with a dozen men swarming ahead along the dim pathway, and with the sturdy column still swiftly following at the double, the little command sweeps over the scattered outposts and reserves in front of it, the Southerners standing their ground like men, but being utterly overmatched, and finally, as the aroused and startled reserves, farther to the rear, fall slowly back toward their main body in the direction of Falls Church, the negro guide, bounding along with the foremost officers, leads the column farther to the southwest, past all infantry outposts and reserves until finally they go scrambling over a snake-fence on the edge of an open field, while away to the southeast guns are firing, bugles sounding the alarm, drums hoarsely rattling, and here as they stop to breathe and close up on the head of column, they are greeted by the stirring peal of a cavalry trumpet certainly not a half a mile away. It is the signal "To horse!" "Look out for those fellows, and give 'em a volley if they approach!" orders the colonel to his panting men. "Form a skirmish line fronting south, captain." And then, behind that living curtain, the rearmost companies come running up and forming battle line, while the general, with a dozen followers, rides into a little grove at the heels of their darky guide. There is

a moment of gleeful shouting and out they come again, slowly, a dark cluster of forms, some apparently supporting an enfeebled man, others grouping about some shadowy companions. Around these a whole company is rallied as escort and bidden to retrace its steps, and then the general rides back, beaming, under cover of the little battle line, and he and Connor shake hands and listen for a moment to the distant uproar of the alarm. And now the Union lines have taken it up, and far back toward the Potomac some new arrivals, as yet untried, have turned loose their bugles and drums, and the general says, quietly, "Let the command fall back slowly, but keep an eye open for the cavalry." Three minutes more and Connor has four companies back on the narrow road, with the skirmishers still out toward the south, and then, with sudden storm and thunder of hoofs, with trumpets sounding a spirited charge, without so much as deigning to see what force might be in front of them, there comes dashing up the turfy woodroad, in slender column, following, fearless, the lead of a daring young Virginian captain, a troop of yelling horsemen, the very fellows, doubtless, who for two days past have been scouring the woods for our fugitives. "It is a mad-brained trick." What possible object is to be gained? All they know is that somewhere along that road is a body of Yankee troops, and they have been burning for a chance to get at them ever since Bull Run. They do not even seem to see – they do not heed – the thin skirmish line through which they bear resistless. The few scattering shots fired are answered by the wild crackle of revolvers. On they come,

straight down the road, invisible as yet, but unmistakable. "Halt! Spread out there, men!" are Connor's orders. At least forty or fifty blue-coats line up quickly and solidly from fence to fence, every rifle at ready or aim, and none too soon. Five seconds more and out from the fire-spitting blackness at the south looms the charging column, and a blinding glare lights up the wood, a crashing volley wakes the echoes. Half a dozen horses come plunging, kicking and struggling, to the very feet of the stern array. Half a dozen gallant fellows are hurled to earth. The whole column is brought up standing, and then, realizing the peril of its position, breaks and turns and tears away, leaving two dead at the front and two or three more wounded, tumbling out of saddle as they rush back for the rear.

Foremost, half stunned and sorely wounded, but a fighter to the last, the Virginia captain struggles to his feet. Bayonets are levelled at his dauntless heart, but a sharp order restrains them. Strong hands seize and disarm him. Strong arms bear him, struggling faintly, within the ranks of his captors. The dead are left to their friends, the wounded tenderly raised and borne as gently as possible to the rear. Then once again the column resumes its homeward march, and in half an hour is safe within the Union lines.

Meantime where is Shorty, whose craze it was to see what might be going on about that hamlet of Lewinsville, whose longing it was to "do something" like Snipe, and who was sleeping the sleep of healthful, hearty boyhood, when he would

have given his ears to be with that raiding column? Somewhere about midnight he became conscious of excited whisperings about him. Marmion was bustling around. Horses were being saddled, and, sitting bolt upright, he heard the clamor of bugles and drums, and, rushing out in front of head-quarters, could distinguish the distant crash of musketry. Then out came two officers, buckling on revolvers and swords. Marmion came running with their horses, and to Shorty's excited question, "Where's the general?" he got the heartless answer, "Gone hours ago, youngster, while you were asleep." Never stopping to saddle, only whipping through "Badger's" rattling teeth the bit of his bridle and throwing the reins over his head, Shorty is astride in a second, and, hardly yet wide awake, is away at a sputtering gallop after the departing officers. Before they have reached the little run half a mile out he has overtaken them. The sound of skirmish firing is still lively at the distant southwest front. He knows every inch of the road, and is mad to get ahead, for the officers ride slowly and with caution.

"Let me lead, captain!" he cries, regardless of martial propriety. "I know the way." And it is a case for common sense, not ceremony, and the staff-officers say, "Go on." And now there is a race through the night, "Badger" having a big lead and easily keeping it. But the road narrows, the sounds of fight subside, and when at last the little party reaches the outposts they meet the left wing of the regiment briskly marching homeward. They see the light of a guard-fire in a hollow a little farther to the front, and

there a dense throng of Connor's men in tattered gray, mingling with the blue of the picket-guards, groups about a little knot of officers and three gaunt, ragged, haggard fellows, one a bearded man of forty-five or fifty, who leans heavily on the shoulder of a supporter, while he grasps the hand of the general and looks gratefully into his eyes. Another is a wiry little specimen in the relics of a Fire Zouave jacket, the chevrons of a sergeant on his sleeve. The third is a tall, lank, long-legged youth, with hollow cheeks and big brown eyes, and a brownish fuzz just sprouting on lip and cheeks and chin, – a tall lad to whom the elder man turns suddenly, laying a thin hand upon his shoulder, a tall lad who looks up shyly and silently as the general grasps his hands and begins some words of hearty praise. But the general's remarks are brought to sudden stop by the impetuous rush of a snorting horse into the midst of the group, the precipitate leap of a half-crazed lad from his back to the ground, and the general's voice is drowned by that of his graceless orderly, half squeal, half choking cry, as the "little 'un" springs upon the tall youth, twining legs and arms, both, about him, and the only intelligible word he says is "Snipe!" The only answer is a long, straining hug and the almost bashful murmur, "Shorty!"

One would say that in that meeting there was interest sufficient for one night – and two boys, – but it was by no means all. A few minutes later two trooper prisoners, led in beside the litter of their wounded captain, were being examined by the general. Both were silent, badly shaken by the fall of their horses. One

was slightly wounded; neither wished to talk. The leader had swooned, and the surgeons were doing their best for him.

"What is your captain's name?" was asked the unhurt cavalier, a dashing young sergeant who might well lay claim to being of one of the famous "first families of Virginia" – a dandy trooper.

"Grayson," was the short reply.

Major Stark and Snipe glanced quickly at each other, and then the former spoke. "Pardon me, general; that was the name of the cavalry lieutenant captured by Corporal Lawton, here, just before Bull Run. Is this another Grayson?" he asked of the prisoner.

"No. You asked our captain's name. He was wounded and has not rejoined yet. That's our first lieutenant." And then, as though to emphasize his disgust at being bored by "mudsill" questions, the young gallant languidly yawned; then, thrusting his hand into the breast of his jaunty trooper jacket, with admirable assumption of supreme indifference to his surroundings, he drew forth a fine watch, coolly stepped to the fire, held it so that the light would shine upon its face, and then was about returning it, when the irrepressible Shorty sprang forward into the fire-lit circle.

"Where'd you get that watch?" he cried. "Look, Snipe! General! It was stolen at school last fall! It's Joy's!"

CHAPTER XXV

The week that followed was one not soon to be forgotten by two at least of Pop's old boys. To begin with, after all the wear and tear and exposure of the month, it was several days before Major Stark, with his gallant companions, was able to go into Washington. He lay in a big tent close to brigade head-quarters, the guest of the general and the object of assiduous attentions from high officials, accomplished surgeons, and enthusiastic soldiers, Snipe and Keating coming in for many a word of praise and promise of advancement and reward. Even the great President, accompanied by Secretary Seward, drove out in his carriage and visited the invalid New-Englander and listened to his story, and sent for Sergeant Keating and the "two boys." He wanted to see that queerly assorted team, said he, and whimsically remarked, after looking them over, with a smile for both and a hearty shake of the hand, "Well, the long and short of it is, you're both bound to be soldiers, I see. Perhaps we can help."

Keating, promptly commissioned a lieutenant in the Second Fire Zouaves, was ordered to join that command. Stark, as soon as he was able to move with comfort, was to go home and accept the colonelcy of a new regiment awaiting him in its camp, Snipe with him. But meantime Mr. and Mrs. Park had reached the capital, and had been driven out to Chain Bridge, where the fond

mother had a very warm reception from all who by this time had heard Snipe's school story (and who that got within hail of Shorty any day that week had failed to hear it?) and the grim step-father a correspondingly cool one. Park had borne more than his share of worry and woe for long months past, and as means to the end, had come with the cool determination of making George an offer, either to put him through college with a fair allowance, or start him in business at Rhinebeck, for Park had been in correspondence with the Doctor and with Halsey, and had reluctantly come to the conclusion that the boy couldn't have been the thief he thought, though of course he was an ingrate and lacking in appreciation. But Park found that step-parental authority was not recognized in the army. The boy himself was bent on following the fortunes of his soldier friends. Major Stark had told the mother of his own plans and the President's promises with regard to her son, and the fond mother, proud, yet full of fears, yielded to the wishes of her boy and the advice of his comrades, and decided against those of her lord and master. Park found the atmosphere of the camp uncongenial. It chilled him like a channel fog, and he left for home, and pressing business, within another day, while Mrs. Park remained. There were other sympathetic women there, wives of officers visiting in camp, and she did not lack for friends.

But for Snipe and Shorty there came a day of thrilling interest when Captain Beach, of the "First Long Island," together with Keating and Desmond, of the Zouaves, met at the provost-

marshal's in Washington, and what a meeting it was! The story of the school-boy days had been told the general, who listened with vivid interest. It was he who planned further movements and arranged the necessary preliminaries at the War Department. Among the few Confederate prisoners in the city at the time were young Grayson, captured as a lieutenant just before Bull Run, and Spottswood, captured as sergeant the night of the rescue in front of Chain Bridge, both of the Virginia cavalry. The latter had wrathfully declined to surrender the watch claimed by Shorty to be stolen property (those were the earliest – the callow – days of the war, when the wishes of prisoners as to their personal property were occasionally respected), and a tremendous scene had ensued. But within three days there appeared at Washington two young gentlemen, Pop's boys, sent thither in response to telegraphic inquiries, – Messrs. Paul Grayson and Clinton Joy, – and they had been taken to the Capitol prison by Captain Winthrop, a former Pop boy, and there had been an interview between the cousins, Northern and Southern; then, a conference between Grayson the Confederate and his bumptious statesman, and then Mr. Spottswood very gracefully surrendered the watch, which Mr. Joy positively and conclusively identified as his own, notwithstanding the obliteration of the name, and Spottswood told how it came into his possession. He had spent some time the previous winter and spring in Mobile, Savannah, and Charleston, had seen a good deal of two young – gentlemen – and he used the word with hesitation – from New York, two brothers by the name

of Hulker. There had grown up something of an intimacy. They had money in abundance at first, but finally seemed to run out, and they had to "baw-wo," said Mr. Spottswood, with a blush, from their friends. In fact, they had "baw-woed" so much from friends to whom he had presented them that he felt in honor bound to make it good, and as the young men had to get out of the South in a hurry in May, and he had become suspicious as to their solvency, he had felt compelled, he said it regretfully, to demand some security, and they had left with him diamonds and this watch. The diamonds were at his home in Richmond. The watch he unhesitatingly turned over, as became a gentleman, to its proper owner. When Lieutenant Grayson was told that all this was necessary to clear the good name of the young scholar soldier who had captured him, you can imagine his interest in the case was by no means diminished.

This matter settled, and a joyous meeting having taken place between the four schoolmates, Captains Beach and Winthrop, brother officers now and ex-Columbiads, affably supervising, the next thing was to follow up the trail of Desmond's statements to Shorty, and this duty was intrusted to Keating. An odd feature with the old fire department was the alliance, offensive and defensive, which existed among certain companies, in contradistinction to the bitter rivalries which were inevitable. In the long-continued feud between Big Six and Manhattan Eight whole communities were involved. Political societies and clubs took sides with one or the other, and rows innumerable

went on for years. Downtown companies, generally at odds with their neighbors, swore eternal friendship with some up-town organization which "ran" in lower districts. Marion 9 and Lady Washington 40 "lay" within three blocks of each other in the lower Fifth Fire District, but did duty, the former in the Fourth and Fifth, the latter in the Sixth and Seventh; turning out, of course, for all fires within a few blocks of their respective stations; and these two companies were on terms of very distant and dignified reserve. Away up-town, in like manner, were Lexington 7 and Pacific 28, both of which answered alarms from the Fifth District, both of which ran down Third Avenue to the Bowery in so doing, and as a consequence, time and again met and raced every inch of the way. The long run from Twenty-seventh Street to the Cooper Institute or beyond would almost exhaust their own men, but by the time they got far down-town there were swarms of allies to man the drag-ropes, 9's men with No. 7, 40's lively lads with 28, and, counting on this old alliance, Keating called on Desmond to redeem his promise to Shorty and tell what he knew about the school or its scholars, and Desmond's story was what boys of a later generation would have called "a corker."

He used to be hard up himself, he said, and more than once had had to "spout" his watch, and several times in other ways to raise money at a pawnbroker's, and there were some young fellows, whom he had twice encountered there, regular young Fifth Avenue swells, and one night while he was in a stall at the

counter, he heard two of them come into an adjoining box, and they had a beautiful gold watch on which they wished to make a raise. He could not see it even by leaning away forward, for the partition prevented, but he could hear distinctly all the talk. The pawnbroker didn't want to take it. He said he was afraid. He knew both the "young fellers;" they'd often been there before, and he knew that watch didn't belong to either of the two. They swore, however, that it belonged to a friend in their set who didn't wish to be known, but had to have money that very night, and, "why, that watch must have been worth over three hundred dollars!" It was a beautiful thing, they said, and all they wanted was fifty; their friend would redeem it the very next week and pay high. They were so earnest about it that Desmond forgot his own troubles in listening to theirs. At last they got some thirty or forty dollars and left in a hurry. Desmond looked after them. Both wore fur caps pulled down over their ears, and coat-collars up almost hiding their heads, although it was quite early in the fall, and, though a raw east wind was blowing and a rain pouring, it was not cold enough for such attire. Outside the shop they were joined by others who were in waiting, three of them, and they scooted back toward the west in a hurry. Not two months afterwards Desmond was there again, and a big, smooth-faced, smug-looking fellow came in, with his head all bundled up, and he had the pawn ticket for that very watch, Desmond knew by the talk; and the pawnbroker had some words with the fellow because he tried to get it back for less by a good deal than the young

men agreed to pay, and both got mad and abused each other, and each said he could send the other to jail. It was fun to hear them, said Desmond, and he wondered who the big man could be, and followed him out and saw him meet the same two "young fellers" that were there before. The big man took off his hat and wiped his face, he was "so blown with jawing," and Desmond said he had a good long look at him, and would know him again anywhere.

Now he was sure he had seen some of those young fellers with the school crowd that used to be up at Duncan's every day for luncheon, and in the "Shanghai" set that ran with Metamora Hose. But from that time they quit going to that pawnshop. The owner told him the police came round there looking for that very watch, and he was glad he was rid of them, and of that "big, smug-faced feller," too. He felt sure he was a thief. As for the boys, the broker said two of them had been there time and again before, and they were a hard lot. "Would you know the two if you were to see them again?" Keating asked the Zouave.

"I didn't see them, plainly. I couldn't, they were wrapped up so, but I could hear them plain, and I'd know their voices among a million."

All this having been duly reported, and Beach, Winthrop, and one or two senior officers having been in consultation, this strange meeting was decided upon, and, not knowing why they were bidden, Snipe and Shorty found themselves one bright September morning in the anteroom of the provost-marshal's

office. Beach and Winthrop were already there. It was just one week after the arrest of the general's orderly by the patrol and his incarceration by order of the lieutenant of the guard. There was a moment of greeting and quiet chat. Then the boys were shown into a side room, and there sat Keating and Desmond. Beach called to the latter. "I wish you to sit here with me close to the door and listen to every word spoken in the office during the next five minutes." Then he, too, seated himself. There was silence a moment or two, then a low-toned conference between the provost-marshal and Winthrop, and presently a door opened, a somewhat unsteady, clinking step was heard, and then a voice, at sound of which Snipe and Shorty started and looked into each other's faces, while Beach sat watching Desmond.

"Did you wish to see me, sir?"

The speaker was invisible, but there was no mistaking the voice, with its odd, jerky, nervous accent.

"Yes, sir. I have been called upon to explain why the guard held a bearer of despatches and an important message last week. You were officer of the guard at the time. What have you to say?"

"Why – major – I don't know much about it. The men said they ordered him to stop all the way for half a mile, and he defied 'em. He – was all covered with dirt and looked like some common volunteer drummer-boy out on a drunk. I didn't suppose any general would trust despatches to – anybody like that. I thought he was lyin'."

"In point of fact, sir," interposed the provost-marshal, "did

you not recognize the messenger and have reason to know that his story was true? Did you not order him to the cells, refusing to listen?"

"P'r'aps I did, and just because I *did* know him to be a no-account little ragamuffin that used to be runnin' round with the firemen and such like – "

Sir Toby Belch listening from ambush to Malvolio's soliloquy at his expense could not have looked more amazed and wrathful than did Shorty at this. Beach, unable to repress a grin, suppressed him with a gesture.

"You may retire, Mr. Hoover. Remain at the guard-room. I may want you in a moment."

And then the party was summoned from its concealment, and then all eyes were on Desmond, and Winthrop propounded this question:

"Well, did you recognize any voice?"

"That young feller's – that was in here just now? I couldn't see him through the screen, but I never heard his voice before in all me life."

And this ended the first lesson. But there were others to come, for the Doctor and Beach had been in rapid correspondence, and when three days later still Major Stark, a celebrity now whom Gotham was eager to honor, arrived at the Cortlandt Street ferry, faithful Snipe still at his side, and Lieutenant Keating, furloughed that he, too, might be lionized, there accompanied them the little corporal of Zouaves, Desmond, late of "28's Engine."

Aunt Lawrence, with her carriage, was at the ferry, effusive in her regrets that Colonel Stark had to go on at once, but grateful that he could permit George to remain, for nothing would answer but that dear, brave George must spend a few days under her roof before reporting at the camp of his new regiment. And with Aunt Lawrence, obsequious, smug, assiduous in his attentions to Mahster George, loading up with Mahster George's light luggage, and bowing low in homage to Mahster George's distinguished commander, as that gallant officer was driven away, was Aunt Lawrence's most expensive household luxury, the English butler, and as that dignitary closed the door of the Lawrence carriage and lifted his hat and wiped his glowing face, and then waddled pompously off in quest of a horse-car, Desmond grabbed his officer by the arm. "There's the Shanghai that got the watch and jawed the pawnbroker and ran with that gang of young fellers," said he. And only another day and Aunt Lawrence's butler marched away in the grip of the law, and Aunt Lawrence's house-maid lay screaming in simulated hysterics.

A precious pair were these, as events and detectives speedily disclosed, and words can hardly describe the shame and horror with which Aunt Lawrence presently realized that, to divert suspicion from themselves, her own domestics had found means of attaching it to George. Their stealings had as yet been confined to old-fashioned trinkets and jewelry, which she seldom looked at and the loss of which would not soon be discovered. It was not the jewels, but the good name the servitor had stolen, that

now arrayed all the household against him and his unhappy victim, the damsel who so neglected George's room and linen. Binny, the butler, went to the police station without a chance to caution her, so she went to the priest, and one confession led to another. The girl was Irish and had a conscience or compunctions, and returning to her mistress, threw herself at her feet, and sobbed out her story. Binny had her completely in his power, or made her think he had. It was he who compelled her to take the cameo and other jewelry from time to time, and who planned more extensive raids to follow. It was he to whom she surrendered Seymour's gold pencil-case, which she found on the floor of Mahster George's room, but stoutly she declared, when questioned by Mrs. Lawrence, that of Joy's beautiful watch she had never even heard.

And this was more than Binny could say when confronted by Desmond, the pawnbroker, and certain members of the police force who had had an eye on him, especially when within twenty-four hours of his incarceration there was landed in the neighboring cell the person of Mr. Briggs, late of the First Latin, but no longer on the rolls of Columbia. Others, long since fathomed as to character by Pop, were under the watchful eye of "the force," and Messrs. Brodrick and the Hulkers, both, betook themselves to summer resorts, despite the fact that the tide of fashion was turning back from the sea-shore and the mountains. Then Briggs the elder, a broken-down politician and former office-holder, was sent for and closeted with the Doctor, Halsey,

Hoover senior, Martigny, and the detective, with the result that within an hour Briggs junior was summoned into the presence of the same tribunal, and then his last remaining trace of nerve gave way.

Even then he lied, shifted, dodged, accused, but one after another his lies were met and overthrown, and at last the miserable story came out in driblets, but the chain was complete. To raise small sums he had begun selling books, sometimes from his father's scant stock, then from other boys' fathers. Binny, on some similar errand bent, had twice encountered him and recognized him as the young "fellar" that used to come to see Mahster George, and bolt up to his room even when the lad was out. Binny found that discovery worth working. He gave Briggs a bracelet, once worn by "me sainted wife, now in 'eaven," but Binny said he was in need of funds and must dispose of it, and wouldn't mind giving Mahster Briggs something "'ansom'" out of what he could get for it. Then Binny had Briggs "by the hair," so to speak, and held him for future service. Hoover, too, and the Hulkers, had used him as a cat's-paw. They loaned him money, and then when he could not repay, demanded service in kind. Then the Hulkers themselves were emboldened to try their luck at the pawnbroker's, and by going only at night – and generally stormy nights – they managed to keep their identity concealed. Briggs was dreadfully in debt to both Hoover and the Hulkers when one day in the early fall the First Latin indulged in one of its famous charges. Briggs, crushed against the bookcase, and

making as much noise as anybody, was one of the last to quit the spot. Joy's beautiful watch caught his eye, dangling at the end of its chain, as the class was disentangling, and a quick jerk transferred it to his capacious pocket. He swore he never meant to keep it. He only wanted to "have some fun with Joy," and to prove it, he said, he ran round to Brodrick's stable and told him and the Hulkers all about it, and left it with the Hulkers for safe-keeping, and that night they pawned it. He didn't dare report it, for they could tell far worse things about him than he could about them, but all were scared when they heard of the Doctor's vigorous measures, and not daring to return for it themselves, Briggs bethought him of Binny, and between them they raised the money necessary to redeem it and sent him, Binny, as their emissary. Then the Hulkers hid it somewhere, and the next thing Briggs knew Binny, and the Hulkers, too, were demanding tribute of him. Briggs vowed he was horrified when he found that Snipe was suspected and accused; he always liked Snipe, Hoover wouldn't lend him another cent, and he was at his wit's end where to raise the money to meet their demands and forestall the threatened exposure, when quarter day and the fire came. He saw his opportunity when Halsey left the desk unguarded, and ran and scooped some gold out of the drawer, poked some of the pieces in his trousers, some in his waistcoat, and some in his overcoat-pocket when at the rack. If he poked any in Shorty's, which hung next to his, it was all a mistake. He wouldn't have done that for the world, he said, and then, as he daren't be found

with the money, he gave most of it to the Hulkers, as before, "for safe-keeping" and to square accounts, and that was about all poor Briggs's inquisitors cared to know. A warrant went out for Brodrick, who managed to precede it to Montreal, but the Hulkers were quietly apprehended and escorted back to Gotham. And here ended the last of the cabal against Snipe. Now came the reaction.

One glorious day in late September the old First Latin reassembled in strong force at the old school, the occasion being a flag-raising. There they were, the same glad-hearted lot of boys that had made merry in the old school-room many and many a day, Hoover and Briggs being conspicuous by their absence. "Regimental duties," wrote the father of the former, would prevent his son's attendance on the auspicious occasion, whereat the Doctor winked over his spectacles at the grinning array of listeners, and "other engagements," it was casually mentioned, would account for the non-appearance of Briggs. At the usual hour of recess the whole school, Classical and English departments both, had clustered about two young fellows in martial uniform, Snipe Lawton, brown-eyed, blushing and shy, towering over most of them in stature, arrayed in the trim-fitting frock-coat and complete uniform of a first lieutenant of infantry, and Shorty, full to the brim of mingled pride and delight, wearing the garb of the famous Zouave regiment to which he had been attached, even while being, by order, as he not infrequently remarked, on detached duty at brigade head-quarters. This was

emphatically Snipe's benefit, however, and no one begrudged it to him less than did his old chum. A little after noon a burst of martial music was heard far up the avenue, and the majestic Doctor waved his thronging boys to their posts, and down the stairs they tumbled, tumultuous, and "lined up," six deep, on the opposite curb. And then, led by a capital band, a great regiment in full marching order, with knapsacks packed and overcoats rolled, came striding down the west side of the broad thoroughfare in column of fours, and a soldierly-looking colonel reined out as they reached the school, and let the right wing, five strong companies, go swinging by until the beautiful silken colors, national and State, were directly opposite the window, where in immaculate broadcloth and immense dignity stood the Doctor, a brand-new bunting flag on his arm, Snipe, with the "down haul" halliard on his right, Shorty, with the slack, on his left. Then the colonel's powerful voice rang out along the thronging street, "Battalio-o-n-n-n halt! Front!" and the whole regiment, at least a thousand strong, stood motionless facing the east. Then the band was drawn up in front of the right centre company, and at a signal, struck up the grand strains of the "Star-Spangled Banner." "Present arms!" shouted Colonel Stark, then reined his horse about and lowered his glistening sword in salute. The school and the great crowd set up a stupendous cheer. The Doctor beamed and waved his white cambric handkerchief. Halsey and Meeker and other masters smiled from the windows. Snipe hauled away with might and main, Shorty paid out, and

the beautiful folds of blue and scarlet and dazzling white went sailing slowly aloft until they touched the peak of the tall white staff at the top of the building. Then the Doctor shook hands with Snipe again and again and put his hand on his shoulder and waved to the crowd as though he would say "Cheer for Lawton," and cheer they did, and presently that cheer swelled into a lusty-lunged roar, for the colonel gave the command shoulder and order arms, magnificently executed, followed by "Rest!" which gave the regiment leave to make itself heard, and never before had Fourth Avenue rung to such acclaim.

Then Snipe shook hands with his old teachers again, poor, pallid Meeker's eyes filling with tears, and with John, the janitor, who grinned and writhed in ecstasy. Then he and Shorty came bounding down the stairs, and another shout went up from the school, and something like a sob rose in Shorty's throat as Lawton drew for the first time his beautiful sword, the gift of all the classes, and, throwing his left arm about the "little 'un's" neck, held him in close hug one second, then bounded away to the post of the adjutant, his eyes too full to look back, his heart too full to speak. Once more the great regiment sprang into column of fours, the arms snapped up to the right shoulder, the band broke into a magnificent swinging quickstep, and the Fourth New England strode sturdily away to make its mark on many a field, its boy adjutant marching at the head of column. Many a long block it went before the last of Pop's boys dropped off and turned back, only to find that half-holiday had been declared in honor of the

event of the day. Snipe and Shorty, big Damon and little Pythias, Mr. Lincoln's "long and short of it," had seen the last of the old school and school-days, with all their fun and frolic and their sad and solemn memories. The old First Latin went on to collegiate days minus its soldier boys and the little lamented Briggs. After all, there was aroused a bit of sympathy for him when the Hulkers were bought off in some mysterious way and never appeared for trial, when Brodrick was heard of as "living high" in Canada, and only the detestable butler was left to share the punishment with the rapscallion of the class. Some boys thought Hoover was so low that "even if he didn't steal he put Briggs up to it," and the school was furious at the thought of his being an officer in the regular army.

It did poor Hoover little good, however. His regiment was soon taken from the comforts of Washington and sent campaigning, and three days' marching through Virginia dust proved more than the poor fellow could stand. He broke down on the eve of battle, had to be sent to the rear in an ambulance, and the regiment said he would be wise to resign: so for once wisdom and Hoover worked together. John, the janitor, lived to tell many a wonderful tale of the times they had when the First Latin had such "fellers" in it as Lawton and Joy, Bertram and Beekman, Julian and Prime. Meeker got a new lease of life with the going out of the old class and the coming in of the new, for the Doctor did not spoil these latter as he had their predecessors, and the Doctor treated him with a consideration that had been lacking a

long time, for there were days in the past when Meeker's poverty and troubles, coupled with other circumstantial evidence, had made him the object of the Doctor's suspicions, and Meeker knew it, and thanked heaven for the load that was lifted when Briggs broke down and bore it all with him. As for the Doctor himself, he came at the same hour every day, poked his cane and the old jokes at the occupants on the mourners' bench, and never seemed more tickled in his life than when, from the distant front, there came a joint letter from Damon and Pythias, who happened to meet for one blissful evening. The watch episode was a thing he would never speak of, but shrewd school-boy observers found a topic that would sometimes start him even to the extent of proclaiming subsequent half-holiday, and that was "our polemical young friends" who had abandoned the classic shades of Columbia for the sword.

"'*Et tunc pugnabant pugnis*,'" he began one day —

"Ha, young gentlemen of the First Latin, behold the line immortalized by your predecessors of the year agone. Half-holiday to him who completes it with a new reading.

"'*Et tunc – pugna – bant pug – nis*' —

"Who supplies the ellipsis? What! a volunteer already? Let us see: '*Et nunc gladiis pugnan*.' Neither brilliant nor metrical, but pregnant with patriotic truth. Half-holiday to Douglas, and – How have the rest done, Mr. Halsey?"

"H'm," says Halsey, "rather worse if anything."

"Ha! Ominous report. Take your seats, young gentlemen,

and we resume the consideration of Xenophon. What's that suggestion? 'Fresh air to clear your brains?' Loquax redivivus! However, Mr. Halsey, – there may be something in it. We'll try it."

THE END