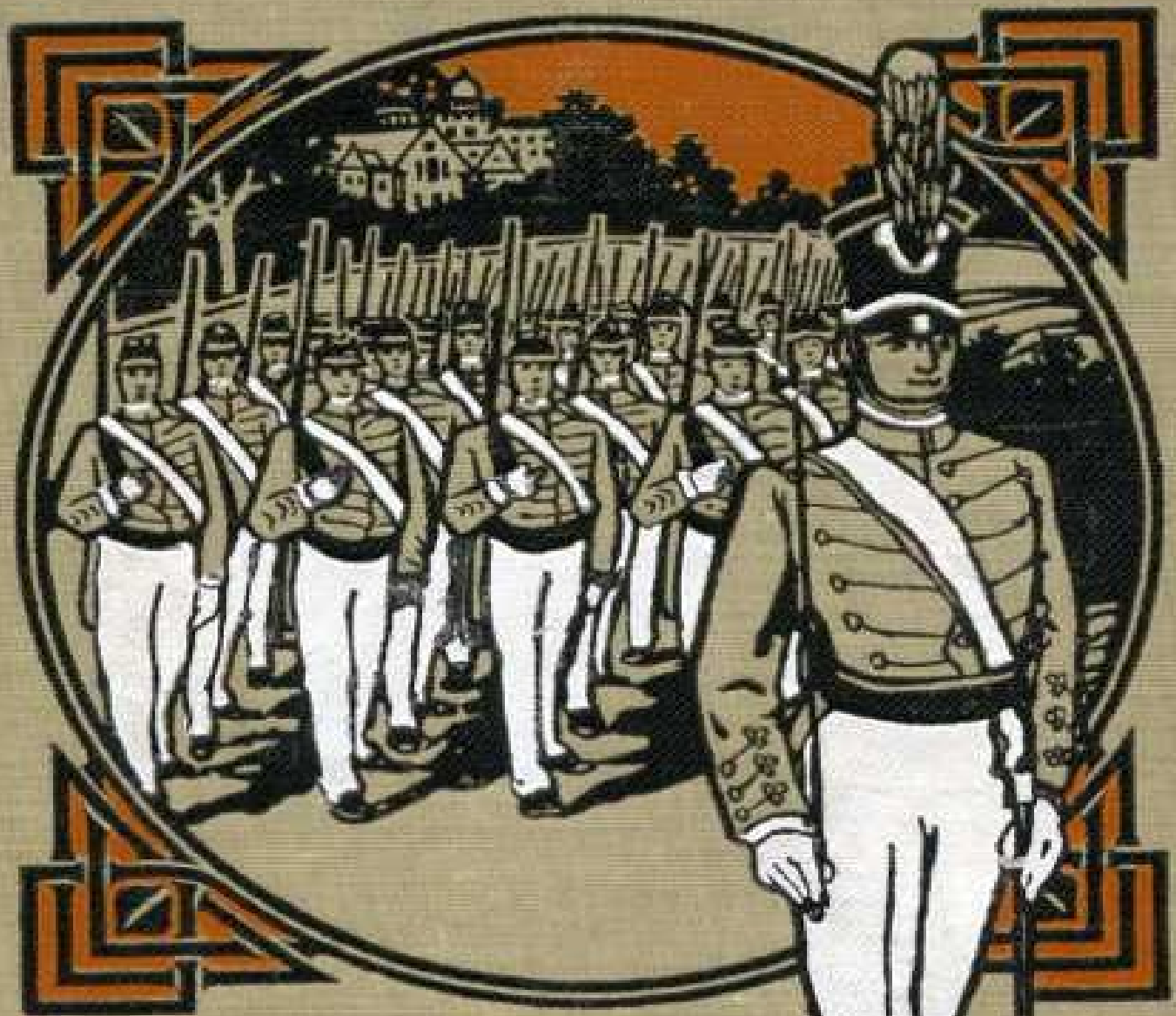


# THE PUTNAM HALL CADETS

ARTHUR M. WINFIELD



PUTNAM HALL  
SERIES

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CADETS\*\*\*

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# THE PUTNAM HALL CADETS

*Or, Good Times in School and Out*

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BY  
ARTHUR M. WINFIELD  
AUTHOR OF "THE ROVER BOYS SERIES," "BOB, THE PHOTOGRAPHER," ETC.

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*ILLUSTRATED*

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GROSSET & DUNLAP  
PUBLISHERS · NEW YORK

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## INTRODUCTION

MY DEAR BOYS: In bringing out this story, "The Putnam Hall Cadets," the initial volume in the "Putnam Hall Series," I feel it necessary to make an explanation why it is that this tale is brought out when I have already written so much concerning the doings of the students at Putnam Hall.

Ever since I presented to the boys the first volume in the "Rover Boys Series," I have been urged by the boys—and girls, too, for the matter of that—to write something concerning the doings of the students at the Hall previous to the coming of the Rover boys on the scene. When the Rovers arrived they found a wide-awake, jolly crowd of cadets already there, some of whom had been at the academy several years. My young friends wished to know more about these, and it is for their benefit that I have instituted this new series, which will tell of many things that happened at the famous seat of learning from the time it was first opened to the present day.

Putnam Hall is an ideal boarding school for boys, located on the shore of a beautiful lake in upper New York State. The students there are bright, manly fellows, full of vigor and fun, and bound to get the best there is out of school life. There are some keen rivalries, and in the story are related the particulars of a mystery which had an unlooked-for ending.

In offering this first book of the new series I wish to thank the thousands everywhere who have written to me regarding the "Rover Boys Series." It does my heart good to know that the tales have been so well liked. I trust sincerely that the present story meets with equal approbation.

Affectionately and sincerely yours,

ARTHUR M. WINFIELD.

*July 25, 1905.*



# **THE PUTNAM HALL CADETS**

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCING SOME CADETS

“Hurrah, Jack, I’ve got news! To-morrow we are going to ballot for officers!”

“I’m glad to hear that,” answered Jack Ruddy, as he threw down the algebra he had been studying. “I was almost afraid we weren’t going to have officers this term.”

“I suppose Captain Putnam wanted to find out if there was any military material here before he let us fellows take charge,” went on Pepper Ditmore, as he swung himself up on a corner of the dormitory table. “Tell you what, Jack, it’s a great thing to organize a school like this, and get everything in working order, all in six weeks.”

“Do you think you are organized, Pep?” queried Jack Ruddy, with a twinkle in his eyes.

“I’m organized about as much as I’ll ever be,” returned Pepper Ditmore. “You can’t expect a fellow like me to settle down and be as quiet as a lamb, can you?”

“No, you’re more like a jumping-jack. The fellows don’t call you the Imp for nothing.”

“It’s a base slander,” returned Pepper Ditmore, with an injured air. “I’m as meek, sometimes——”

“When you are asleep.”

“As a—a——”

“Circus clown. By the way, have they found out yet who mixed the salt and sugar last Saturday?”

“Can’t say as they have.”

“And who put that little bulldog in Josiah Crabtree’s bedroom in the dark?”

“They haven’t asked me about it,” and now Pepper Ditmore began to grin.

“Then let me congratulate you on your escape,” and Jack Ruddy smiled broadly.

“Let’s change the subject, Jack. Don’t you want to be an officer of the Putnam Hall Cadet Corps? I should think that would just suit you. Your father was an army officer.”

“It would suit me first-rate. But the fellows don’t know much about me. Most of them are strangers to me.”

“Well, they are mostly strangers to each other. If you want to become an officer, say the word and I’ll do the electioneering for you.”

“Don’t you want to be an officer yourself?”

At this question Pepper Ditmore gave a merry laugh.

“I’d make a fine-looking officer, wouldn’t I?” he returned. “No, I’ll remain a high private in the rear rank—and take my sport in some other way.”

“And you expect me to be an officer over you, Pep? How in the world will I manage you?”

“By not trying, Jack. But come, are you going to be an officer or not? As a battalion, we are to have a major, two captains, two first lieutenants, two second lieutenants, and a lot of sergeants and corporals. I want to see you a captain at least.”

“That’s kind.”

“I’d rather see you an officer than that Dan Baxter. Do you know, Jack, I don’t like that chap at all.”

“No more do I. He is very overbearing. I heard him bossing some of the little fellows around in regular slave-driver style.”

“Well, he shan’t boss me around.”

“Oh, it’s not likely he’ll bother the big boys,” came from Jack Ruddy, as he arose from his chair and stretched himself. “Those chaps usually make the little fellows toady to them. What time is it?”

“Just five o’clock.”

“Then come on down to the lake and have a row before supper.”

At that moment something soft, thrown up through the open dormitory window, struck Jack Ruddy on the shirt bosom. It was a lump of mud, and it left quite a mark behind.

“Hi, there, who threw that?” he cried, angrily, as he rushed for the window. He was just in time to see a lank youth diving out of sight behind some bushes.

“I know that lad,” came from Pepper Ditmore. “His name is John Fenwick, but they call him Mumps.”

“I’ll Mumps him!” retorted Jack Ruddy. “Come on!” And he rushed out of the dormitory, and down the broad stairway three steps at a time. He was just near the bottom when he passed a tall and rather sour-looking teacher, who was coming up.

“Master Ruddy, not so fast——” began the teacher, when of a sudden Pepper Ditmore struck the man on the shoulder, hurling him flat on his back at the foot of the stairs.

“Oh, excuse me, Mr. Crabtree!” burst out the cadet. “I—er—I didn’t mean to run into you!”

“Yo—you imp!” spluttered Josiah Crabtree. “What do you mean by tearing downstairs like a—a cyclone?”

“We’re after a fellow who threw some mud up into our room,” explained Jack Ruddy.

“I didn’t see you coming,” added Pepper. “Very sorry—it shan’t occur again.”

“This jumping downstairs has got to be stopped!” fumed Josiah Crabtree. “I shall make an example of you, Ditmore. Go back to your classroom and write this sentence one hundred times: ‘It is best to walk with care.’”

“Have I got to go back now?” cried Pepper.

“At once.”

“It isn’t fair, Mr. Crabtree. I didn’t mean to run into you; really, I didn’t.”

“Stop! I want no back talk. To the classroom instantly.”

“Mr. Crabtree,” put in Jack Ruddy, “please——”

“Silence, Master Ruddy, or I shall send you, too.”

“Catch that boy if you can, Jack,” said Pepper, and walked slowly towards his classroom. Josiah Crabtree saw him enter, and saw Jack Ruddy leave the building, and then continued on his way upstairs.

Jack Ruddy and Pepper Ditmore were chums. Both hailed from the western part of New York State, and they had arrived at Putnam Hall about a month before this tale opens. Jack was a few months older than Pepper, but the youths were of the same size and weight. Jack was of a serious turn and studious, while Pepper was rightly called the Imp, on account of his fun-loving disposition.

At the time of which I write, Putnam Hall was a new institution of learning. It was located on Cayuga Lake, in New York State, not many miles from the village of Cedarville. It was a handsome structure of brick and stone, standing in the middle of a parade ground of about ten acres. In front was a well-kept wagon road, and beyond this the grounds sloped down to the lake, where were located the academy boathouse and bathing houses. To the rear of the school were the barns and a storehouse, and on one side a well-fitted-up gymnasium, all backed up by a stretch of thick woods.

On the ground floor of the Hall, which was built in the shape of the letter E, were located the classrooms and also a drillroom and a messroom, all reached by three entrances, each of imposing appearance. Above the ground floor were the sleeping apartments, those for the students divided into dormitories holding four, six, or eight cadets.

The master of the school was Captain Victor Putnam, a bachelor, and a West Point graduate. The captain had seen strenuous service in the West, where he had fought under the gallant General Custer during several Indian uprisings. But a fall from a horse had placed him on a sick bed, and when he regained his health he decided to give up army life, and go back to his former profession of teaching. Money had been left to him, and with this he purchased the grounds and built the academy.

As was to be expected from a military man, the school was organized upon military lines, and each cadet was given instructions in military duties daily. All were clothed in neat but serviceable uniforms, and there was a general parade each day, just before supper.

To get the school into proper shape, Captain Putnam had hired three retired officers of the army to drill the boys daily. Under their tuition all of the scholars had learned rapidly, and now the master of the Hall was about to let the cadets choose their own officers and do their own drilling, under his sole management.

Captain Putnam was a well-educated man, and taught several classes in the school, besides looking after the general management. His head assistant was Josiah Crabtree, just introduced, and his second assistant was George Strong, whom we shall meet later.

Josiah Crabtree was a morose individual, with a very exalted opinion of himself. He had come to the Hall with high recommendations, but it cannot be said that Captain Putnam liked the man, and as for the cadets, they nearly all hated him.

Leaving the building, Jack Ruddy hurried to the spot where his chum had seen the boy called Mumps. He found the boy talking earnestly to a big, burly youth, who carried a baseball bat in his hand.

“It was lots of fun,” Mumps was saying, as Jack strode up. “I struck Andy Snow, and Hen Lee, and some fellows in dormitory No. 4, and——”

“And you struck me, you sneak!” cried Jack, catching the boy by the arm. “I suppose you thought it fine fun to cover me with mud.”

“Hi! let me go!” cried Mumps, in sudden alarm. “Let me go. I—I—didn’t do anything.”

“You threw a lump of mud up into our room and struck me.”

“I—I—didn’t——”

“You can’t get out of it. I’ve a good mind to box your ears, Mumps.”

“Say, you let that kid alone,” came from the big boy with the baseball bat.  
“Leave him alone, I say!”

“See here, Dan Baxter, this is none of your quarrel,” retorted Jack.

“Let him alone.”

“I’ll let him alone when I feel like it.”

“You’ll let him alone now.”

“Will I?” Jack caught Mumps by the collar and shook him thoroughly. “Now, after this, you behave yourself, or I’ll thrash you good,” he went on.

“Oh! oh!” screamed the boy. “Le—let up! Don’t—don’t shake my head off!”

“Stop it!” roared Dan Baxter. “Stop it!” And rushing in he took hold of Jack and tried to draw him back.

“Baxter, let go of me,” said Jack, quietly, but with determination. “If you don’t \_\_\_\_\_”

“What?” came from the big youth with a sneer.

“That!” retorted Jack, and turning from Mumps, he gave a quick push that sent Dan Baxter flat on the turf.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **THE MYSTERIOUS SLOOP**

The attack had come so unexpectedly that for the moment Dan Baxter did not know what to do. In a dazed fashion he sat up, and finally scrambled to his feet. Mumps, the toady and sneak, gazed at Jack Ruddy in wonder.

“You’ll catch it for that!” he cried. “Dan Baxter’ll most kill you!”

“He has got to spell able first,” murmured Jack.

“See here, what did you do that for?” spluttered Dan Baxter, when he could collect himself sufficiently to speak.

“I told you this was none of your affair!” answered Jack. “After this you attend to your own business, and I’ll attend to mine.”

“I told you to let up on Mumps.”

“Well, you are not my master, Baxter.”

“Mumps is under my protection.”

“What you mean is, that he is one of your toadies.”

“I ain’t anybody’s toady,” came from John Fenwick, but his face grew as red as a beet.

“Yes, you are, and you’re a sneak in the bargain,” said Jack.

“I’ve a good mind to give you a crack with this,” burst out Dan Baxter, as he swung his baseball bat aloft.



“Here, don’t you hit Jack Ruddy with that!” came a voice from the rear, and on the instant another cadet caught hold of the bat.

“Thanks, Andy,” came from Jack. “But I don’t think he’d dare.”

“So you’re going to take part in this too, eh?” said Dan Baxter, turning to the newcomer.

“Oh, I only want to see fair play,” answered Andy Snow, a tall, slender boy, who was a good deal of an acrobat, and at the head of the gymnasium class.

“Andy, were you up in your dormitory a while ago?” questioned Jack.

“Yes.”

“Did you get hit with a lump of mud?”

“Yes. I’d like to spot the rascal that threw it.”

“I was hit myself. That’s why I came down after Mumps.”

“So you’re the guilty party, eh?” cried Andy Snow, stepping up to John Fenwick.

“Don’t!” screamed the lank boy, and turning, he ran off at top speed. “Come on, Dan!” he called out, when at a safe distance. “Don’t have anything more to do with ’em!”

By this time a crowd of a dozen was beginning to collect. Dan Baxter gazed around uneasily.

“We’ll settle this some other time,” he muttered, and edged away.

“Better settle it now,” retorted Jack.

“I—I’ve got something else to do,” faltered Dan Baxter, and then he turned and followed his toady.

“Baxter is afraid of you, Jack,” came from Andy Snow. “He’s a bully if ever there was one.”

“He certainly is a bully.”

“A thrashing would do him good.”

“Well, he’ll get it unless he minds what he is doing.”

“It was a mean trick of Mumps to throw mud in at the windows,” went on Andy Snow, as they walked away. “I had just put on a clean shirt when it hit me in the shoulder.”

“Mumps is as much of a mean sneak as Baxter is a bully, Andy. They make a fine team.”

“Where are you bound?”

“Pepper Ditmore and I were going for a row on the lake, but Pep got into trouble with Mr. Crabtree and had to go to the classroom.”

“I’ll go for a row if you wish.”

“All right. We haven’t much time, but we can take a short row anyway. It’s a pity Pep isn’t along.”

“You and he are great chums, aren’t you?”

“Yes. You see, it is this way: His father and mine were old college chums, and we take after them. Besides that, his father and mine are associated in several business affairs.”

The boathouse was soon gained, and the two cadets brought forth a rowboat of fair size, and two pairs of oars.

“Hullo, you fellers!” came from back of the boathouse. “Is it yerselves that’s afther wantin’ company, I don’t know? If yez do, it’s meself will be afther comin’ along.”

“Hullo, Emerald!” returned Jack. “Yes, come on if you wish—there is room enough.”

“It’s meself that would loike to learn how to row,” said Joseph Hogan, as he stepped into the craft. He was a pleasant-faced Irish lad, who had come to Putnam Hall on the day the institution opened.

“All right, Emerald, we’ll give you lessons,” came from Andy Snow. “Wait till we get out on the lake.”

The craft was shoved off, and Jack and Andy seated themselves at the oars. Soon they were gliding over the surface of Cayuga Lake in fine style.

“Sure, an’ it looks aisy enough,” said Hogan.

“It is easy—after you know how,” answered Andy. “By the way,” he went on to Jack, “are you going in for that boat race next week?”

“Yes, and so is Pepper.”

“Good enough. I hope you both win.”

As soon as they were well out on the lake both boys stopped rowing, and allowed Joseph Hogan to take a pair of the oars.

“Now, take hold this way,” said Andy Snow, “and pull like this.”

The Irish lad tried. At first his blades slipped quite frequently, and once he splashed some water into the craft.

“Look out!” cried Jack. “Emerald, we’ve had all the bath we want.”

“Sure, an’ I didn’t mane to wet yez,” was the answer. “The oars schlipped before I knew it!”

In a few minutes the Irish boy was doing better, and they turned down the lake. As they did this they noticed a small sailing boat approaching.

“There’s that craft again!” cried Jack.

“What craft is that, Jack?”

“Oh, I forgot, Andy. It’s a sloop Pepper and I saw day before yesterday. We thought the fellows on board acted queerly.”

“In what way?”

“They sailed up and down the shore at least ten times, as if they were on the

lookout for something or somebody.”

“Who was on board?”

“Two men. I tried to catch a good look at their faces, but they wouldn’t give me a chance.”

“It’s certainly queer they should sail up and down here,” was Andy’s comment. “Did they come from Cedarville?”

“I don’t know.”

By this time the strange sloop was close at hand. The same two men were in command, but both kept their faces turned away as the rowboat glided by.

“Did you notice how they kept their faces hidden?” queried Jack.

“Sure, I did that,” answered Hogan. “B’ys, they are up to some thrick.”

“It certainly is strange,” said Andy, thoughtfully. “See, they are turning back once more.”

“Perhaps they know some of the cadets, and would like to meet them.”

“More than likely they want to steal some of our boats.”

The sloop turned again on her course, and it was not long before both craft were only a short distance apart.

“I’m going to hail them, and learn what they have to say for themselves,” whispered Jack.

“Do it,” answered Andy.

“Sloop ahoy!”

At first there was no reply to this shout. Jack repeated the call, and Andy brought the rowboat still closer.

“What do you want?” growled one of the men on the sloop, finally.

“Fine day,” said Jack, brightly.

To this there was no answer.

“Looking for anybody around here?” came from Andy.

“No.”

“Saw you cruising around here day before yesterday, didn’t I?” continued Jack.

“Maybe you did. We’ve been out on the lake quite some the past week,” answered the second man.

“Thought, if you were looking for somebody, I might help you.”

“No, you can’t help us,” growled the one who had first spoken.

“Do you belong at Putnam Hall?” questioned the other occupant of the sloop.

“Sure, we do that,” answered Hogan.

“Got many pupils there now?”

“Forty or fifty so far,” said Jack.

“Humph! How many teachers?”

“Two regular teachers, besides Captain Putnam. Then we have others for French, and German, and music.”

“Who are the regular teachers?”

“Mr. Crabtree and Mr. Strong.”

“Do they stay there all the time?”

“Yes.”

“It must grow rather monotonous for them.”

“Oh, we try to make it lively enough.”

“Don’t they ever go to town, or go boating?”

“Of course. Mr. Strong is quite an oarsman,” came from Andy, who had been out with the second assistant on more than one occasion.

At this announcement both of the men exchanged glances.

“You can come ashore and look at the school if you wish,” said Jack.

“No, thank you, we don’t care to do so,” was the hasty answer; and a moment later the sloop veered off, and was soon out of speaking distance.

“Well, they are a queer pair and no mistake,” murmured Jack. “Did you notice how one kept his hand over his forehead?”

“And how the other had his cap pulled far down over his eyes,” added Andy.

“Sure, an nayther of ’em looked roight sharp to me,” put in Hogan. “I’d not like to be spendin’ much toime in their company.”

“I believe they are up to something,” said Jack. “I’d like to know what it is.”

“Perhaps we’ll find out later,” answered Andy. And they did find out, in a manner that was as thrilling as it was astonishing.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **A CASE OF BRIBERY**

When the boys got back to the boathouse they found Pepper Ditmore awaiting them.

“Dashed off that bit of writing as soon as I could,” said he. “My, but wasn’t it mean of old Crabtree to make me do it! But wait, I’ll get square on him!”

“Pep, we met that strange sloop again,” said Jack, and told of what had been said.

“There’s a mystery there, that’s certain,” answered Pepper. “Perhaps we had better report to Captain Putnam.”

“It won’t do any harm.”

“Then come on now. We’ve got ten minutes before parade.”

Captain Putnam’s office was a finely furnished apartment, just off the main classroom. They found the master of the school engaged in writing a letter.

“Well, young gentlemen, what can I do for you?” he said cheerily as they entered.

“We’ve got something to tell you, sir,” they answered, and then Jack quietly related their story.

The master of Putnam Hall listened with close attention, and questioned each one of the party.

“This is certainly odd,” said he, meditatively. “Still, there may be nothing of importance in it. If you see the sloop hovering around again, let me know.”

“We will, sir,” answered Jack, and then he and his companions hurried off.

The drum was already rolling, and all of the cadets lost no time in getting out on the parade ground. It was a beautiful day in early October, with just enough of coolness to make it bracing.

“The battalion will fall into line!” was the command, from one of the old army officers present, and then the cadets of Company A and Company B took the places assigned to them.

“Company, attention!” was the command from the officer in charge of Company A, to which Jack, Pepper, and Andy belonged. And then followed a similar command to Company B.

While the battalion was at attention, Captain Putnam came forth and mounted a small stand that was handy.

“Young gentlemen,” said he, gazing, at the assembled cadets, “I have an announcement of importance to make to you. In the past you have been under the command of Captain Wilson and Lieutenants Plummer and Montgomery, who have drilled you thoroughly in the arts and duties of the soldier. These instructors will leave the Hall early next week, and then I intend to place the battalion in charge of such officers as you may select for yourselves.”

“Hurrah!” came the shout. “Three cheers for Captain Putnam!”

“Three cheers for Captain Wilson and his assistants!” was the added cry, and the cheers were given with a will.

“As you well know, ever since this school was organized I have been keeping a close watch on every cadet, to find out who was fit to take command. I have prepared a list of sixteen names, which you will find hung up in the general library and in the gymnasium. Of these names the first eight are eligible for the rank of major of the battalion, and all are eligible for the rank of captain, or first or second lieutenant. The position of sergeant or corporal may be filled by any cadet in the school. Voting for the various officers will take place to-morrow, directly after the regular school session.”

“Hurrah!” came another shout, as the captain stepped down.



“Battalion, attention!” came the command, a moment later. “Carry arms! Present arms! Support arms! Shoulder arms! Forward, march!”

“Tap! tap! tap-tap-tap!” went the drums, and off moved the young soldiers. They marched around the parade ground twice, and then into the mess-hall, where each cadet took his place at one or another of the long dining tables. It was a spirited scene, and one calculated to make the heart of each boy bound with enthusiasm.

“Your name is on that list, Jack,” whispered a cadet sitting near. “I saw Peleg Snuggers tacking it up in the gym as I came away.” Peleg Snuggers was the general utility man around Putnam Hall.

“I hope you are on it, too, Joe,” answered Jack.

“I am,” returned Joe Nelson, who was a quiet and studious cadet, hailing from Philadelphia. “And Andy Snow and Henry Lee are on it, too,” he went on. “I think——”

“Silence at the table!” broke in the rough voice of Josiah Crabtree. “If I hear any more of that, I’ll send you away without your supper!”

“Oh,” murmured Joe Nelson. It was rarely that he had any trouble with any of the teachers.

“Say, but old Crabtree is crusty enough to make pie of,” was Pepper’s whispered comment.

“Silence, I say!” thundered the first assistant. “I will have silence!” And he looked around the board so fiercely that hardly anybody dared to say another word.

At the next table sat Dan Baxter and Mumps, the sneak. The former scowled darkly at Jack and Andy, while the sneak put his tongue into his cheek at them.

“I’m going to fix Mumps,” whispered Pepper, who had been told of the occurrence in the school yard, and watching his chance, he leaned back in his chair and dropped a bit of sharp fish-bone down inside the sneak’s collar.

At first the sneak did not notice what had been done, but then he made a side

turn and of a sudden uttered a yell of pain.

“Hi! who’s sticking me with a pin?” he roared. “Drop it!”

He glanced around, but the boys on both sides of him were busy with their eating.

“What is it, Master Fenwick?” questioned George Strong, the second assistant.

“Somebody stuck me with a——Oh, I’m stuck again! Oh! oh! Something is down my back!” And the sneak began to wiggle from side to side. “Oh, dear me!”

“You had better leave the room and find out what is the matter,” said the teacher, and still twisting and squirming, Mumps left the mess-hall in a hurry.

“Baxter, do you know anything of this?”

“No, sir.”

“It is strange; what could be the matter?”

There were a few minutes of silence, and then the sneak came back and dropped into his chair.

“It was a fish-bone—awfully sharp, too,” he said. “Somebody must have dropped it down my back, sir.”

There was a titter, in which our friends joined. Pepper winked at Jack, Andy, and Joe Nelson, and they understood.

As soon as the meal was over, the cadets rushed off to the library of Putnam Hall and to the gymnasium, to scan the list of names the master had mentioned.

“Bart Connors is at the head,” said Andy. “Harry Blossom comes next, Jack is third, Henry Lee fourth, myself fifth, Dave Kearney sixth, Stuffer Singleton next, and Dan Baxter next.”

“And those are the ones who may be made major,” came from a cadet named Dale Blackmore, one of the leading athletes of the academy.

“You are up next, Dale,” returned Jack. “That means you may become a captain.”

“I’d rather be captain of the football team,” answered Dale, with a smile.

As soon as the list was scanned, an animated discussion took place regarding the merits of the different candidates. As among men, and especially politicians, there was a good bit of “log-rolling” and electioneering.

“I think Henry Lee ought to be major,” said Jack. “He is one of our best soldiers.”

“He is no better soldier than you are, Jack,” returned Andy.

“Just what I say,” came from Pepper. “Jack ought to be major, and Henry one of the captains.”

“Dan Baxter is working hard to become major,” came from a cadet who had just strolled in. “Somebody told me he was actually trying to buy votes!”

“Buy them? Do you mean with money?” queried Jack.

“So somebody told me.”

“Oh, that can’t be true, Jerry. Why, who in this school would be mean enough to sell his vote?”

“Well, Baxter has got a wad of rocks all right enough. I saw the money myself.”

“I’m going to watch him,” came from Pepper, and he motioned for Andy Snow to go along.

“What will you do, if you learn he is really offering money for votes?” questioned Andy, as they hurried away.

“I don’t know yet, Andy. But it would be a mean piece of business. Why, in politics that is bribery, and they can arrest a man for it.”

“I know that—but it’s seldom a briber is caught.”

It was not difficult to trace Dan Baxter. From a small cadet they learned he was

down by the lake, back of the row of bathing-houses.

By going down to the boathouse first, and then stealing along a fringe of bushes skirting the lake shore, they reached the bath-houses without being seen. As it was past the bathing season, the houses were supposed to be “out of commission,” and locked up, but one of them—the largest—stood wide open.

“Well, that is the chance of your life, if you only know it,” reached their ears, in the voice of Dan Baxter. “Besides, you know well enough that I would make as good a major as anybody in the school.”

“That’s a fine way to blow one’s own horn,” murmured Pepper.

“And what will you give me, Baxter, if I work for you?” came from a big boy named Gus Coulter. He, too, was a bully, and, coming from humble parentage, had very little spending money.

“I’ll give you five dollars, Gus.”

“Will you give it to me now?”

“Yes, if you’ll promise to do all you can to elect me major.”

“All right, then, hand over the money,” answered Gus Coulter. “I’d just as soon work for you as anybody.”

“Why can’t I have a fiver, too?” put in Mumps, who was present. “I’ll work as hard as Gus.”

“I’ll give you two dollars, Mumps,” said the bully. “I can’t afford any more.”

“Where do I come in on this?” came from a lad named Paxton.

“I’ll give you two dollars, too, Nick, if you’ll vote for me and try to get others to do so, too.”

“Humph! Aren’t my services worth as much as Gus Coulter’s?” demanded Nick Paxton.

“Well, if I’m elected I’ll give you two dollars more.”

“Very well, hand over the dough, Dan. As Gus says, I’d just as soon work for you as for anybody.”

“What a barefaced thing to do!” whispered Andy Snow. “Baxter can’t have a bit of honor about him!”

“The others are just as bad—to take his money,” whispered Pepper in return. “If they—who’s this?”

“Hullo, what are you doing here?” demanded a rough voice behind them, and a cadet named Sabine appeared on the scene.

“Who is there?” cried Dan Baxter, and rushed from the bath-house. “Humph! Pepper Ditmore and Andy Snow! So you’ve been spying on us, eh? That’s a nice business to be into, I must say!”

## CHAPTER IV

### ELECTING A MAJOR

“Have they been spying on us?” queried Mumps, and turned slightly pale.

“Yes, they have been spying—I caught them at it,” came from Billy Sabine. “What have you fellows been up to here?” he added, anxiously.

“Never mind just now,” answered Dan Baxter. He looked much disconcerted. “Just step in here a minute, will you?” he requested, of Pepper and Andy.

“What do you want of us?” asked Pepper, cautiously, while Andy also held back.

“Have you been listening to our talk?”

“Yes.”

“It was a mean piece of business, Pepper Ditmore!”

“Not half as mean as what you were up to, Dan Baxter!”

“What was I up to?”

“You were bribing these fellows to vote for you.”

“No, I wasn’t. I—er—that is—we were talking about something else. It’s a—er—a secret society,” stammered the bully. He did not know what to say.

“Bosh!” came from Andy. “You were bribing them to vote for you for major,—paying them from two to five dollars apiece.”

“You shut up!” roared Baxter, rushing up to Andy and catching him by the arm. “I know what I’m doing. I don’t want any talk from you!”

He ran Andy against the side of the bath-house, but as said before, Andy was a good deal of an acrobat, and in a twinkling he had slipped from Baxter's grasp.

"Let us get out of here, Andy," said Pepper. "We have seen and heard enough."

"Are you going to blab on us?" demanded Gus Coulter.

"That depends upon what you do," retorted Pepper, bravely. "We are not going to stand for such underhanded work as has been going on here."

"If you dare to say a word I'll—I'll thrash you within an inch of your life!" hissed Dan Baxter, rushing forward and catching Pepper by the throat. "Don't you dare to do it! Don't you dare!"

"Le—let up, Baxter!" gasped Pepper. He pushed the bully back with his hand. "You won't, eh? Then take that!"

So speaking, he landed a blow that took Dan Baxter full in the face and sent him staggering back several paces.

"What's going on here?" came the cry from the parade ground, and half a dozen cadets appeared, including Joe Nelson and Jack.

"Perhaps Baxter will tell you," said Andy.

"I—er—I haven't anything to say!" stammered the bully.

"But I have something to say!" cried Pepper, boldly. "Boys, take care that he doesn't try to bribe you to vote for him. He has just bribed Coulter, Paxton, and Mumps. I saw him pay over his money, and so did Andy Snow."

"It's a—a—falsehood!" stormed Dan Baxter. He was beside himself with rage.

"It's the truth," came from Andy. "It was the most disgraceful thing I ever witnessed in my life. We don't want such a chap for a major, or even for a captain."

"Maybe we don't want him even for a high private," came from somebody in the crowd.

Gus Coulter whispered to Baxter, and then to Paxton and to Mumps.

“That’s the way to talk!” whispered Mumps. “Our word is as good as theirs!”

“What these fellows say is not true,” came from Gus Coulter. “I was never bribed in my life.”

“I wouldn’t accept a bribe,” put in Paxton, loftily. “I’m not that sort, and my friends know it.”

“We all belong to a secret society, and we were counting up the money in the treasury,” said Mumps. “In the midst of it Ditmore and Snow rushed up and intimated that Dan was bribing us. They ought to have their heads punched for it!”

“Well, you’ll never punch them, Mumps,” said Pepper. “And Baxter won’t punch them, either.”

“Don’t be so sure about that,” growled Dan Baxter. “You may get more than you expect!”

“I am not afraid of you,” answered Pepper.

Further talk was cut short by the ringing of the school bell, calling the cadets into the Hall. Baxter and his cronies went off in one bunch, while Pepper, Andy, and Jack went off in another.

Among so many cadets opinions were necessarily divided. Some thought Baxter guilty, while others believed in his protestations of innocence. Yet with it all, the bully had only a limited circle of friends and hangers-on, as later events proved.

During the evening the air was filled with subdued excitement. All of the candidates for the officers’ positions were discussed, and it was generally admitted that Jack, Bart Conners, Henry Lee, and Dan Baxter stood equal chances of winning the majorship, or at least one of the captaincies.

“I hope you win the majorship, Jack,” said Andy. “You are just suited for that position.”

“I’d like it, Andy, I must confess. But I’m afraid I’m not well enough known.



Big Bart Conners has a host of friends—and he is a staving good chap in the bargain.”

During the following morning it was easily to be seen that Dan Baxter had been working hard to win the cadets over to him. The bully and his cronies had done a good deal of talking, and in a few cases it looked as if he had been doing additional bribing.

During the recess electioneering became warm once more, and the students gathered in little knots to discuss the situation. Jack, Pepper, and several others were talking together when Dan Baxter strolled up, with a dark look on his face.

“Say, I want this talk about bribery stopped,” he said, savagely. “I won’t stand it—do you understand? I won’t stand it!” And he shook his fist at the crowd.

“If you won’t stand it, sit down on it, Baxter,” retorted Pepper.

“It ain’t fair,” roared the bully, for the benefit of the crowd.

“I believe Pepper tells the truth,” came from Jack, eyeing Baxter boldly. “He caught you in the act.”

“Of course you’d say so, Jack Ruddy, you’re so anxious to be elected!”

“Well, I don’t want to be elected,” came from Pepper.

“And neither do I,” put in Andy. “I saw it as well as Pepper.”

“It’s false! Absurd!” roared Baxter, and then, as there seemed nothing more to say, he walked off with his head held high in the air.

“He makes me tired,” came from Dale Blackmore. “I’d never vote for him, even if he hadn’t started to bribe the fellows.”

The voting began directly after dinner. There was a large ballot box, and the cadets were given slips of paper and pencils, so that they might put down the names of their candidates.

“There are seventy-seven students present,” said Captain Putnam. “Consequently it will take thirty-nine votes for a choice. We will now take the vote for the

majorship.”

There was a moment of silence, during which the students put down the names of their candidates, and then the line filed past the ballot-box, and each youth deposited his ballot. Without delay the captain and George Strong tabulated the vote.

“I will now read the result of the first ballot,” announced Captain Putnam, and at once the cadets became silent.

“Number of votes cast, 77;  
Necessary to a choice, 39;  
Bart Connors has 21,  
John Ruddy has 21,  
Henry Lee has 14,  
Harry Blossom has 9,  
Daniel Baxter has 7,  
David Kearney has 3,  
Andrew Snow has 1,  
Paul Singleton has 1.”

“Hullo, Bart and Jack are a tie!” exclaimed Pepper.

“And I’ve got one vote,” put in Andy.

“Guess you must have voted for yourself,” put in Gus Coulter, sarcastically.

“If I did, I didn’t have to bribe myself to do it,” retorted Andy. He raised his voice: “Whoever voted for me, will kindly vote for Jack Ruddy on the next ballot.”

“I also wish to withdraw in favor of Jack Ruddy,” came from Dave Kearney. “I don’t believe I can fill the position of major just yet,” he added, by way of explanation.

“Please cross me off the list,” sang out Paul Singleton, a fat youth, who went by the nickname of Stuffer because he was always hungry.

After this came a little more electioneering, and Henry Lee said he would withdraw and give Jack his support if Jack’s friends would vote for him for captain.

“Yes, we’ll do that, Henry,” cried Andy.

The second ballot was soon cast, and resulted as follows:

Number of votes cast, 77;  
Necessary to a choice, 39;  
For John Ruddy, 48;

For Bart Conners, 20;  
For Harry Blossom, 5;  
For Daniel Baxter, 4.

“Hurrah! Jack is elected!” cried Pepper, and rushing forward he caught his chum by the hand.

“I congratulate you, Major Ruddy,” said Captain Putnam, with a smile.

“I move we make the election of Jack Ruddy unanimous!” called out Bart Conners. “I voted for him, and I want all of you to do the same.”

“Hurrah! That’s the way to talk!” sang out a student. “Bart, you’re a good fellow.”

“Three cheers for Major Ruddy, Captain Putnam, and Bart Conners!” came the cry, and the cheers were given with a will. But Dan Baxter and his cronies did not join in.

“They sold me out!” muttered the bully to Mumps. “Some of the fellows who said they’d vote for me didn’t vote for me at all.”

“I’d square up with them for it,” returned the sneak.

“I shall—and I’ll square up with Jack Ruddy too,” added Dan Baxter, bitterly.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **OFF ON A PICNIC**

As soon as the excitement attending Jack's election had subsided, Captain Putnam announced that they would proceed next to the election of two captains, one for Company A, and one for Company B. For this purpose each student was allowed to put down two names, making the total number of votes cast one hundred and fifty-four.

True to their promise, many who had supported Jack voted in favor of Henry Lee, and as a consequence he was made captain of the first company. Bart Connors became captain of Company B. Later still, Harry Blossom became first lieutenant, and Dave Kearney a second lieutenant. For all of these positions Dan Baxter received not more than six votes, much to his disgust.

"It's a put-up job," he growled. "But just wait—I'll fix them!" And then he and his cronies said no more.

After the voting was over, Captain Putnam called the newly elected officers together and gave them their instructions.

"I shall leave the battalion in your hands from now on," he said to them. "On parade and during drill you must see to it that every cadet does his duty. Of course, during school hours and off hours, you will have no more authority than any of your fellow pupils."

"I understand," said Jack, "and I don't want any authority excepting on parade and during drill."

That evening the battalion celebrated on the campus of the Hall, with a big bonfire and singing. There was also a fancy drill and a short parade, and all enjoyed it excepting Baxter and his cronies. As soon as possible the latter

sneaked off in a little crowd by themselves.

“I’m satisfied that Ruddy and his crowd cooked this whole thing up against you, Dan,” said Coulter. “Look at Lee. He sold out the majorship just to get a captaincy.”

“And Dave Kearney sold out so he could be sure of becoming a lieutenant,” put in Paxton. “It makes me sick.”

“Well, some of the others sold me out,” growled the bully. “I know twelve fellows who said they’d vote for me, and the most votes I got were seven!”

“Jack Ruddy must have bought them up,” put in Mumps. “He’s a slippery one, he is!”

The majority of the cadets, however, were well satisfied over Jack’s election, and they told the newly elected major so. All shook him by the hand, and wished him the best of success in his position. He was called on to speak and made a neat speech.

“I thank you all for electing me,” said he. “I trust we shall all be friends, and that our relations with one another will be pleasant from beginning to end. I am going to try to do my duty, and I know you will try to do yours. And because you have made me major, don’t forget that—during school hours and off hours—I am one of you anyway.”

“That’s the way to talk!” called out a cadet. “Jack’s the right kind of a major.”

“Three cheers for Major Ruddy,” was the cry, and they were given loudly, and a tiger followed.

A number of the boys, including Pepper and Andy, had worked hard to elect Jack and he felt that he ought to do something for them in return. He thought the matter over carefully and then decided to ask a dozen of the cadets to go off on a picnic with him on the following Saturday afternoon, which would be a half-holiday.

“Just the thing, Jack,” said Pepper, when the thing was mentioned. “We can have a jolly time, in the woods and along the lake shore.”

“Do we take any grub along?” came from Stuffer Singleton, anxiously. “It’s no picnic without grub.”

“Trust Stuffer to remember about food!” laughed Andy.

“To be sure we shall take something to eat along,” answered Jack. “I’ll arrange it with the captain and Mrs. Green, and I’ll buy some extras at Cedarville.”

As soon as the picnic, as it was called, was announced those to take part became enthusiastic. Not to make the other cadets feel bad, it was kept a secret among those concerned. Captain Putnam allowed the housekeeper to have two baskets of provisions packed for Jack, and the young major took Andy and Pepper with him to town, where they purchased some extra dainties.

“This is going to be the dandiest of all picnics,” declared Pepper. “A red-letter day for Putnam Hall.”

“Don’t you want to invite Dan Baxter?” said Andy, with a sly grin.

“Not on your life, Andy!” cried Jack.

“Oh, I was only joking.”

“He wouldn’t come,” put in Henry Lee. “He is as mad as hops because he wasn’t elected an officer.”

“I don’t want any such bully as he is to be an officer over me,” came from Stuffer Singleton.

There were signs of rain in the air on Friday and the students to participate in the picnic grew anxious, fearing they would have bad weather. But by the next morning the sun was shining as brightly as ever, and soon all were ready for the start, which was to be made at one o’clock.

“Say, what do you think?” cried Mumps, coming up to where Baxter and Paxton were standing. “Jack Ruddy is going to take some of the fellows out to the woods for a spread.”

“Who told you?” queried the bully of Putnam Hall.

“I overheard them talking about it in the gym. They’re going to take two or three baskets of good things with them.”

“That’s a shame!” cried Paxton.

“We ought to spoil their game,” suggested Gus Coulter. “Can’t we do it, Dan?”

“I don’t know.” Baxter became thoughtful. “Where are they going, Mumps?”

“Up to Gerry’s Point, on the lake. It’s about two miles from here.”

“We might row up in one of the boats and see what we can do,” answered the bully. So it was arranged, and Baxter, Paxton, and Mumps set off without delay. Coulter wished to go along but could not because he had an extra lesson to do, he having missed several times during the week.

Jack and his friends started in high glee. They had three baskets filled with good things to eat and to drink, and each basket was carried by two boys, the handle having a stick passed through it for that purpose.

“I’m going to have a swim,” declared Andy. “I know it’s a little late in the season, but the water is pretty warm.”

“I’m with you,” said Pepper. “I shan’t mind the cold water. Why, I take a cold bath two or three times a week, in the bathtub.”

“Cold baths are very healthy,” came from another of the crowd. “My father used to be quite weak, but now he takes a cold bath every morning and it is wonderful how strong he is getting.”

The path led back of the Hall grounds and then through a dense woods fronting the lake, where the shore made a sweeping turn. As the boys were all good walkers, they covered the two miles with ease, reaching Gerry’s Point inside of an hour after starting.

“Now then for a rest and a swim,” cried Pepper.

“And then we’ll sample some of the good things Jack has provided,” added Stuffer, smacking his lips.



“Say, Stuffer, you could eat about all the time, couldn’t you?” queried Andy.

“No, not all the time—he must sleep,” put in Jack, and this brought forth a laugh.

“I caught myself eating once in my sleep,” said Stuffer. “I began to cough and woke up with a piece of pie in my hand. I had had the nightmare, gone down to the kitchen pantry, and helped myself. After that ma locked the pantry up and hid the key.” And at this tale there was another laugh.

After a short rest the boys went in bathing, placing their baskets in a secluded spot behind some bushes. Not far away was a small stream of water, and they did not know that in this one of the Hall rowboats was hidden, containing Baxter, Paxton, and Mumps, who had watched their arrival.

“Now is our chance!” cried Baxter, when all but two of the boys had gone in bathing. “Let us take their baskets and make off with them. We can go up the lake shore and have a dandy time on the good things!”

“Right you are,” put in Paxton. “And won’t Jack Ruddy and the others be mad!”

“Be careful, or they’ll spot you!” whispered Mumps, in a trembling tone.

“Oh, don’t get scared, Mumps,” said Baxter. “They can’t see us—the bushes are too thick.”

Leaving the rowboat, the party of three stole to the spot where the baskets were resting.

“Say but they are heavy,” remarked Paxton in a low voice.

“Hush!” came warningly from the bully, and then nothing further was said. Each took a basket, and started back for the rowboat as fast as he could carry the load.

Baxter and Paxton had just placed their baskets in the boat when there came a crash. Mumps, who was bringing up the rear, had slipped and let his basket fall, breaking a drinking glass and a bottle of ginger ale.

“Hi, there, what’s that?” came from Jack, who was standing in the water up to his waist. “Who’s breaking glass?”

“I’m not,” answered one of the cadets on shore. “It was——”

“Hullo, there is Dan Baxter!” yelled Pepper. “He’s got one of our baskets!”

“They are running off with our things!” broke in Andy. “Hi, stop, Baxter! Stop, Paxton!”

“Go to grass!” roared the bully of Putnam Hall. He flung himself into the rowboat. “Quick, Paxton; quick, Mumps!”

Paxton leaped in, basket in hand. But Mumps, becoming frightened, let his load remain where it had fallen and scrambled in headlong. Then the oars were taken up and the craft shoved out into the stream.

“Stop them! Stop them!” came from Jack. “Don’t let them get away, boys!”

“STOP THEM! DON’T LET THEM GET AWAY, BOYS!”

“STOP THEM! DON’T LET THEM GET AWAY, BOYS!”

“Swim for the boat,” said another cadet. “Come on!”

“Baxter, stop your rowing!” called a cadet on shore. “Stop, or I’ll throw this!” And he held up a large and sharp stone.

“Ain’t going to stop!” muttered the bully. “Clear the track, you fellows!” And he shook his head at those in the water. “If you don’t get out of the way, I’ll run over you!” And then he began to pull with might and main, while Paxton did the same.

## **CHAPTER VI**

### **AN ODD BIT OF PUNISHMENT**

For the moment the declaration by the bully that he would run the boat into those in the water kept the swimmers back.

“Look out, fellows!” cried Stuffer, in alarm. “That boat has got a pretty sharp bow. If it hits you it will cut you deep!”

“I’m going to stop the boat anyway,” cried Jack, and continued to swim toward the craft.

As Jack did this, Andy measured his distance and suddenly dove out of sight. Andy was as good at swimming as he was at acrobatic feats, and he did not come up until he was close to the side of the rowboat. Then, before Baxter knew what was up, he had hold of one of the oars and jerked it out of the bully’s hand.

“Hi, give me back that oar!” cried Baxter, in alarm.

“Not much,” said Andy. And then, as Baxter tried to hit him with the other oar, he dove under the boat and gave it a sudden push that nearly upset the craft.

“Oh!” yelled Mumps, in alarm. “Don’t! We are going over! Help!”

By this time all of the crowd in the water were surrounding the rowboat, and Jack lost no time in pulling an oar from Paxton. Then he shoved the end of the blade against Dan Baxter, and in a twinkling the bully fell over against the gunwale. Here Pepper caught him by the arm, and over went Baxter into the water with a loud splash.

“Don’t throw me over!” screamed Mumps. “Don’t! I—I can’t hardly swim a stroke.”

“Do you surrender?” demanded Jack.

“Yes! Yes! Please don’t throw me over! I—I wasn’t going to do anything!”

“Paxton, do you surrender?” asked Jack.

“No, I don’t! I’m going——Hi! give me that oar!” For somebody had suddenly captured the other blade.

“If you don’t surrender we’ll cast you adrift without oars,” came from Pepper, with a wink at his companions.

“Yo—you won’t dare,” faltered Paxton.

“Won’t we? You’ll soon see.”

“Yes, cast him adrift,” was the cry.

“Send him away out into the lake!”

“No! No! I—I surrender!” said Paxton.

By this time Dan Baxter was walking ashore. His clothes—a new suit, elegantly pressed,—were, of course, soaked completely, and there was a streak of mud over one shoulder.

“I’ll make somebody pay for this!” he growled. “It will cost two dollars to have this suit fixed up again.”

“You brought it on yourself, Baxter,” said Jack.

“No, I didn’t!”

“Yes, you did. What right had you to try to run away with our baskets of things?”

“I—er—I wasn’t going to run off with ’em. I was just fooling.”

“I don’t believe you,” broke in Pepper.

Several surrounded the bully, so that he might not run away, and the rowboat with Paxton and Mumps was turned back to the point from where it had started.

“Let us make them prisoners,” suggested Andy. “They ought to be taught a lesson.”

“That’s the talk!” came the cry.

“I—I won’t stand it,” faltered Paxton.

“Then sit on it!” cried Pepper, and tripped the fellow up. While he and Stuffer made Paxton a prisoner, the others attended to Dan Baxter and Mumps. The prisoners had their hands tied behind them, and each had a foot tied to the root of a big tree, the boys using sections of boat rope for that purpose.

“Now let us finish our swim,” said Jack, and drew his crowd to one side.

“What shall we do with them?” whispered Pepper.

“We ought to duck Paxton and Mumps,” came the suggestion. “Baxter don’t need any more.”

“Let us keep them bound up,” said another. “They can look on while we are feasting.”

“That’s the talk!” cried Jack. “It will make their mouths water to look at us getting outside of the good things.”

“And let us pretend that we’re going to leave them tied up when we go away,” added Andy.

So it was arranged, and, this settled, the boys continued their swim and then dressed at their leisure.

“See here, ain’t you going to let us go?” asked Dan Baxter, after a long spell of silence.

“Of course not,” answered Jack. “We’ve decided to let you stay here until Sunday night.”

“Sunday night!” cried Mumps, in alarm. “I don’t want to stay here all night and all day tomorrow!”

“Don’t get afraid, Mumpsy dear,” came from Pepper. “There are not very many bears around these parts now.”

“Oh! one bear is enough!” And the sneak shivered.

“I’m not going to stay here until Sunday night,” came from Paxton.

“Come, let us off, and maybe I’ll call it square,” said Baxter, in a more reasonable tone.

“But we don’t intend to call it square, Baxter,” answered Pepper.

“Then you won’t let us go?”

“No!” shouted the rest of the crowd.

After that the baskets were brought up and all the good things spread out where Baxter, Paxton, and Mumps could see them. Soon the cadets were eating and drinking to their hearts’ content.

“Baxter, wouldn’t you like a drink of soda?” asked Pepper, coming up with a glass full of the beverage. “I don’t like to be too hard on a fellow student.”

“Yes, I’d like a drink,” grumbled the bully.

“All right then, you shall have one—as soon as you go down to Cedarville and put up the necessary nickel at the store.”

“Oh, go to thunder!” growled the bully.

“Can’t I have a drink?” asked Mumps. “I’m as dry as a—a fish.”

“Sure you can have a drink—but not of soda,” said Andy. “I’ll get some water for all hands.”

He disappeared behind the bushes in the direction of a spring. Soon he came back with three glasses filled with water.

“Here’s a drink for each,” he said. “I’m not going to be too mean about this. I know what it is to go dry.”

He passed a glass to Pepper and one to Stuffer, and each of the cadets held his glass up to the mouth of a prisoner. As Baxter, Paxton, and Mumps were all dry, each drank eagerly.

“Hullo, what’s this?” spluttered Paxton.

“Bah!” came from Baxter, spitting out the water. “It’s full of salt!”

“This will make us drier than ever!” groaned Mumps.

“And I took several swallows,” growled Paxton.

“So did I,” added Baxter.

“To be sure it’s full of salt,” said Andy. “I thought you all needed it, you’re so fresh, you know.”

“Be gorry, that’s the bist joke yit,” came from Emerald Hogan, with a roar. “That’s roight, Andy, me b’y, salt ’em down.”

“I’ll salt you down, Irish!” cried Baxter, in a rage. “Just wait till I get back to the Hall.”

After this the bully and his cronies asked for nothing more to eat or drink, but they wistfully eyed the good things as the others disposed of them. The salt made them fearfully dry, and each would have given a good round sum for a glass of pure, cold water.

“Wonder if we can all get into that boat,” said Jack, after the feast had come to an end. “A row on the lake and back to the Hall would just suit me.”

“It will give us a little practice for those races,” put in Pepper. “I reckon we can manage it.”

“Are you going to steal our boat?” demanded Baxter.

“It is not your boat—it belongs to the academy,” retorted Jack. “We have as much right to it as you have.”

“Yes, but we had it first.”

“You won’t need any boat just yet,” said Stuffer. “You’re to stay here, you know.”

“No! No! don’t leave us here,” cried Paxton. “Let us go and—er—I, for one, will call the whole matter off.”

“Will you really!” said Pepper. “Awfully kind, I’m sure.”

“If you don’t let us go I’ll tell on you,” said Mumps. “The captain won’t stand for anything like this.”

“What have you got to say, Baxter?” demanded Jack.

“You had better let us go,” grumbled the bully. He did not fancy spending a night in the dark woods.

“If we let you go, will you keep your mouth shut?”

“I haven’t said that I would.”

“All right, we’ll leave you tied up.”

“No! No!” came from Mumps, pleadingly. “Please don’t do it! Dan, tell them that you won’t say anything.”

“They won’t dare to leave us,” said the bully.

“Won’t we?” said Jack. “Wait and see. Come on, fellows, put the baskets in the boat and come on board.”

“They are going to leave us,” groaned Mumps, as the baskets were stowed away and several entered the craft. “We’ll have to stay here all night, and I know it is going to rain! And there may be bears around! Peleg Snuggers told me about a bear he saw once, on the road to Malville.”

“Oh, don’t be a calf, Mumps,” interrupted the bully. “They’ll all laugh at you.”

“I don’t care, I don’t want to stay, so there!” whimpered the sneak. “Tell them you won’t say anything.”

“Well, good-bye!” shouted Jack, turning toward the rowboat.



He walked several steps, but then Baxter hailed him.

“Stop!” cried the bully. “Let us go. For Mumps’ sake I won’t say anything.”

“Very well. Remember, Baxter, that’s a bargain. Are you agreed, Paxton?”

“Yes.”

“And you, Mumps?”

“I shan’t say a word—I promise, Ruddy.”

Without another word Jack released the three prisoners. Then he ran for the rowboat, leaped in and shoved off, and soon the craft was on its way out into the lake.

## **CHAPTER VII**

### **HOW THE BOAT RACES WERE WON**

“Do you think they’ll keep silent?” asked Stuffer, after the rowboat was some distance from the shore.

“That’s a problem,” answered Jack. “Maybe they will—for their own benefit.”

“If they talk about it, the laugh will be on them,” came from Andy.

“That was a fine dive of yours, Andy,” came from Pepper. “You took them by surprise.”

“We would have been in a mess if they had gotten away with the baskets and our clothes,” said Stuffer.

“Sure, an do yez think they’d stale our duds?” questioned Hogan.

“They’d take everything—if they got the chance,” answered Jack. “It was lucky for us that Mumps fell and gave the alarm.”

“What a calf he is!”

“Sneaks are generally of that sort,” said Andy. “How I’d hate to have the reputation he is gaining.”

They looked back and saw Baxter, Paxton, and Mumps standing on the shore. The bully shook his fist at them.

“He feels real friendly,” said Andy. “I think he’d like to embrace us all.”

Soon the rowboat passed out of sight of that portion of the shore. Then the craft was turned up the lake, and those who were to go into the boat races during the

following week took turns at the oars.

“Pepper pulls a fine stroke,” said Stuffer. “He ought to win something.”

“I believe Jackson and Perry will win the main races,” said another cadet. “They are bang-up oarsmen. They live on the Ohio River and have had lots of practice.”

“Well, I am going to do my best,” answered Pepper.

“And so am I,” added Jack.

The sun was just going down when the boys returned to Putnam Hall, tired out but thoroughly happy. They cleaned out the boat and put it away, and then went to their dormitories to wash up for parade.

“Hullo, look here!” cried Jack, as he got out his uniform. “Somebody has been putting on my rank of office.” And this was true, and the uniforms of the other elected officers had been treated likewise. When the young officers went below each received a shining sword, with a scabbard and belt to match.

“We’ll have to have our pictures taken,” said Henry Lee, with pride, and later on, this was done, and each officer sent one or more of the photographs home, much to the parents’ delight.

It must be confessed that Jack felt quite proud when he stepped out in front of the battalion, sword in hand, and in his newly decorated uniform. He saw his friends in the ranks and also saw his enemies. Baxter looked as dark as a thundercloud, but did not dare to express his feelings.

“That was very well accomplished, Major Ruddy,” said Captain Putnam after the drill was at an end. “I trust you keep the battalion up to such a standard for the balance of the term.”

“I shall do my best, sir,” answered the youthful major.

“Ruddy seems to take hold with vigor,” was George Strong’s comment. “I like to see a boy do that.”

“His father was once in the army, and he has military blood in his veins,”

answered the master of the Hall.

The boat races which have been mentioned were to come off on the following Wednesday afternoon, starting at two o'clock. There were to be four races, three among the students of Putnam Hall and the fourth race with the students of Pornell Academy, situated a few miles from Putnam Hall. Pornell Academy was an old institution of learning presided over by a Dr. Pornell, who did not much fancy the coming of Captain Putnam to that neighborhood.

"I hope we wax those Pornell fellows good," said Pepper. "They are a proud lot, and they think we are nothing but the dust of the earth."

"The races between ourselves will show what we can do," answered Singleton.

"Are you going to row, Stuffer?"

"To be sure I am."

"Well, I hope you win something."

The day was a cool, bracing one, an ideal day for boat racing, and immediately after the midday meal the oarsmen turned out in force and the lake front was alive with craft of various sorts. The races had been talked of for two weeks and several sloops and a steam launch came up from Cedarville bringing parties to view the contests. Some boats also came from across the lake, and flags flapped gayly in the moderate breeze.

The first race was a four-oared affair between the smaller boys, and much to the surprise of everybody it was won by Mumps and a lad named Cathby.

"Hullo, I didn't know Mumps could row so well," cried Pepper.

"He comes from a town on the Hudson River, and was brought up around boats," answered a cadet standing near. "His folks own several sailboats, so I've been told."

"Well, he deserves credit for winning, even if he is a sneak," declared Jack.

The next race was an eight-oared affair, between crews made of Stuffer, Hogan, Blackmore, and a number of others already mentioned in these pages. This was

lost by the crew led by Stuffer.

“Stuffer had been eating too much,” said Pepper. And the always-hungry lad afterwards admitted that this was true.

The third race was a four-oared affair between Jack, Pepper, Andy, and Joe Nelson on one side, and Paxton and several chums on the other. Baxter had been expected to row in this, but fell out at the last moment, stating he was not well. Privately, he was afraid of losing, for he knew Jack and his friends were good oarsmen.

The race was for a mile, and at the discharge of a pistol both crews started in fine shape.

“Go it, Paxton!” was the cry. “You can win if you try!”

“Pull, Pepper, pull!”

“Make every stroke tell, Jack!”

On and on swept the two boats, and for the first half of the course kept side by side.

“It’s going to be a tie race!”

“Pull, Paxton! Pull, Leeds!”

“See, Paxton’s boat is going ahead!”

It was true—slowly but surely the craft went forward, until it was a full length in advance. Jack, Pepper, and the others were doing their best but the other boat continued to keep in the lead.

“I see a rope trailing behind!” cried Pepper suddenly.

“There it goes,” added Andy. “It was caught on the bottom.”

“All together, and give her tar!” shouted Jack, shutting his teeth hard. “Pull, boys, pull!” And they did pull as never before.

But quarter of a mile of the race remained, and now Jack’s boat was crawling up

to the rival craft.

“See, Paxton’s boat is but half a length ahead!”

“They are tie again!”

“Pull, everybody, and may the best crew win!” came from a gentleman in one of the sailboats.

“Oh, pa, I hope that last boat wins,” cried a girl in the sailing craft, a fine small yacht.

“So do I, Laura,” came from a second girl.

“Why, Flossie?” questioned her father, with a smile.

“Oh, I don’t know. They look nicer than the boys in the first boat.”

“Really? You have sharp eyes, I must say.” And then Mr. Ford, for such was the gentleman’s name, turned to the race once more.

Jack, Pepper, Andy, and Joe Nelson were working like steam engines, and the same may be said of their opponents. On and on swept the two rowboats toward the finish line. There was a wild yelling along the lake front and from the various boats gathered around.

“Come, we must win!” shouted Joe Nelson, and seemed to suddenly wake up. Jack and the others also renewed their exertions, and now their spurt carried them a foot in the lead.

“Here they come!”

“Jack Ruddy’s boat is ahead!”

“Paxton is crawling up again!”

It was true, the rivals were also spurring, and for a moment the two craft were side by side once more. But Paxton’s crew could not keep up the terrific pace, and suddenly they fell back, and Jack and his friends shot over the line winners by a full length.

“Hurrah! Jack Ruddy’s crew wins!”

“It was a stiff race though, wasn’t it?”

“It was, indeed!”

As soon as he saw that he had lost Paxton fell down in his boat and put his hand to his side.

“What’s the matter, Paxton?” asked George Strong, who was in a boat nearby.

“Got a—a pain in—my—side,” gasped Paxton. “It’s the old trouble, sir.”

“That’s too bad.”

“I—I could have won if—it—wasn’t—for—that,” went on Paxton.

“Possibly,” returned the assistant teacher.

“He and his crew were beat clean and clear,” whispered one of the cadets nearby, and this opinion was the opinion of the majority who witnessed the race.

When Jack and his crew landed at the boathouse a crowd surrounded them, slapping them on the backs and shaking hands.

“It was well won!” cried Bart Conners. “But, say, wasn’t there something the matter with your boat at first?”

“Sure there was,” answered Pepper. “Somehow, a rope caught fast to the bottom. If it hadn’t been for that I think we should have won with ease.”

“I’d like to know how that rope got there,” said Andy. But the mystery was never explained.

Half an hour later the race came off between the Putnam Hall cadets and the crew from Pornell Academy. None of our friends took part in this affair, and to witness it to advantage Jack, Pepper, and Andy went out in a small rowboat and stationed themselves near the course.

“There is that yacht that passed us while we were racing,” observed Andy, pointing the craft out. “See the girls who waved their handkerchiefs at us.”

“They look to be nice girls,” said Jack. “Let us get a little closer to the yacht.”

“Hullo, Jack must be smitten!” came from Pepper.

“Nonsense!” murmured Jack, turning red. “I only wanted to see who the gentleman was who is on board.”

“I know him,” came from Andy. “His name is Ford, and he has a fine estate further up the lake. Somebody told me he was rich. Those girls must be his daughters.”

“I don’t believe he knows much about handling a yacht,” said the young major. “See how he is bringing her around.”

“Those girls want to be careful,” came from Andy. “That boom may——”

Andy got no further, for just then the yacht swung around on another tack. Around came the boom of the mainsail, hitting each of the girls on the shoulder. Just then the yacht gave a lurch, and with a wild scream of terror, the two maidens slipped over the craft’s side and disappeared beneath the waters of Cayuga Lake!



## **CHAPTER VIII**

### **THE CADETS TO THE RESCUE**

“They are overboard!”

“They’ll be drowned!”

“We must save them!”

Such were the three exclamations that came from Jack, Pepper, and Andy as Laura and Flossie Ford sank beneath the surface of the broad and rippling lake.

“My daughters! My daughters!” came in an agonizing cry from Rossmore Ford. “Save them! Save them! I cannot swim!”

“We’ll save them!” shouted back Jack, and bent to the oars of the rowboat, while Pepper did the same. Andy was in the bow, and stood up, ready to dive overboard should it become necessary to do so.

The mishaps had occurred some distance away and it took nearly a minute for the small craft to reach the locality. In the meantime both Laura and Flossie had reappeared and were shrieking for help. Both could swim a little, but not enough to keep up with all of their clothing and their shoes on.

“Save them! Save them!” Mr. Ford continued to call out, and tried his best to bring the yacht around again.

By the time the rowboat was at hand the girls had disappeared once more. As quick as a flash Andy dove overboard, for he had caught a brief glimpse of Flossie’s dress.

“I see the other one, Pep!” called out Jack. “Keep the boat handy!” And then he followed Andy into the water.

It was a long dive for Jack, but it brought him close beside Laura, and soon he had hold of the girl and was bringing her to the surface. She clutched him tightly, and he had all he could do to keep her from shutting off his breath.

“Don’t—don’t hold so tight—you—you are safe,” he gasped, when they got their heads above water. “Here is a rowboat. I’ll put you in that!”

“Oh!” murmured Laura. “Ple—please don’t let me go down again!”

“I won’t. Here’s the boat. Now easy, Pep, or you’ll tip over.”

“I’ve got her, Jack,” was the reply, and bracing himself in the rowboat, Pepper hauled the young lady aboard.

“I’VE GOT HER, JACK!”

“I’VE GOT HER, JACK!”

“Where’s Andy?” questioned the young major, looking around.

“I see him,” answered Pepper, and a moment later Andy came up, holding Flossie by the back of her shirt-waist. The girl was partly unconscious.

“Got tangled up in some wild grass on the bottom,” spluttered Andy. “Here, take her,” and he held her up, and soon Flossie was resting on the seats of the rowboat.

By this time several boats were coming up, including the steam tug containing the judge of the coming race.

“They’re safe!” was the cry. And this was re-echoed on all sides.

“Are they—they all right?” asked Rossmore Ford, in a faltering voice.

“Yes, sir.”

“Thank God for that!” murmured the rich man. “Will you bring the rowboat up here?”

“Better lower your mainsail first,” suggested Pepper. This was done, and soon

the rowboat was alongside of the yacht, and then the girls were passed up to the deck.

“Oh, dear, what has happened?” murmured Flossie, opening her eyes. She gave a shudder. “I—we went overboard, didn’t we?” And she gazed around in wonder.

“Are you all right, Laura?” questioned the father.

“Yes, pa—but I—I don’t want to fall overboard again,” said the older of the two sisters.

“Neither do I,” put in Flossie. She was recovering rapidly. “It was the boom struck us, wasn’t it?”

“Yes.”

“Let us get out of the crowd,” whispered Jack. “The girls are all right now.”

“Just as you say,” answered Andy. And they rowed away as rapidly as they had come up.

“Hi! hi!” called out Rossmore Ford. “Wait! I want to thank you for what you have done.”

“Oh, that’s all right, sir,” called back Jack.

“Come back, won’t you?” pleaded the rich man.

“We’ll have to go back,” said Andy, and once more the rowboat was turned around, and presently they boarded the yacht and tied the small craft behind.

“Are those young ladies safe?” asked the judge of the race, from the steam tug.

“They are,” answered Rossmore Ford.

“Good,” and the tug soon after that moved away, and so did the majority of the other boats.

“I owe you young gentlemen a good deal for saving my daughters,” said Rossmore Ford.

“I shall never forget what you did,” put in Laura, with a bright glance at Jack.

“You saved us from death,” came from Flossie, and gave Andy a grateful look.

“Your boom came around pretty lively,” said the young major.

“Yes. The—er—fact is, I don’t know as much about sailing a boat as I’d like to,” answered the owner of the yacht. “I’ll have to be more careful in the future.”

He asked the cadets their names, and then introduced himself and his daughters, and all shook hands.

“Pa, we’ll have to go home and put on some dry clothing,” said Laura.

“Gracious me, I never thought of that!” exclaimed the fond parent. “To be sure—we’ll go back at once. Do you wish to go along, young gentlemen?”

“I guess we had better stay behind and see the race,” answered Jack, after a questioning look at his companions.

“Yes, I presume you are greatly interested. I was interested myself.”

“I hope your school wins,” came from Laura.

“So do I,” added her sister.

“You must give us a call some time,” went on Rossmore Ford. “Our home is up the lake—Point View Lodge we call it. We shall be glad to see you any time.”

“Thank you, perhaps we’ll come up,” said Andy, and the others said practically the same. Then the cadets jumped into their rowboat once more and the yacht went on its way.

“They are certainly nice people,” was Pepper’s comment. “You two fellows are regular heroes for saving the maidens fair.”

“Pooh! As if you didn’t have as much to do with it as anybody!” cried Jack.

“I didn’t leap into the briny deep, as the novelists say.”

“Briny deep is good,” laughed Andy. “Why, the water isn’t over twelve feet deep

around here.”

“It’s deep enough to drown in. If you don’t believe it, stand on the bottom and find out.” And then there was a general laugh.

The race between the cadets of Putnam Hall and the boys from Pornell Academy was now about to start. Crack! went the pistol and down into the clear waters of Cayuga Lake went the oars.

“They are off!”

“And Putnam Hall leads!” came the cry half a minute later.

It was true, almost from the start Putnam Hall led by half a length. The oarsmanship of the crew was perfect, and the lead was held for the first half of the race.

“Oh, if only they can keep it up!” cried Pepper.

“Go it, boys, go it!” yelled Jack. “You’ve got to win!”

“Show ’em what Putnam Hall can do!” cried Andy.

On and on flew the two boats. Putnam Hall was still ahead, but only a few inches.

“We’re going to lose the lead!” cried Harry Blossom. “Too bad!”

“Are we?” came from Dave Kearney. “Not much! How is that for a spurt?”

As he spoke the captain of the Putnam Hall crew spoke to his fellows, and in a twinkling the time of the stroke was increased. Straight to the front leaped the boat, until the stern was even with the bow of the rival’s craft.

“They are going ahead!”

“Hurrah for Putnam Hall!”

“Pull, Pornell, pull! You’ve got to win!”

So the cries ran on and the crew of the Pornell boat did their best to increase

their stroke. But they could not overtake Putnam Hall and when the line was crossed the latter was the winner by two lengths and a half.

A wild din went up. Horns tooted, rattles clacked loudly, and cheer after cheer rent the air.

“That’s the way to beat ’em!”

“Pornell wasn’t in it from start to finish!”

“Better go home and learn to row!”

The rivals felt sheepish enough, and without loss of time they rowed ashore and the members of the crew disappeared, followed by those who had come from Pornell Academy to see them win.

“You have certainly done very well,” said Captain Putnam, to the winning crew. “Your stroke was almost perfect.”

“And it was well kept up,” came from George Strong. “I never saw a prettier race in my life.”

Josiah Crabtree had nothing to say, for he took no interest in sports. But nobody paid attention to the crabbed teacher.

The races were followed by a general holiday time, in which nearly all of the cadets participated. Only Dan Baxter and his crowd went away. They departed for a deserted boathouse, and there sat talking and smoking cigarettes.

“I suppose those fellows will have swelled heads after this,” muttered the bully.

“Sure,” grumbled Paxton. “But I don’t care. If they try to crow over me——”

“What will you do?” asked Mumps.

“Never mind, I’ll do something.”

“And I’ll help,” came from the bully of the school. “We have got to take them down a peg or two, or else they’ll be running the whole Hall to suit themselves.”

## **CHAPTER IX**

### **THE CHUMS MAKE A CALL**

For a week after the races, matters at Putnam Hall ran along smoothly. Captain Putnam insisted upon it that the students attend to their studies and our friends pitched in with vigor, so that Jack stood first in his class, Pepper third, and Andy fourth, which was certainly fine.

During that time Dan Baxter had a sharp “run-in” with the master of the Hall, who gave the bully a stern lecture. As a consequence Baxter was quite humble for the time being and did not risk doing anything to bring him into further disgrace.

On a Tuesday morning Captain Putnam called Jack, Pepper, and Andy into his private office.

“Gracious, I hope we aren’t in for a lecture!” whispered Andy while on the way.

“Have you been doing anything wrong?” asked Pepper with a wink.

“No, have you?”

“Not much. I had some flour yesterday and when I was upstairs old Crabtree was in the lower hallway. Somehow the flour slipped out of my hand and went down on Crabtree’s head.”

“Slipped is good!” chuckled Jack. “Did he spot you?”

“Not much! I had business elsewhere, and I dusted,” answered his chum.

When they entered the office they found Captain Putnam awaiting them with a smile and knew at once that everything was all right.

“I’ve received an invitation for you three lads,” said the master of the Hall. “It is from Mr. Rossmore Ford. He and his wife and daughters are going to have a small gathering at their home this afternoon and evening, and they would like you to be present. If you desire to go you may do so. Mr. Ford is anxious to do something to show how much he appreciates what you did for his daughters.”

“Oh, I don’t know——” faltered Andy, who was somewhat bashful.

“Let us go by all means!” cried Pepper. “I’m sure we’ll have a good time.”

“I shouldn’t mind going,” said Jack. “They seemed to be real nice people, and it would look strange to refuse.”

So it was settled that they should go, and Captain Putnam said they could take a horse and buggy from the Hall and make the journey to Point View Lodge and back in that.

“And remember to be back by eleven o’clock,” said the master of the Hall.

They were to start at two o’clock, and immediately after dinner they rushed up to their dormitory to get ready. It was a rule of the establishment that cadets must wear their uniforms when going out on such occasions and they brushed up as never before, and put on their best collars, cuffs, and shoes.

“Jack is sprucing up for the girls,” observed Pepper, with a wink at Andy.

“I’m sprucing up for the credit of the Hall,” retorted the young major. “And you must do the same.”

When they went down to the barn, Peleg Snuggers had the horse and buggy ready for them, and the utility man told them of the road to take to get to Point View Lodge.

“Mr. Ford is a swell gent,” said Peleg Snuggers. “Ain’t no more swell gent in these parts.”

“Any danger of his bursting?” queried Andy.

“Is he a land swell or a sea swell?” questioned Pepper.



“You young gents know wot I mean,” answered the utility man. “He’s rich—got millions.”

“Phew!” murmured Jack. “Boys, we’ll have to put on swell airs!”

“Peleg, won’t you lend me a diamond for my shirt front?” asked Andy.

“Ain’t got no diamond.”

“Maybe you’ll lend us a gold watch,” suggested Jack.

“Oh, you stop a-jokin’ me,” cried the utility man. “How am I to git diamonds an’ gold watches on twenty dollars a month, answer me that now?”

“Oh, we know you’re rich, Peleg,” said Pepper. “Some day you’ll buy out the Hall and give us free board, eh?” And then the boys drove off, leaving Peleg Snuggers standing grinning after them.

“Boys is boys, an’ allers will be!” murmured the man of all work. “Bless ’em all, say I.”

The road to Point View Lodge was somewhat rough and they had to drive along with care. In some spots the trees overhung the road completely, making the way rather dark.

“It will be no mean drive getting back,” said Andy.

“We’ve got a lantern, and we can drive slow,” answered Jack. “We ought to start for the Hall by half-past nine o’clock.”

At last they reached the Lodge, located on a point of the lake shore. There were elegant grounds, filled with shrubs and flowers, and a fine mansion with broad piazzas. Off to one side was a large summerhouse and to the other a barn and sheds.

“This is fine and no mistake,” murmured Jack. “See, there is quite a crowd here, too.”

A stable-hand took care of their turnout, and soon Rossmore Ford and his stately wife came to greet them. Then the girls came also, and there were warm

handshakings all around.

“I am very, very thankful for what you did for Laura and Flossie,” said Mrs. Ford. “I want you to make yourselves at home here, and I trust you have a good time.”

“It’s a splendid place,” said Andy.

They were introduced to a number of the guests, including several young men from Pornell Academy, and then Laura and Flossie took them around the mansion and grounds, showing them various points of interest. The girls were bright and lively and soon succeeded in making them feel perfectly at home.

“I see you have several students from Pornell here,” said Jack to Laura, when they had drifted a short distance away from the others.

At this Laura frowned slightly.

“Yes. We did not expect them. They came to make a call.”

“Oh, I see.”

“One of them, Roy Bock, knows some of my mother’s people, and he comes on that account and brings those others with him.”

“He seems to be making himself at home.”

“Yes, he acts as if he owned the place. Flossie and I do not like them to come, but mamma doesn’t like to say anything, and pa is away most of the time.”

They took a ramble through the garden and into a conservatory, and Laura gave Jack a big rose for his buttonhole, while Flossie got roses for Andy and Pepper. These had just been pinned on when Roy Bock appeared, followed by three of his fellow students from Pornell Academy.

“So here you are!” cried Roy Bock, loudly. “We were wondering what had become of you. Spooning, I suppose?” he added, coarsely.

“We were showing our friends around the grounds,” said Laura, quietly.

“I just heard you were the chaps that pulled the girls out of the lake,” said a student named Grimes.

“Oh, anybody could have done that,” came from another, named Gussic.

“I suppose anybody could have rowed that race, too,” said Jack, sharply. The manner of the rival academy boys was very obnoxious.

“Oh, I heard how your school won that race!” cried Flossie, her eyes beaming.

“I guess our school didn’t have a fair show,” growled Roy Bock. “The Putnam Hall crew started before the pistol went off.”

“That is not true!” exclaimed Pepper. “The start was a very fair one.”

“Humph! Of course you’d say so,” grumbled the student named Gussic.

“I say so because it is true.”

“I reckon all you fellows have the swelled head now,” put in Grimes. “But just wait till the football match comes off—we’ll show you a trick or two.”

“Oh, please don’t quarrel here!” whispered Laura, in a frightened tone. “If you get Roy Bock mad, he’ll say all sorts of mean things.”

“We’ve got to go back now,” said Bock. “We’ll call again some day—when these fellows ain’t around. We don’t want anything to do with chaps who cheat at boat races.”

“Bock, some day I’ll make you take back those words,” said Jack, hotly. “But we are guests here, so I’ll say no more.”

“Bah! I’m not afraid of you,” growled Roy Bock, and then he strode off, followed by his fellow students. Soon they left the house, on the buckboard that had brought them to the Lodge.

“Oh, how thankful I am that they are gone,” said Flossie. “Do you know, I am getting afraid of Roy Bock!”

“He’s a—a—puppy,” said Andy. “Excuse the word, but I can’t describe him in

any other way.”

“I think he is very mean,” came from Laura. “I wish he would keep away for good.”

“His companions are about as bad as he is,” said Pepper. “They seem to be all tarred with the same brush.”

“They are always together,” said Flossie. “They always come here in a bunch and stay and stay. It’s a wonder they didn’t invite themselves to dinner. And then, so I’ve been told, they tell their fellow students that we urge them to come, and that they can’t hardly get away from here!”

There were one or two other young folks present, and all had a good time until dinner was served. The repast was an elaborate one, and our friends did it full justice. Then came some music and a few games, and all too soon it was time for Jack, Pepper, and Andy to leave.

“We’ve had a boss time!” cried Pepper, enthusiastically. “Excuse the French!” he added, meaning the slang.

“Couldn’t have had a better!” added Jack.

“It was real nice of you to ask us to come,” put in Andy.

“We have enjoyed your company,” said Laura, and Flossie said the same. Then Mr. and Mrs. Ford asked them to call again.

“You must come down to our school,” said Jack. “On Saturdays we give a special drill.”

“And Jack, you know, is our major!” said Andy.

“Oh, pa, we must see the drill by all means!” cried the two girls.

“Well, we can drive over some day,” answered the fond parent.

It was quarter to ten when the boys left the grounds in the buggy. The lantern was lit and hung over the dashboard, yet it did not light the road very well, and they had to proceed with care.

“This isn’t so nice,” observed Andy, when they were in a black portion of the woods. “Supposing some tramps or highway robbers should pounce out on us?”

“Andy must have been reading some trashy five-cent library,” laughed Pepper. “I caught Link Smiley reading one the other day, and I had to laugh at all the hair-breadth escapes the so-called hero had.”

“Excuse me, but I’m not giving up my good nickels for such rot,” answered Andy. “Good books are too plentiful. But it is dark and no mistake.”

“I see a light ahead!” interrupted Pepper. “Perhaps a carriage is coming this way.”

They drove slowly, and presently came up to where the light was resting, on a limb of a tree. Just as they were opposite to the lantern, eight masked figures leaped out from behind the bushes.

“Stop!” was the command. “Don’t you dare to drive another step!”

## **CHAPTER X**

### **IN THE HANDS OF THE ENEMY**

“What are we up against now?”

“Are these fellows tramps?”

“Are they going to rob us?”

Such were a few of the questions which Jack, Andy, and Pepper asked when they found themselves confronted by the eight masked figures on the lonely forest road. Each of the masked persons was armed with a stout stick.

“Stop, do you hear?” came from one of the crowd, and stepping forward, he caught the horse by the head.

“What is the meaning of this?” demanded Jack.

“It means that you must consider yourself prisoners,” was the cold reply.

“Prisoners!”

“Yes.”

“Who are you?” queried Pepper.

“That remains for you to find out. Step down out of that carriage and be quick about it.”

“Perhaps we won’t step out,” said Andy.

“If you don’t, you’ll get hurt.”

“I know them!” shouted Jack. “They must be Pornell students. Roy Bock, I know your voice.”

“I am not Roy Bock,” was the answer, in a disguised voice.

“You are. What are you going to do with us?”

“We are going to give you a lesson,” growled Roy Bock, for it was really he who had spoken. “Come down out of that buggy!”

As Bock spoke one of the boys leaped forward and secured the whip and two others pulled away the reins. There was no help for it, and Jack, Pepper, and Andy had to leap out. They were at once surrounded.

“This is a pretty high-handed proceeding,” said Jack, in a steady voice. “Don’t you know we can put you in the hands of the law for it?”

“Bah!” growled one of the masked students. “You don’t know us.”

“Perhaps we do.”

“We know Bock, and Grimes, and Gussie,” put in Pepper.

“None of them here,” said one of the Pornell boys. “You are on to the wrong crowd entirely.”

“Maybe this is a Baxter trick!” whispered Andy to his chums.

“No, it’s a Roy Bock trick, I am sure of it,” returned Jack. “He is mad because we cut him out with the Ford girls.”

Our friends were led to a small grove not far from the roadside. Here a camp-fire was burning, and they were forced to kneel while the enemy stood around with their sticks upraised.

“We want you to make a solemn promise,” said one of the masked students.

“What promise?” demanded Jack.

“You have no right to visit Point View Lodge.”

“Ho! I thought so!”

“All of you must promise not to go there again.”

“I’ll not promise,” cried Jack.

“Nor I,” added Pepper.

“Count me out too,” came from Andy. “Why should we stay away?”

“You won’t promise?” asked several.

“No!” came in unison from our three friends.

“Then you’d rather suffer, eh?”

“We don’t intend to suffer!”

“Quit talking and take them to the lake, fellows!” growled one of the masked students. “They’ll sing another tune after they have been ducked three or four times.”

“So you are going to duck us?” said Jack.

“Such is our intention.”

“It’s a mean trick.”

“You can save yourself by promising to steer clear of Point View Lodge in the future.”

“Supposing we are invited there?”

“You can plead a previous engagement.”

“I’ll not do it,” said Andy.

“Nor I,” came from Jack and Pepper.

“To the lake with them!”



In spite of their resistance, our three friends were hurried through the woods, to a point where there was a small cove of the lake. Here a bent tree overhung the water and here were several ropes.

“We’ll tie them by the hands and feet and then duck them good,” said Roy Bock.

“We must escape!” whispered Jack to his friends. “When I give the word cut for it, and cut lively.”

“All right,” they answered.

“I’d rather be ducked than make any promises,” said Jack, loudly. “But I want to tell you fellows something. We have friends, and some day we’ll get square. The people—Gracious sakes alive! What is that, fellows? Look, it’s coming this way! It must be a mad bull!”

As Jack broke off short and pointed with his hand, all of the masked students looked in that direction. Then Jack gave Pepper and Andy the signal, and side by side they dove into the woods and ran towards the road.

“They are gone!”

“It was a trick, to get us to look away!” roared Roy Bock. “Come on after them!”

“If you come after us now we’ll shoot somebody!” cried Andy. They had no firearms, but he thought he might scare their enemies.

“Do you think they will shoot?” questioned one of the masked boys, a lad who was timid by nature.

“No, I don’t,” answered Grimes. “Come on!”

“We don’t want to get hurt——”

“Come on, it’s all right!” And then the crowd went after Jack, Pepper, and Andy pell-mell.

But our friends had gained a good start and they made the best possible use of their time. They leaped over the rocks and small brush-wood, and presently caught sight of the lantern, still hanging over the dashboard of the buggy.

“Hullo, what’s this?” cried Pepper, as he stumbled over something. “Bicycles, I declare, four singles and two tandems!”

“They must have come to this spot on their wheels,” answered Andy.

“I’ve got an idea—we’ll take a couple of the wheels along! Then somebody will have to walk home!”

This was agreed to, and in a trice they had hoisted two of the bicycles into the buggy. Then they got in and urged the horse forward.

“Stop!” came from behind. “Stop!”

“They have two of our wheels!” came in alarm, a moment later. “They are driving away with them!”

“Give us back our bicycles!”

“Not to-night!” shouted Jack. “If you want them, come to Putnam Hall tomorrow and get them!”

“This is the worst yet!” growled Roy Bock, whose wheel had been taken. “We must catch them if we can.”

“Yes, let’s do our best,” returned Grimes, whose wheel was likewise missing.

The rest of the boys mounted their wheels and tried to follow the buggy. But the road to Putnam Hall was much rougher than that to Pornell Academy, and soon they had to abandon the pursuit.

“We made a mess of it,” said Gussic. “They have the laugh on us.”

“I don’t feel like going to Putnam Hall for my wheel,” said Grimes, with a downcast look on his face.

“No more do I,” answered Bock. “But what are you going to do about it?”

“They’ll be sure to tell the Ford girls of this, and they’ll have the laugh on us.”

“If they do that, I’ll punch somebody’s head,” grumbled Roy Bock.

As soon as they were sure the Pornell students had given up the pursuit, those in the buggy slackened their pace, and re-arranged the bicycles they were carrying.

“We surely turned the tables on them that time,” laughed Jack. “I don’t think they’ll stop us again in a hurry.”

When they reached Putnam Hall they placed the bicycles in care of Peleg Snuggers.

“An’ where did you get them machines?” demanded the general utility man.

“They belong to a couple of Pornell boys. We picked ’em up on the road,” answered Jack.

“I’ll wager a tomato you got into a scrap,” said Peleg, with a grin.

“If we did, we didn’t get the worst of it, Peleg,” said Pepper.

“I don’t reckon you did. Most on the boys at Putnam Hall knows how to take care o’ themselves.”

Our friends were curious to know what the Pornell students would do about their wheels. Two days passed, and then a hired man from the Academy appeared with a wagon, and a note for Jack. The note was unsigned and read as follows:

“Please return the two bicycles per bearer, and we will call the whole thing off.”

“That’s short enough,” said Pepper, after Jack had read the note aloud. “What are you going to do?”

“Let them have their wheels. It wouldn’t be honest to keep them.”

“Let us send a note in return,” suggested Andy.

“I have it!” cried Pepper, and without delay he wrote out the following:

“In the future beware and keep off the grass.

“COMMITTEE OF THREE.”

“That’s short and to the point,” said Jack. The note was sent with the bicycles; and that was the last seen or heard of the Pornell boys for some time to come.

## **CHAPTER XI**

### **A GREAT GAME OF FOOTBALL**

Once more the days glided by peacefully. Autumn was now well under way, and the leaves of the trees were turning to crimson and gold. Boating became almost a thing of the past, and talks about football filled the air.

With the coming of the football season Dale Blackmore was in his element. Not only was Dale a good athlete, but it was speedily learned that he had been captain of a good amateur football team in the town he hailed from, and that the team had in one season won nine games out of twelve.

“Dale is the man for our team,” said Jack, and by a popular vote the lad was made captain. There was a slight opposition by Dan Baxter but this quickly subsided.

As soon as he was made captain, Dale set to work to organize as a good a team as Putnam Hall could produce. He tried fully thirty cadets and then selected fifteen—eleven for the regular team and the balance as substitutes. On the regular team were Jack, Andy, Hogan, Bart Connors, Henry Lee, and others already mentioned in these pages. Pepper was a substitute, and he was willing enough to take a “back seat” as he called it.

“Now we have got to get into practice,” said Dale, “and it’s to be no baby play either.” And every day the team went out on the playground to practice. Dale made a good coach, and soon had the boys doing finely. He was assisted by George Strong, who had himself played football on his college team.

It had been expected that Pornell Academy would play Putnam Hall. But the Pornell students were sore over their boat-race defeat and they insisted that a false start had been made. The discussion grew warm on both sides, and so the scheme for a football match for that year fell through, although matches between

the two schools were played later, as I have already mentioned in certain volumes of the "Rover Boys Series."

"Those Pornell fellows are a sore lot," said Jack. "I suppose they felt sure they'd win that boat race."

"They are going to play the Rigsby Football Club next Saturday," said Andy. "Dale just told me."

"I thought we were to play Rigsby," put in Joe Nelson.

"We are, some time later."

The Rigsby Football Club was controlled by a rich gentleman named Rigsby who had an elegant place outside of a nearby city which I shall call Mornville. The team was composed largely of college boys and played exceedingly well.

The game between the Pornell Academy and the Rigsby Club attracted a large crowd to Mornville, and half a dozen students from Putnam Hall journeyed to the town, to see what sort of a game was being put up.

"We must catch all the pointers we can," said Dale. "It may help us in our playing."

The Pornell Academy made a fine showing during practice, but when the game started it was quickly found that the Rigsby team was too heavy and too clever for them. In each half of the game the Rigsby Club made a touchdown and a goal, and when the contest came to a close the score stood, Rigsby 12, Pornell Academy 0.

"That's as bad as the boat-race defeat," said Pepper. "They must feel sick."

"Those Rigsby chaps are heavy and full of ginger," said Dale, seriously. "We'll have no picnic playing against them."

When our friends were coming from the football grounds they fell in with half a dozen Pornell students.

"Fine day, Bock!" called out Pepper, cheerily. "Good day for playing football, eh?"

“Oh, you needn’t crow!” growled Roy Bock. “Just wait till Rigsby waxes you—you won’t feel so happy.”

“Maybe they won’t wax us.”

“Won’t they!” put in Grimes, who was along. “The score will be about 50 to nothing in Rigsby’s favor.”

“Wait and see,” said Jack, quietly; and then the students of the two schools separated.

After this game the team of the Hall practiced harder than ever, and George Strong taught them several useful plays. So the days went by until the eventful day for the match arrived. The game was to come off on the Rigsby grounds, and the students from Putnam Hall went over in the stage, the carryall, and in carriages and on bicycles.

At first Dan Baxter said he was not going, but when he heard how the Rigsby Club had defeated Pornell Academy he changed his mind.

“The Rigsby Club is sure to beat Dale Blackmore’s crowd,” said he to Paxton and Coulter. “Let us go over there and see the drubbing administered.”

“All right, I’m willing,” said Coulter. “Maybe we can pick up a little money in bets.” And when they arrived on the football grounds all of Baxter’s cronies as well as the bully himself put up money that Putnam Hall would be beaten.

“I just heard Baxter is betting against our club,” said Andy, coming in with the news.

“How mean!” cried Jack. “To bet against his own school! I don’t believe in betting, but if I did want to lay a wager, I’d do it on my own school.”

“That’s just how I feel about it,” put in Pepper. “Well, I hope now, more than ever, that we win.”

It was a fine ground, with a beautiful stand and nice dressing rooms for both clubs. Mr. Rigsby himself was at hand and shook each of the visitors by the hand.

“Play for all you are worth, boys!” he said, cheerfully. “I want the best club to win!”

“We are going to do our best, sir,” said Dale, modestly.

The halves were divided into thirty-five minutes each, and soon the first half was on. It was Rigsby’s ball and they sent it twenty yards into Putnam Hall territory. The Rigsby fellows were exceedingly active, and inside of ten minutes they scored a touchdown and immediately afterwards kicked a goal.

“Hurrah for Rigsby! That’s the way to do it!” was the cry.

“Putnam Hall will be defeated worse than Pornell Academy was!”

When the touchdown and goal were made Dan Baxter grinned at Paxton and his other cronies.

“What did I tell you?” he whispered. “This is a dead easy thing for Rigsby.”

“You’re right,” answered Paxton. “Wish I had another fiver up on them.”

“Let us do a little more betting,” said Mumps, who had just a dollar of his spending money left.

They walked into the crowd, and after some trouble managed to place what money they had left on the Rigsby team. Then they hurried back to their seats. The first half of the game was drawing to a close.

“Another touchdown for Rigsby!”

“Hurrah! Now for a goal!”

“There she goes! A goal, sure enough! How do you like that, Putnam Hall?”

With the score 12 to 0 the two teams went at it again. But hardly had the leather been put into play when the whistle blew and the first half came to an end.

“We are up against it sure, this trip,” sighed Andy. “They can play like—like tigers!”

“They are too heavy for us, that is certain,” said Dale. “We must depend upon



our lightness and our quickness if we want to win anything at all.”

The brief intermission was soon at an end, and once more the two teams faced each other. The Rigsby followers cheered wildly while the students from Putnam Hall gazed expectantly.

It was soon seen that Dale’s team was not playing as before. There was little mass work, and the ball flew from player to player with great rapidity. This did not suit the Rigsby team, and they made several errors and lost some ground thereby.

Hardly had the second half been opened than Joe Nelson got the ball. He passed it to Hogan, who sent it to Andy. With a wild leap over a Rigsby player, the acrobatic youth went flying down the gridiron with the leather clutched in his arms.

“See Andy Snow running with the ball!”

“Stop him, Brown! Stop him, Callahan!”

“Cut him off, Sturmen!”

So the calls rang out and several started in pursuit of Andy. But just as they thought they had him he let the ball drop, gave it a swift kick, and over the bar sailed the leather.

“Hurrah! What a beautiful kick!”

“And on a dead run, too!”

“Putnam Hall is waking up!”

The cadets cheered wildly and unfurled the flags they had brought along, while some tooted their horns.

As soon as possible the ball was put into play once more. This time it went far up into Putnam Hall territory, and it looked as if Rigsby would score once more, when Hogan got the ball.

“Not just yit, me laddybuck!” muttered the Irish cadet, and started in the

opposite direction. He made twenty yards before he was downed and the ball went to Joe Nelson, who carried it another ten yards. Then Dale landed on it through a fumble by Rigsby, and took it over the line for a touchdown. A moment later there was a trial for a goal, but it failed.

“Never mind, it’s a touchdown, anyway!” shouted the Putnam Hall supporters.

With the score 12 to 9 against them, Putnam Hall went again at the battle. They had exactly seven minutes in which to do or die, and the excitement all over the field was now intense. Among the anxious ones were Baxter and his cronies.

“They can’t win anything in seven minutes,” argued Paxton, somewhat gloomily.

“There it goes!” cried Mumps. “See, Rigsby has the ball!”

“They are going to score again!”

It certainly looked like it, but at the last moment Dale got the ball and sent it back. Then it went from player to player so rapidly that the Rigsby players could not follow it. At last Jack had it and he ran with might and main for a touchdown—and got it!

“Whoop! Hurrah! Putnam Hall wins!” was the cry.

The goal was kicked, and the ball went again into play. But before it could be moved ten yards time was called; and the match came to an end. Putnam Hall had indeed won.

## **CHAPTER XII**

### **HAPPENINGS AFTER THE GAME**

“What a splendid game!”

“Say, but didn’t the Putnam Hall boys pull themselves together in that second half!”

“They surely did! I never saw such running in my life!”

“And such dodging, too! They deserve their victory!”

So the talk ran on. Both Captain Putnam and George Strong came up to congratulate the team members.

Dan Baxter and his cronies were utterly downcast. Between them they had lost sixteen dollars and a half, and now some of them would have to do without spending money for a long time to come.

“I guess those Rigsby chaps didn’t want to win,” growled the bully. “They went all to pieces in the second half.”

Jack was talking to Andy and Pepper when Laura and Flossie Ford came up with smiling faces.

“Oh, it was just splendid!” cried Laura.

“I just had to scream for you!” added Flossie. “I was terribly anxious at first! Those Pornell boys were sure you’d be beaten.”

“Well, we have disappointed them,” said Jack. “I guess we could beat them, too.”

“Why, of course. See how they were beaten by Rigsby,” said Flossie.

“Have you been bothered by Roy Bock lately?”

“Only once. Then he came and talked against you, and pa told them—Roy and those others—they had better stay away.”

“Good!” said Pepper, and told of the meeting in the woods. The girls laughed heartily when they heard how the bicycles had been taken.

“We are coming to see the drill next week,” said Laura. And they did come, and were entertained to the best of our friends’ ability. They thought the drill and parade fine, and complimented Jack on the way he handled the cadets.

As a substitute player, Pepper had gotten into the second half of the football game, so he came in for a portion of the glory, even though he had made no brilliant plays. That night the boys celebrated by a bonfire and by singing and “larking” on the campus until eleven o’clock.

“Captain Putnam, let them have their sport,” said George Strong. “They certainly deserve it.” And the captain took the advice of his assistant. Josiah Crabtree took no part in the proceedings, but locked himself up in his room and read. To his mind, all sports were just so much time wasted.

On the following day one of the students brought in news that interested all of the cadets. A circus was to stop at Cedarville, and the boy had brought one of the handbills along.

“This looks as if it might be a pretty good show,” said Pepper, after reading the handbill. “Andy, let’s go if we can.”

“Don’t think the captain will let us off,” answered Andy.

“We can sound him anyway,” put in Jack.

The master of Putnam Hall was appealed to, and finally said the big boys could go to the circus if they wished, but all must promise to behave themselves.

“To be sure we’ll behave ourselves,” said Jack.

“But we must have a little fun,” came from Pepper, with a wink at his chums.

“Better keep out of mischief,” put in Andy. “If you don’t, the captain will put the screws on us, and we won’t get anywhere after this.”

The circus soon became the chief topic of conversation, and it was ascertained that twenty-one of the older cadets were going. Dan Baxter “stuck up his nose” at the affair.

“Don’t catch me going to such a one-horse affair,” he said, with a sneer. “When I go to a circus it’s only to the best.”

“We can get along very well without his company,” was Jack’s comment, when he heard what the bully had said.

On the following day Jack and Pepper walked down to the lake shore and then up to a spot where a large tree overhung the water. It was sunny and fairly warm, and the two cadets took a seat in the tree to chat and rest.

They had been sitting there less than five minutes when the young major uttered a cry of surprise.

“What is it, Jack?”

“Unless I am mistaken, there is that mysterious sloop again!”

“Where?”

“Up the lake! She is coming this way, too.”

“Let us keep out of sight and see if we can discover anything.”

This was agreed to, and from behind the boughs of the tree the two boys watched the strange craft as it approached the shore where Putnam Hall was located.

“The same two men are on board!” whispered Pepper.

“Yes, and they are acting as they did before, too,” added Jack. “Pep, I’d give a good deal to know what their game is.”

“So would I. Let us lay low. We may learn something.”

Slowly the mysterious sloop approached the shore and sailed past the Putnam Hall grounds. The men on board looked eagerly toward the academy buildings, and then went up the lake a short distance. A few minutes later they came back, and lowering the mainsail, drew close to shore, a short distance from where Jack and Pepper were in hiding.

“Perhaps our trip will be in vain again,” said one of the men to his companion.

“They cannot all be in vain,” was the answer. “Some day we shall be successful.”

“Are you going to land?”

“Yes. But stand ready to sail when I come back.”

So speaking, one of the men leaped ashore and stole behind a fringe of bushes. From that point he made his way up to a spot back of the gymnasium, and then walked completely around Putnam Hall, taking care to keep out of sight of the cadets who chanced to be roaming about.

“He acts as if he was a robber!” whispered Pepper.

“I don’t think a robber would come here in broad daylight.”

It was quite a while before the man came back. As he boarded the sloop again, his face showed his disappointment.

“Well?” questioned his companion.

“Another disappointment,” was the answer. “Let us go. We may have better luck another time.” And without another word the two men hoisted the mainsail of the sloop and sailed away across Cayuga Lake.

“Well, of all the odd things I ever heard of!” murmured Pepper. “If I wasn’t sure I was wide awake I’d say I was dreaming.”

“They are after something,” answered Jack. “The question is, what? I’m rather sorry we didn’t call Peleg Snuggers and capture that fellow who came ashore. Perhaps Captain Putnam could get something out of him.”

“Shall we go to the captain again?”

“I don’t know. Perhaps he’ll think we are only fooling him.”

They talked the matter over, and decided to say nothing more for the present. They watched the sloop until it disappeared from view, and returned to the school building.

The day for the circus dawned bright and clear, and directly after the midday meal the long stage belonging to the Hall was brought out and the boys who were going to the show piled in. They were in charge of George Strong, and many carried small flags and horns.

“Hurrah for Wildman’s Great International Circus!” cried Pepper. “Largest Aggregation of Wild Beasts on the Globe! See the wild man from Samoa, and the elephant-faced monkey from Greenland! All for the one price of admission, twenty-five cents—quarter of a dollar! Walk up, crawl up, tumble up, anyway to get up, ladies and gentlemen! Children half price, babies no price at all. If you don’t get your money’s worth, ask the manager to refund your hard-earned savings! The show will be started at exactly seventeen minutes past fourteen o’clock. The audience must come dressed in uniforms befitting the occa——”

“Stop! stop!” cried Jack. “Pepper, you’ll have us wound up before we’re started.”

“All clocks are wound up before they are started,” retorted the Imp. “Don’t you go on a strike though, if you do——”

“He’ll be so shamed that, like the clock, he’ll hide his face behind his hands,” finished Andy. “Call it off, as the young lady said of the caterpillar.”

“You’ll have to be just a little less enthusiastic, young gentlemen,” put in George Strong. “We don’t want this stage-load to be taken for the cage of monkeys, you know.” And then the crowd settled down, Peleg Snuggers whipped up the four horses, and off they rattled for the circus grounds, located on the outskirts of Cedarville.

When they arrived they found the tents in position, and a goodly crowd assembled. There were the usual side shows and the usual stands with peanuts, popcorn, and pink lemonade. There was also a man with a little gambling game,

surrounded by a score of countrymen who thought they could win, when they were certain to lose.

“Looks as if it might be a pretty good show,” remarked Andy, after the chums had entered the tent devoted to the menagerie, and he was right. The animals were not many in number, but they had been selected with care, and George Strong explained just what each was to those under his guidance.

“There is a particularly fine tiger,” said he, pointing the beast out as it paced up and down its narrow cage. “He looks as if he’d enjoy his liberty.”

“And he looks as if he’d like to chew some of us up,” put in one of the students, and this created a laugh.

It was soon time for the circus proper, and all obtained good seats. One act after another passed and was applauded, for all were very good. Then came a chariot race, to wind up the performance. This was in progress when there came a shout from the menagerie tent.

“Stop the monkeys! They have broken loose!”

“Hullo, what’s that?” cried Pepper. “Somebody said the monkeys were loose!”

“If they are there will be fun!” murmured Jack, and he was right. But how much fun he was still to see.



## **CHAPTER XIII**

### **THE CIRCUS, AND A MONKEY**

The chariot race soon came to an end, and the cadets passed into the menagerie tent once more. Here there was considerable excitement. By accident the monkeys had opened the door to their big wagon cage, and fully a dozen of the little creatures were missing. One monkey had climbed into a cage containing two lions, and the kings of the forest had made a meal of the wanderer in double-quick order.

“Here’s fun truly,” said Pepper. “Wish I could catch one of the little beggars!”

“You’d have your hands full, if Mr. Monk was of the biting kind,” returned Dale.

They watched the circus employees trying to catch two of the monkeys, and then passed outside. One of the monkeys had climbed clear to the top of the flagpole on the circus tent and a crowd of children were watching him with keen delight.

“He’s the king-pin acrobat of the show!” cried Jack. “I don’t believe anybody will dare go after him,” and so it proved. But the monkey soon came down when shown some peanuts, and was then placed back in his cage.

“He didn’t know what to do with his liberty after he got it,” was Andy’s comment. “It’s a wonder he didn’t take to the woods.”

“More than likely he was born in captivity and didn’t know what liberty meant,” came from Joe Nelson. “I knew some folks who had a tame canary. For an experiment they took the bird to the woods and opened the cage wide. Close by the cage was a brook, and by the side of this they put the canary’s bath tub full of water. Would you believe it, the canary always came back to his cage to roost, and instead of dipping himself in the brook, took his bath in his old tub!”

“Which showed what habit would do,” said another pupil. “He didn’t know

anything different.”

The boys were soon in the stage, and Pepper took his seat on the rear step, the stage itself being crowded.

“Don’t fall off, Master Ditmore,” said George Strong.

“No fear, you can’t lose me so easily,” replied the fun-loving youth, and said this so merrily that everybody had to laugh.

The stage was going along at a good gait when Pepper happened to look under the turnout and saw a sight that made him open his mouth wide in astonishment. There, on the bar running from the front to the back axle, sat a little monkey, gazing around in wonder, with his face screwed up into a curious pucker.

“Well, I declare!” murmured Pepper to himself. “Have you been hiding there ever since we left the circus grounds?”

As soon as the monkey saw that he was discovered, he gave a little squeak, and hopped a few inches away. Then he looked at Pepper in added curiosity, as much as to say: “What do you want to do with me?”

“You’re a cute little chap,” thought the cadet. And then of a sudden he broke into a grin. What fun might be had if he could capture that monkey!

“I’ll do it,” he told himself, and feeling into his pocket, he brought out a few peanuts. As soon as the monkey saw these he came closer, snatched one of the nuts, and proceeded to crack it open.

“Don’t you want to come into the stage, Pep?” called out Andy. “We’ll make room for you.”

“Oh, I can stay here,” was the answer. “It’s like a private seat, you know.” And then, when he got the chance, he whispered: “I’ve got a reason for remaining here, but keep mum!”

“What’s doing?”

“I’ll tell you afterwards.”

On and on rattled the stage, the boys singing and tooting their horns to pass the time. The monkey did not appear to mind the noise, and evidently enjoyed the ride. Luckily a slight shower the night before had laid the dust, otherwise both Pepper and the monkey might have been smothered.

At last they came in sight of the Putnam Hall grounds, and then Pepper realized that something must be done. He held out some more peanuts, and when the monkey reached for them, he caught the animal and held him fast, pushing him inside his jacket. Then Pepper knocked off his own cap into the road.

“Hi! there goes my cap!” he called out, and leaped to the ground. “Don’t wait for me,” he added. “I’ll walk the rest of the way.”

“Pep has lost his cap!” cried several.

“Never mind, it’s only a step to walk,” came from some others.

“I’m going to walk in with him,” said Andy, and leaped to the ground, followed by Jack. As the three were known to be chums, nothing was thought of this, and in a moment the stage disappeared around a bend.

At first Pepper had his hands full holding the monkey, and he was afraid he was going to be bitten. But as Jack and Andy came up the creature quieted down.

“Well, I declare!” ejaculated the young major. “Where did you get the monk?”

“He was on the stage,” explained Pepper. “Say, help me make him a prisoner, will you?”

“Sure,” came from the others, and soon the monkey had a cord tied around his waist. As this was nothing new to him, he submitted without much trouble, and when given half a dozen more peanuts and a bit of candy Andy carried, seemed quite content.

“What are you going to do with him?” questioned Jack.

“Introduce him to old Crabtree,” was Pepper’s answer.

“Just the thing!” ejaculated Andy. “Let’s put him in Crabtree’s room to-night!”

“That’s what I was thinking, Andy.”

“There will be some fun when the monk begins to roam around.”

After some talk, the boys decided to enter the school by the back way. Jack went ahead to see that the coast was clear, and soon they had the animal safe in dormitory No. 4, over which the youthful major presided. Then Andy found an empty bird cage in the storeroom of the Hall, and his monkeyship was transferred to this.

The evening was a long one to the boys, but it finally came to an end, and they retired. Then, when all the lights were out, Pepper and Andy stole through the darkened hallways to the door of Josiah Crabtree’s room. Listening intently, they heard the first assistant teacher snoring peacefully on his bed.

“Is the door unlocked?” questioned Andy.

“Yes.”

No more was said, and Pepper hurried back for the bird cage containing the monkey, and also for an old school-book he had brought up from below.

Opening the door with caution, they took the monkey from the cage and placed him at the foot of Josiah Crabtree’s bed. Then they hurried to the doorway once more, and went outside.

“Wait!” whispered Pepper, and taking aim, he sent the book flying at Josiah Crabtree. Then the chums scampered for their dormitory with might and main.

The book landed on Josiah Crabtree’s somewhat bald head, and he awoke with a start and sat up.

“What in the world was that?” he muttered. “Is the ceiling falling down?”

He stared around him. The moon was coming up, and it cast considerable light into the apartment. He saw a dark object moving around.

“Hi! What’s that?” he called out. “Scat!”

Thinking it might be a cat, he made a wild pass at the monkey. At once the frisky

animal caught him by the finger and gave him a nip.

“Oh, oh!” roared the teacher. “He has bitten me! Take him off! Help! Robbers! Help!” And he flung the bedclothes aside and began to dance around.

At the excitement of the man the monkey also became excited, and leaped upon the top of a bookcase in a corner, which contained some volumes belonging to the teacher. Down came a bust on the bookcase with a crash. Then the monkey took up a book and flung it at the man.

“Stop! stop!” roared Josiah Crabtree. “Don’t! Help! There is a wild beast in the room!” And he ran around, with the monkey following. Presently the animal leaped on his shoulder, and then Josiah Crabtree let out a yell as if a dozen wild Zulus were on his track.

The noise aroused the whole school. Doors were flung open, and teachers, hired help, and cadets came forth into the hallways.

“What’s the trouble?”

“Is there a fire?”

“I heard somebody say robbers!”

“It’s Mr. Crabtree!” shouted Pepper. “Somebody must be trying to rob him. Come on, let us catch the thief!” And on the instant the cadets stormed forward, towards the teacher’s apartment, and George Strong and Captain Putnam followed.

“Oh, dear! Scat, I tell you! Let me alone. Don’t pull my hair! Oh, will somebody take him away!” came from the room. “This is simply awful! Who put this beast here?” and so the cries ran on.

“Something is surely wrong,” cried Captain Putnam. “Stand back, young gentlemen, or you may get hurt.”

He flung open the doorway, and as he did so, Josiah Crabtree, robed in his nightdress, leaped out, with the monkey on his shoulder.

“Have you gone crazy?” asked Captain Putnam. And then he added: “Where did

that monkey come from?”

“How should I know?” roared Josiah Crabtree. “Take him off! He’ll have my hair out by the roots!”

“What a pretty monkey!” cried Pepper. “Is he your pet, Mr. Crabtree?”

“My pet? Never! Take him away!” And the teacher continued to dance around.

Several darted in to secure the monkey, but like a flash the animal leaped to a fixture suspended from the ceiling, and then swung himself to a hall window and slipped outside.

“He has gone!”

“Let us catch him!”

“Whose monkey is it?”

“He must have come over from the circus,” said Jack. “They said a lot of them had gotten away.”

“I’ll sue the circus proprietor for this!” howled Josiah Crabtree. “It’s an outrage on the public. Oh, my poor head!” And he ran back into his room, banging the door behind him.

“Has the monkey gone?” asked Captain Putnam.

“Went through the window,” answered Joe Nelson.

They looked out of the window, but could see nothing of the animal. Then some went below, but the monkey had disappeared. He was captured in the morning and returned to the circus by Snuggers.

“Young gentlemen, you may retire,” said Captain Putnam, and one after another the cadets did so. Safe in Dormitory No. 4, Pepper told his whole story, and the boys had a laugh that lasted for a long time.

“Old Crabtree won’t get over that right away,” said Andy. “What a sight he did cut, with Mr. Monk on his shoulder pulling his hair!”

“Mum’s the word about this,” came from Pepper. “If he found me out he’d be mad enough to chew my head off.”

“Well, we are not telling on you,” came from one of the others. “We are glad you fixed old Crabtree. He deserves it.”

## CHAPTER XIV

### ALL ABOUT A TIGER

“Oh, it’s awful, gents, really it is! As soon as I heard the news, it made my knees shake like they was made o’ jelly! Whatever are we goin’ to do, with sech a wild animal as thet roamin’ the roads, I’d like to know?”

It was Peleg Snuggers who was speaking. He had just returned from an early morning trip to Cedarville with the monkey, and was addressing a little knot of cadets standing just outside of the parade ground.

“Better git in the school,” he went on. “It won’t be safe to go outdoor no more. Ain’t it awful, though?” And he shook his head solemnly.

“What is the trouble, Snuggers?” questioned Captain Putnam, who chanced to come up and saw how disturbed his hired man was.

“It’s about thet tagger as was at the circus, sir,” said Snuggers. “Somehow or other, he broke loose last night—knocked some o’ the bars out o’ his cage. An’ they ain’t found him yet.”

“A tiger broke loose?” queried the captain, and now he was intensely interested. “Who told you of this?”

“Mr. Chase, sir—an’ some circus folks. Cedarville is wild with excitement, an’ none o’ the folks dare to go outdoors. They say he’s a powerful tagger an’ mighty ugly.”

“He certainly was a big tiger,” said Jack, who was in the crowd. “I shouldn’t want to fall in with him.”

“Maybe he is coming this way,” suggested one of the smaller students, looking around nervously.



“Excuse me from meeting a tiger,” said Mumps, and without another word he walked into the Hall and to his classroom.

The news spread with the rapidity of lightning, and to be on the safe side, Captain Putnam ordered all of the boys into the school and had all the lower windows and doors closed.

“This is certainly exciting enough,” said Joe Nelson. “Supposing the tiger takes it into his head to camp out around here? None of us will want to go out any more.”

“Oh, they are bound to either catch him or shoot him, sooner or later,” answered Jack. “But just the same, I don’t want to run afoul of that beast. He looked strong enough to kill half a dozen of us.”

The excitement was intense, and nobody dared to venture far from the Hall. The cadets kept a constant watch; but nothing came of it.

“They must have news of the beast by this time,” said Captain Putnam on the following morning. “I’ll drive down to Cedarville and find out.”

“Oh, dear captain don’t do that!” shrieked Mrs. Green, the housekeeper. “If you meet him he’ll eat you up!”

“I’ll risk that,” returned the master of the Hall, grimly. “I’ll take my rifle with me, and also my seven-shooter. If I see the tiger I’ll try to give him a warm reception.”

“You—you—er—don’t want me to drive you, do you?” asked Peleg Snuggers, in a trembling voice. “I—er—I ain’t well this morning. I had a—er—a dreadful backache all night, an’ a headache, an’——”

“You won’t have to drive, Snuggers. I’ll take the buggy and drive myself.”

“It’s flyin’ in the face of Providence,” came from Mrs. Green. “Better wait a day or two longer.”

“No, I’m going now. Hitch up Black Bess, Snuggers. She is a steady mare, and won’t run away even if the tiger does show himself.”

The mare was hooked to the buggy, and Captain Putnam looked carefully to his rifle and his old army revolver. The excitement of the occasion was just to his liking. It put him in mind of his days in the wild west, and he half wished the escaped tiger would show itself so that he might get a shot.

“The captain certainly has grit,” remarked Jack, as the master of the Hall drove away.

“I shouldn’t mind going with him,” came from Dale. “I like hunting.”

“Well, this isn’t ordinary hunting,” put in Andy. “It’s the wildest kind of game to bring down.”

As soon as the captain was out of sight all began to wait anxiously for his return. The cadets could scarcely settle themselves to their studies, and more than one failed utterly in his lessons.

“This is wretched!” cried Josiah Crabtree, wrathfully. “I shall keep all of you in after regular hours!” He had not gotten over his adventure with the monkey, and was feeling more sour than ever.

“We can’t forget the tiger,” said Andy.

“The tiger is not here,” snapped the crabbed teacher. “Attend to your lessons.”

“Oh, what a teacher!” murmured Jack.

“I’ll fix him,” whispered Pepper. “Wait till he passes that open window again.”

A moment later Josiah Crabtree walked by the window in question. His back was toward it, and on the instant Pepper arose and pointed at the opening.

“Hi! Is that the tiger?” he cried, shrilly.

At the words Josiah Crabtree sprang a foot into the air and dodged into a corner. All of the cadets leaped to their feet.

“Did—did you—see the tiger?” questioned the teacher, faintly.

“Where’s the tiger?” roared several boys.

“Must be trying to come into the window,” shouted Andy, catching the spirit of the joke.

“Ke—ke—keep him ou—ou—out!” spluttered Josiah Crabtree. “Do—don’t let him get in here!”

“It is gone now,” said Pepper. “Must have been something else!” And he winked broadly at his friends, so that none of them might be alarmed.

“Are you—you sure, Ditmore?”

“Yes, sir.”

“This is awful!” murmured Josiah Crabtree, wiping the cold perspiration from his forehead.

“Oh, we can study anyway,” murmured Pepper.

“Eh?”

“It won’t hurt our studying, Mr. Crabtree. You can watch for the tiger while we do our sums.”

“Silence!” roared the crabbed teacher, but after that he said little about the poor lessons.

By noon Captain Putnam came back, and the cadets at once surrounded him to learn what he might have to tell.

“I saw nothing of the tiger,” said the master of the Hall. “A number of parties went out after him yesterday, and one crowd discovered the beast near the lake. They fired on him and he started to swim away. They think he must have been drowned, although they have not yet located the body.”

“Hope he was drowned,” said Pepper.

The matter was talked over for the balance of that day, and also the next. Then came in news that the circus people were also certain the tiger had gone to the bottom of Cayuga Lake, and everybody breathed easier. The circus moved southward, and soon the excitement died down completely.

Our young friends had not forgotten the Fords, and having received another invitation to call at the mansion at Point View Lodge, they set off one afternoon as soon as they could get away.

“I hope we don’t have another encounter with those Pornell Academy fellows,” said Jack, as they drove along in the buggy the captain had let them have. “One such mix-up was enough.”

“I guess they haven’t forgotten how they fared on that occasion,” returned Andy. “They promised to call it off, if you’ll remember.”

“So they did, but I shouldn’t take their word for it,” put in Pepper.

They arrived at the Ford mansion without mishap, having met absolutely nobody on the road. Laura and Flossie were there, and also Mrs. Ford and a niece from Rochester, and all did what they could to make the time pass pleasantly for the boys. They played croquet and lawn tennis, and went out for a short row.

“You boys can certainly handle the oars,” said Laura, with a sunny smile. “I wish I could row half as well.”

“It’s practice that does it,” answered Jack. “Now, all of you girls can play croquet better than we can.”

The party of girls and cadets was just returning to the house when they heard a loud scream coming from the direction of the road running to Point View Lodge.

“Hullo, what does that mean?” cried Jack, stopping short.

“Somebody is in trouble!” came from Andy.

“Help! save me!” was the cry. “Save me! I’ll be eaten up alive!”

“Something is wrong, fellows. Come on!” ejaculated Jack, and ran forward, catching up an oar as he spoke. The others followed, one with another oar, and Andy with a boathook. They were just in time to see a colored woman, who was the cook at the mansion, flying into a side door.

“I see what’s up!” exclaimed Jack, pointing down the road. “It’s the tiger!”

“The tiger!” echoed Pepper, and all of the girls set up a scream.

“Yes, there he is—crouching by the side of yonder tree.”

“I see him!”

“So do I,” put in Andy. “Quick, girls, get into the house before he comes this way!”

“Come in! Come in!” roared the colored cook. “He’ll eat you all up!”

As fast as they could the girls ran for the mansion, entering by a back door. The cadets followed. Looking back they saw the tiger moving slowly from the vicinity of the tree to a clump of bushes on the lawn.

“He is certainly coming this way,” called out Jack.

“He is moving for the house, too!” put in Pepper. “There he goes around to the kitchen door!”

Pepper spoke the truth. The tiger had reached the back door. Now he bounded up the small stoop, and a second later entered the kitchen of the mansion.

## **CHAPTER XV**

### **PRISONERS OF A WILD BEAST**

As soon as they could do so the three cadets ran into the side door of the mansion. They found the girls on an upper landing, gazing down anxiously.

“Is the tiger coming?” called down Laura.

“Yes, he’s in the kitchen,” answered Jack.

“The kitchen!” gasped Mrs. Ford, who had come out of the library.

“Oh, save me, somebody!” came from the rear of the mansion, and the butler appeared, with his hair almost on end. “A wild beast, mum—roaming the pantry, mum,” he spluttered.

“Better go upstairs, all of you,” said Jack, as he heard the tiger leap upon a table.

“Dat’s where I’m a-goin’,” said the cook, and ran to the top of the house, followed by the butler, where both locked themselves in their rooms.

The girls and Mrs. Ford were soon on the second floor of the mansion, and the three cadets followed.

“Shut all of the doors tight, Mrs. Ford,” said Jack. “For all we know, he may take it into his head to come upstairs.”

Following Jack’s directions, the doors were closed, and the family gathered in a large room in the front of the mansion.

“Whatever are we to do?” questioned Laura, helplessly.

“Well, we can stay here,” answered her sister. “That is what I am going to do for

the present.”

“Where is Joseph?” asked Mrs. Ford. The man she mentioned was the gardener.

“He has gone to town to have the lawn mower repaired,” answered Laura. She turned to Jack. “Oh, isn’t this dreadful!”

“Have you got anything in the way of a gun or a pistol, Mrs. Ford?” questioned the young major.

“My husband keeps a pistol in his bedroom. I can get it for you.”

“Please do so.”

“Are you going to risk going after the tiger?” asked Andy.

“A pistol won’t fetch him,” put in Pepper. “He looks as tough as a boarding-house steak.”

“I want to investigate, and I’ll feel safer with the pistol,” answered Jack.

The weapon was soon brought and the young major saw that it was ready for use. It looked as if it might do considerable damage.

“Keep all the doors but this one shut,” said Jack, and then tiptoed his way into the hall once more. He looked down the stairs and along the lower hallway, but could see nothing of the tiger.

“How are you making out?” questioned Pepper, coming out behind him with a bed slat.

“Don’t see anything yet.”

Andy came out into the hallway also, and the three listened intently. All was quiet outside and not a sound came from the lower floor of the mansion.

“Perhaps he went outside again,” whispered Andy. “It wouldn’t be natural for him to stay indoors. Tigers love to roam the forest, and lay in wait for——”

“I hear him!” interrupted Pepper. “Hark!”

All listened again, and now they could hear the creature moving from the kitchen into the library, and then to the parlor. A discord on the piano followed.

“Hullo, he is trying the piano!” cried Pepper, and grinned. “Maybe he’ll play us a waltz!”

From the parlor the tiger roamed into the library, and then showed his head in the hallway for an instant. But before Jack could take aim the beast had disappeared.

“He is making himself at home,” muttered the young major. “Wish I could get a chance at him.”

“Here he comes again!” cried Pepper, and at that moment the tiger came out into the hall and turned partly around.

Jack had his pistol ready, and taking a quick aim, he pulled the trigger. There was a flash and a report, in the semi-dark hallway, and the tiger gave a snarl of pain. Then he glanced up the stairs, glared at the cadets, and came up four steps at a time.

“Into the room, quick!” yelled Jack, and blazed away twice in rapid succession. The tiger was struck in the fore leg, and came to a pause close to the top of the stairs. Jack fired one more shot, then followed his chums into the room, and the door was closed and locked.

“Did you hit him?” queried several, in concert.

“I certainly did, but I don’t know how badly he is wounded. Mrs. Ford, have you any cartridges for this pistol?”

“Yes,” answered the lady of the mansion, and brought forth a box half full. Without loss of time, Jack filled up the empty chambers of the pistol.

“He is snarling outside of the door!” cried Laura. “Oh, do you think he’ll try to break down the door?”

Before anybody could answer there came a wild snarl, and then a thump on the barrier that almost took the door from its hinges.

“Better get into the next room,” called out Pepper. “He’ll break in here if he



can.”

“Let us move the bed against the door,” suggested Andy.

The bed was a large affair, of solid mahogany, and would prove an excellent barrier, but before it could be rolled into position there came a crash, and the tiger’s head appeared through a portion of one of the door panels.

Crack! crack! went the pistol in Jack’s hand, and as quickly as he had appeared the tiger disappeared, with a wound in the jaw and another along the left ear.

“Guess that will teach him to keep his distance,” said the young major.

“He is going to the front of the house,” cried Andy.

“The upper veranda! He is going out on the upper veranda!” cried Mrs. Ford.

“He’ll come through the windows!” burst from Flossie’s lips. “Let us go to another room, mamma!” And the girls and their mother did so. Andy and Pepper looked inquiringly at Jack.

“A few more shots ought to make him tired of living,” said the young major.

“Let me try the pistol on him,” came from Pepper, and having secured the weapon, he peeped out into the hallway. The tiger stood at the front end, gazing at the upper veranda and beyond.

Pepper was not an extra shot, but the bullet took the tiger in the left hind knee, and made him utter a fierce snarl. He leaped out on the veranda, and then made another leap into the branches of a nearby tree.

“He has taken to the tree!”

“Let me give him a shot too,” pleaded Andy, and having received the pistol, he awaited his opportunity, and blazed away, hitting the beast in the side. There was a snarl, and the tiger fell to the grass, rolling over and over in evident pain.

“Good!” cried Jack. “That’s one of the shots that told! Give him another, Andy!” and the cadet did so.

“What’s all this shooting about?” came from the roadway, and Mr. Ford appeared, in company with his gardener. “Gracious! Where did that tiger come from?” he added.

“It’s the one that got away from the circus the other day!” called down Jack. “Look out, there may be some fight left in him yet, although we have peppered him pretty well.”

“Throw down the pistol and I’ll finish him,” said the gentleman.

“Let us finish him, won’t you?” pleaded Pepper.

“All right, you can do so.”

All three of the cadets went down the front stairs with a rush, while the girls and Mrs. Ford came out on the upper balcony. Pepper fired one shot, Jack a second, and Andy a third. The last was too much for his tigership, and with a final quiver he rolled over, stretched out, and lay dead.

“Is he—he dead?” asked the gardener cautiously.

“I think so,” answered Mr. Ford. “But don’t go near him yet—he may be shamming.”

They waited a few minutes, and then Jack went up carefully and made an examination.

“Dead as a barn door!” he called out. “My, what a big fellow he is!”

“Are you certain he is dead?” faltered Laura.

“Yes,” answered her father.

“Are there any more of them?”

“He is the only one that got loose,” answered Pepper.

Thus assured, the girls and Mrs. Ford came downstairs, followed later by the butler and the cook. The latter was still trembling.

“Thought we was goin’ to be eat up suah!” said the cook.

“It was a great happening, sir,” said the butler. “I can’t abide wild beasts, sir, not me!”

“You ought to have the skin of this tiger,” said Jack to Mrs. Ford. “It would make a fine rug.”

“Yes, mamma, let us have the skin by all means,” pleaded Laura. “We can have it fixed up with the head on, and it will look beautiful!”

“I’ll have to see the circus people about it,” came from Mr. Ford. “Tell me how he happened to come here.” And then all told their stories, to which the gentleman listened closely.

“I’m so glad these young men were here,” said Mrs. Ford. “Had we been alone, I do not know what might have happened.”

The tiger was dragged to a carriage shed by the gardener and the boys, and then the cook was sent off to get dinner ready. It was found that outside of eating up some steaks, drinking a pan of milk, and breaking a few dishes, the tiger had done no damage. Every bullet aimed at him had taken effect, and there were also two old wounds on him, in the leg and side.

“He must have gotten these old wounds when he leaped into the lake,” said Mrs. Ford. “But it was a mistake to report him drowned.”

“I don’t know as I ever want to meet another tiger at large,” said Andy. “They are too dangerous!”

“Yes, Snow,” answered Mr. Ford. “You can all be thankful that he did not get at you. If he had, he might have made mince-meat of one or another in no time.”

## CHAPTER XVI

### OFF ON A LONG MARCH

When the boys returned to Putnam Hall and told about their adventure with the tiger, they were proclaimed genuine heroes.

“You certainly deserve a great deal of credit,” said Captain Putnam. “Just the same, had I known the tiger was still at large, I should have kept you at the Hall.”

Later on, the circus authorities were communicated with, and from them Rossmore Ford obtained the skin of the beast, and had it prepared, with the head on, for a rug; and it is in his mansion on the floor to this day.

The cadets of Putnam Hall were now getting ready for an outing to last several days. Before winter set in, the captain wished to give them a taste of camp life, and so decided to make a march to a beautiful valley some twenty miles away. Here the boys were to go into camp for two nights, returning on the next day.

“That is what I’ll like!” exclaimed Stuffer Singleton. “No lessons to study. Only to march, get up an appetite, and eat!”

“Especially eat!” said Andy. “That hits Stuffer every time.”

“We’re to go on army rations,” put in Pepper, with a wink at his chums. “Pork and beans, and hard-tack.”

“No!” exclaimed Stuffer in alarm. “Who told you that?”

“Why, everybody knows it,” put in Andy.

“We’ll see that you get all the hard-tack you want, Stuffer,” went on Pepper. “The captain won’t want you to go hungry, you know.”

“I don’t want any hard-tack,” growled Stuffer, in disgust. “I thought we’d get the same kind of feed as we get here.” The march had suddenly lost all of its interest for him.

“Better take some private rations along,” suggested another cadet. “A loaf of bread, or some dried herrings, or——”

“Oh, you’re joking!” exclaimed the boy who loved to eat. “I’m going to ask Mr. Strong,” and off he ran, while the others set up a loud laugh.

It was a cool, crisp morning when the battalion started. The cadets made a fine showing in their clean, neat uniforms, with buttons and buckles polished to the last degree. Major Jack was at the head of the column, and he was certainly proud of his position, and had a right to be.

“Shoulder arms, forward, march!” was the command given, and the drums sounded out, and the column moved off. A few people were present to see them march away, and these gave a cheer.

“Ain’t no nicer school in these United States!” exclaimed Peleg Snuggers, enthusiastically. “Them boys is the real thing, right straight through!”

“An’ nice boys, too,” added Mrs. Green. “God bless ’em, every one!”

For the first mile the route was along the lake shore. Then the battalion turned to the westward, and were soon pursuing a road that wound in and out among the hills. The cadets passed through several small villages, and the inhabitants came out to gaze at them in wonder, while the small boys set up a cheer.

One of the villages had just been left behind, when those in the front of the line of march heard a loud tooting from an automobile horn.

“Here comes one of those big autos,” said Pepper. “Say, it’s coming at a spanking gait, too.”

“Hope it gives us plenty of room,” came from another cadet. “I don’t like to meet those big machines, when they are going at a twenty-mile clip.”

The automobile was coming around a turn of the road, and soon it was almost on top of Company A. The cadets were marching on the right side of the road, but

the automobile crowded them closely.

“Hi, there, keep to your side of the road!” shouted Jack.

“Go to Halifax!” growled the man who was running the machine, a big burly fellow, with a red face.

“If you don’t keep to your side of the road there will be trouble,” answered Jack, sharply, and then the young major commanded the battalion to halt. He was in sole charge, Captain Putnam and his assistants having gone ahead to arrange for dinner.

“Look here, young fellow, you can’t bulldoze me, even if you are in soldier clothes!” stormed the man, bringing his machine to a standstill.

“Never mind, Carl!” pleaded a lady who sat on the rear seat of the automobile. “Let us go on.”

“I want him to understand he can’t bulldoze me, Annie.”

“I am not trying to bulldoze you, sir,” answered Jack. “We are entitled to half the roadway, and we are going to have it.”

“Feel big, don’t you?” sneered the automobilist.

“Are you going to give us half the road or not?”

“Give them what they want, Carl!” pleaded the lady.

“I can’t give them half the road,” growled the man. “I’m not going to run my wheels into the soft ground for anybody. I might get stuck.”

“You can give us half the road and not get stuck either,” returned Jack. He knew a little about running an automobile himself.

The machine was standing almost in the middle of the road. Somewhat to the right was a puddle of water, and had the cadets marched around the machine, they would have had to go directly through the wet spot.

“Do you expect us to march through that puddle?” demanded the young major,

after a pause.

“You can break ranks and go around the other way,” answered the man. He evidently wanted to make as much trouble for the young soldiers as he could.

“We are not breaking ranks for that purpose.” Jack’s face was growing white. “I’ll give you just two minutes in which to get out of the road. Now be quick, and move on!”

“Ho! do you intend to dictate to me?” growled the man, but looked just a bit anxious.

For reply the young major got out his watch. At the same time he turned to the two companies behind him.

“Support arms!” was the command. “Fix bayonets!” And at the last word the cadets drew their shining bayonets from their scabbards and fastened them to their guns.

“Oh, Carl, do move to one side!” cried the lady, in terror. “They are going to charge on us!”

“Hi! hi! don’t you charge!” yelled the man. He knew only too well what bayonets could do to the rubber tires of his automobile.

“Time is up,” called out Major Jack. “Are you going to get to your side of the road or not?”

“ARE YOU GOING TO GET TO YOUR SIDE OF THE ROAD OR NOT?”

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“Wait—I’ll try it,” grumbled the man, and turning on the power, he moved to one side, and passed the two companies with ease. Several made imitation charges on his rubber tires as he passed, much to his alarm.

“What a brute!” was Andy’s comment, as the cadets moved on once more. “I suppose he wanted the whole road to himself.”

“A good many folks who own autos forget that other folks have rights on the



road which they are bound to respect,” answered Joe Nelson. “If they had their way, they’d ride over everything and everybody that came along.”

A short distance further on, the battalion came to another village, and here the young soldiers stopped for dinner. Without loss of time Jack reported to Captain Putnam.

“I am sorry you had trouble,” said the owner of the Hall. “You did right to demand half the road. If you have more trouble, let me know.”

Dinner was had under some large spreading chestnut trees. It was plain but wholesome, and the long morning march had given everybody a good appetite.

“Are you enjoying your hard-tack, Stuffer?” asked Pepper, with a wink at the always-hungry cadet.

“Humph! I knew you fellows were only fooling,” was the answer.

At two o’clock the march was resumed, and kept up until half-past five. They had now reached a spot known as Squire’s Grove, and here tents were pitched in true military style. Big fires were started, and the cadets had their first taste of camp life.

“Say, but I’d like about a month of this,” was Andy’s comment, after each cadet had been assigned to his quarters.

“Perhaps we couldn’t have some fun!” put in Pepper. “As it is, I’m going to try for some fun to-night.”

“Right you are, Pep.”

The air was so cool in the evening that the cadets were glad enough to gather around the big camp-fires. They told stories, and sang songs, and all too quickly came the hour to turn in.

As Captain Putnam wanted the students to learn what real military life was like, each cadet was assigned to two hours of guard duty during the night. As soon as he heard of this, Pepper learned where Mumps would be stationed, and then called Andy to one side.

“Did you hear that ghost story Dale was telling?” he questioned.

“To be sure I did. It fairly made some of the younger lads tremble.”

“Did you notice how scared Mumps was?”

“Yes.”

“Well, Mumps is going to see a ghost to-night, Andy.”

“How do you know?”

“Because we are going to fix one up for him,” and then Pepper unfolded a plan that had just entered his head. It met with instant approval, and soon the two boys started to carry it out.

Taking a tree branch they wrapped it up in a white sheet, and on the top placed a white duck cap, making the whole look like the ghost of a cadet while at a distance. Then they took this out of camp, and placed it at the end of a strong cord, running up over the limb of a tree. The figure was pulled up among the branches, out of sight, and this done they sought out Mumps.

“Say, Mumps, was it you told the fellows that a cadet was once murdered around here?” questioned Pepper, innocently.

“Murdered?” returned the sneak of the school. “No, I never heard of it.”

“They say a cadet was murdered at this place about four years ago, and that if you watch for it, you can see his ghost among the trees.”

“Ah, you can’t scare me,” returned Mumps.

“I’m not trying to scare you. I thought you told the story yourself,” was the answer, and then Andy and Pepper strolled on.

“He’ll remember that, I’ll wager,” whispered Pepper.

“We’ll know better when he goes on guard,” answered Andy, and then they waited impatiently for the time to come when they could work off their little joke on the sneak.

## **CHAPTER XVII**

### **MUMPS SEES A GHOST**

As luck would have it, Pepper and Andy went on guard from ten o'clock to midnight, while Mumps had his time set from midnight to two in the morning.

As soon as they came in from guard duty, Pepper and Andy told a few of their chums of what was in the air, and they all stole from their tents to a spot overlooking the ground that Mumps would have to cover during the next two hours.

The sneak was already on duty, pacing up and down slowly, with his gun on his shoulder. He had to march from one tree in the grove to another, a distance of two hundred feet.

As the sneak passed the tree where the white figure was concealed, Pepper, who was close at hand, uttered a low and unearthly groan.

At once Mumps came to a halt.

“Wh—what’s that?” he faltered.

For reply Pepper uttered another groan, and Andy followed with a sound like that of a dying calf.

“I say, what’s that?” repeated the sneak. All was so dark and strange around him that he felt anything but comfortable.

“Murdered!” moaned Pepper. “Murdered!”

“Murdered!” put in Andy, in a solemn tone. “Oh, to be avenged!”

Then when Mumps’ back was turned Pepper allowed the white figure to drop to

within a foot of the ground. As it was light in weight, the breeze made it sway slowly from side to side.

“Ha! ha! ha!” came from Andy and Pepper together.

At this blood-curdling laugh the sneak of the school turned around once again. When he saw the swaying figure in white his teeth began to chatter.

“Oh! Ple—please go—go a—away!” he groaned. “G—go away!”

“Ha! ha! ha!” went on Pepper and Andy. “Down on thy knees, if thou wouldst live!”

“Don’t!” screamed Mumps, and fell on his knees. “Oh, please, don’t kill me! I—I didn’t have anything to do with killing that other fellow, indeed I didn’t!”

“Thou art doomed!” went on the Imp and his chum.

“Doomed! doomed! doomed!” came from half a dozen. All of the cadets could scarcely keep from laughing.

“Oh, save me!” yelled Mumps, and sprang to his feet. “Save me! Save me from the ghost!” And throwing down his gun he started for the center of the camp, with all the speed at his command.

The other cadets set up a laugh, but the sneak was too paralyzed with fear to pay attention to it. Still yelling for help he ran down the main street of the camp, and plunged into the tent occupied by Captain Putnam.

“Hullo, what’s the trouble?” came from Captain Putnam.

“Oh, the ghost! Please save me from the ghost, Captain Putnam!” howled Mumps, and clutched the master of the Hall by the arm. “Save me! The ghost is going to kill me!”

“Why, Master Fenwick, what is the trouble? Have you a nightmare?”

“No, sir. It’s the ghost of the murdered cadet! I—I saw it. It came after me! Oh, save me!”

“Nonsense! You have seen no ghost. Be reasonable.”

“I did see it, sir. It was all white, and it was going to kill me!” And the sneak clung tighter than ever.

“This is some trick.” The captain slipped into his clothes, and turned up a lantern hanging on a tent post. “I’ll investigate. Come along.”

“Oh, I—I’m afraid!” whined Mumps.

“You need not be, Fenwick. I’ll protect you. Come along. There are no such things as ghosts.”

It was fully five minutes before Captain Putnam could get the sneak to accompany him to the spot where the latter had been doing guard duty. In the meantime the whole camp had been aroused, and Pepper and Andy had folded up the sheet and put it away, along with the cap and the cord.

“You can see for yourself that there is nothing here, Fenwick,” said the captain, gazing around.

“But I saw it, Captain Putnam. A tall white figure, right there.”

“You must have been dreaming.”

“No, sir, I saw it, I am certain.”

“Well, where is it now?”

“I don’t know, sir.”

An investigation was made, but, of course, nothing out of the ordinary was brought to light.

“You had better go back to your duty, Fenwick,” said the master of the Hall at last.

“Oh, sir—supposing that ghost comes again?”

“Run up and catch hold of it. You’ll likely find it some joke the other cadets have played on you,” and Captain Putnam smiled broadly.

“A joke!” Mumps looked interested. “Do you think it was a joke?”

“More than likely.”

“Oh, but it looked so real!”

“A ghost can’t look real. You have been deceived. Go back to your duty,” and the master of Putnam Hall returned to his tent, and Mumps resumed his guard duty, with a heart that trembled every time he took a step.

“Gosh! but that was rich!” laughed Andy, when the affair was over.

“Talk about being scared,” returned Pepper. “I was afraid he would have a regular fit!”

There was more fun that night. Poor Hogan was tossed in a blanket, and Dan Baxter had three frogs placed between the blankets of his cot. Our friends did not escape, for in the morning Pepper found a sharp burr in one shoe, and Andy found the sleeves of his coat tied into hard knots. Jack was minus his shoes, which were finally located dangling from the limb of a tree back of his tent.

“Hullo, Major Ruddy has planted a shoe tree!” cried one of the cadets. “Wouldn’t mind having some seed, major. I’d like to grow a pair of slippers.”

“Why not try some lady-slipper seed,” suggested Pepper.

“I’ll slipper the chap that put my shoes up there, if I can find him,” grumbled Jack.

At breakfast there was more fun. Dan Baxter’s crowd was preparing a pot of coffee when Pepper, watching his chance, dropped a piece of soap into the pot.

“Phew! but this is rank coffee!” came from Paxton, spitting out a mouthful.

“Vilest I ever tasted,” came from Coulter. “Say, Dan, did you make that out of stale glue, or old boots?”

“It’s good enough coffee for anybody,” grumbled the bully. “If you don’t like it, make it yourself after this.”

Then he took a deep gulp, just to show them he was not afraid to drink it. A wry face followed.

“Fine, eh?” came from Paxton, sarcastically.

“Regular Waldorf-Astoria brand,” put in Coulter.

“Something’s got in the pot,” cried the bully, and poured the coffee into a big pan that was handy. “What’s this? A cake of soap, I declare! Who put that there?”

“Excuse me from drinking soap coffee,” grunted Paxton.

“Hullo, Dan Baxter’s crowd is drinking soap coffee!” shouted one of the cadets.

“How do you like the flavor, Dan?” asked another.

“Better than Java, eh?” came from a third cadet.

“I have heard of all sorts of tastes in coffee, but I never heard of soap being used before,” was Pepper’s comment.

“Baxter’s afther wantin’ a good wash on th’ insoide!” came from Hogan.

“Ah, you fellows shut up!” growled the bully, and taking the chunk of semi-soft soap, he hurled it at Pepper. But the Imp dodged, and the soap landed in Mumps’ left eye.

“Oh! oh!” howled the sneak. “Oh! you have put out my eye! Oh!” And he began to dance around wildly.

“Didn’t mean to hit you, Mumps,” said Baxter. “I say,” he called out; “who put that soap in the coffee?”

“Here’s a riddle,” came from Andy. “A lima bean to the one who solves it last.”

“Coffee in the soap is good for warts,” said Dale, with a grin, for Baxter’s hands were covered with warts.

“Just wait—I’ll get square!” growled the bully; and there the talk had to come to an end.

Breakfast over, there was a long drill, and then the cadets were allowed to do as they pleased for several hours. Some wandered through the woods, while others went to a nearby brook to fish. Half a dozen of Baxter's crowd went off through the woods by themselves.

"Where are they going?" asked Pepper.

"I don't know—and don't much care," answered Jack.

Baxter's crowd walked through the woods to where there was a farmhouse, and there stopped to get some apples and some milk. While stopping at the place they got into conversation with the farmer's daughter, a pleasant-looking damsel of eighteen.

"She's a beauty," said Coulter.

Baxter followed the farmer's daughter to the dairy, and began to talk to her in a pleasant way. Then he tried to put his arm around her waist.

"Stop that!" she said sharply.

"I'm not going to hurt you," said he. "Won't you give me just one kiss?"

"I'll give you—this!" she answered quickly, and, taking up a can of sour milk, she threw it directly into his face. Then she ran into the house, shrieking with laughter.

"Dan got it that time!" said Paxton, with a snicker.

"It was real sweet, too!" added Coulter.

Wild with rage, Baxter wiped the sour milk from his face and hair.

"I'll fix you for that!" he roared, and started to go into the house, but the girl appeared with a broom.

"You keep away!" she cried, shrilly. "If you don't, I'll set our dog on you!"

"Oh, come on away!" put in Mumps, in alarm. "Come on!" And he hurried towards the road.



“I guess we had better go,” whispered Coulter. “If the farmer should report us to Captain Putnam, there would be the Old Nick to pay,” and he too walked off, with Paxton and the sneak beside him. Seeing there was no help for it, Baxter withdrew, the girl laughing merrily at him as he did so.

## **CHAPTER XVIII**

### **THE YOUNG MAJOR SHOWS HIS COURAGE**

All too soon for the young cadets the encampment in the grove came to an end, and the march back to Putnam Hall was taken up.

“This gives us a taste of what the annual encampment will be like,” said Andy. “My, but won’t we have just boss times!” And his face glowed with anticipation.

The day was positively cold, and the young soldiers were glad enough to march along briskly. Mile after mile was covered, until they came to the place where they had taken dinner when coming from the Hall.

While they were resting Jack and Pepper fell in with a boy of the neighborhood, who was riding a bicycle. The boy asked them about life at the Hall, and in return they questioned him about his wheeling trips.

“You can try my wheel if you wish,” said the youth to them, and Pepper took a short spin up the road and back. Then Jack turned his sword over to his chum and hopped into the saddle.

“The seat isn’t quite high enough for me,” said the young major. “But it’s a good wheel and I feel as if I could pedal ten or twenty miles without half trying.”

Jack had gone quite a distance down the road when he heard a whirring sound, and looking in the direction, saw an automobile approaching. It was coming at good speed, and swaying from side to side.

“Hullo, I’ll have to get out of the way, or run the risk of being run over,” he said to himself, and drew up near a stone fence.

As the automobile came closer he saw that it contained only a lady and a little girl. The lady was holding on to the steering wheel with one hand, and holding

the girl with the other.

“Oh, help!” she cried out, as the automobile passed Jack. “Help! I cannot stop the machine!” And then she passed by in a cloud of dust.

For the moment Jack did not comprehend. Then he shut his teeth hard, turned around, and raced after the automobile on the bicycle.

“I’ll have to stop that machine for her if I can!” he reasoned. “I suppose she is afraid the girl will fall out, or else the lever is stuck.”

The automobile was now a good distance down the road, and running dangerously close to the stone fence. Then it swayed to the other side, two wheels going into some mud.

“Help! help!” the lady shrieked, at some cadets standing near.

“Here comes Jack on the bicycle!” exclaimed Andy.

“Look, he is going after the auto!” put in Pepper.

Along the road swung the ponderous machine, the lady continuing to call for help, and the little girl crying in her terror. Behind, Jack was doing his best to catch the runaway machine.

It was a stiff race, and for several minutes it looked as if the young cadet would not make it. But at last he closed the gap ahead, and came up directly behind the automobile. Then, with a quick leap, he cleared the bicycle handle bars and caught hold of the back seat of the turnout ahead.

“What’s the matter?” he asked, as he piled forward. “Can’t you stop it?”

“No, the lever is stuck!” gasped the woman. She was on the point of fainting through excitement and fear.

Jack bent down, and his knowledge of automobiles stood him in good stead. He saw how the lever had become bent. With all of his might he tugged upon it, and brought it back. At once the automobile began to slacken its pace. Then came another pull, and the ponderous machine came to a complete standstill.

“Oh!” murmured the lady, and sank back in a deathlike swoon.

“Oh, Aunt Annie is dying!” shrieked the little girl. “Oh, dear, I never want to ride like this again!”

“She isn’t dying,” said Jack. “She’ll soon be better.”

He looked back and saw some of the cadets hurrying along the road. Soon Pepper came up, followed by Andy and a dozen others, and then Captain Putnam put in an appearance.

The lady was lifted from the automobile and carried to a shady spot under a tree. She had smelling salts with her, and was treated with these, and her face was bathed with water from the brook. Soon she opened her eyes and stared around her.

“You are safe, madam,” said the captain. “Pray take it easy.”

“And Jennie, my niece?”

“She is safe too.”

“What a fearful ride I have had,” went on the lady, with a shudder. “It was awful! The auto got entirely beyond my control. Where is the brave young gentleman who stopped it for me?”

“Here he is,” answered Captain Putnam, pointing to Jack.

“What, you! Why, you—er—you are the young man that—that had the trouble with my husband a few days ago,” faltered the lady, and reddened.

“Never mind about that,” said Jack, quickly. He remembered what the lady had said on that occasion. “I’m glad I happened to be on the bicycle.”

“You sprang from the wheel into the machine?”

“Yes, ma’am.”

“It was a brave thing to do. I thank you from the bottom of my heart.”

A few minutes later a buggy came along, being driven furiously by the man who

owned the automobile. He leaped out and ran toward his wife and his little niece.

“Are they hurt?” he demanded.

“No, Carl, we are not hurt,” answered his wife.

“What made you run off so furiously, Annie?”

“I didn’t do it on purpose. The machine started up, and I could not stop it.”

“That young soldier saved us, Uncle Carl,” came from the little girl. “He rode on his wheel after us, and jumped into our auto and pulled on the handles till it stopped.”

The man looked at Jack, and his face grew red.

“Why—er—did you—er—you stop the auto for my wife?” he stammered.

“I did,” answered the young major, coldly.

“He did it at the risk of his life, too,” added the lady. “Carl, we owe him a great deal.”

The man’s face became a study.

“How did you do it?” he asked at length. “Tell me the story, won’t you?” And Jack did so, and then the lady had her say, and so did Captain Putnam.

“I thank you, sir,” said the man. “It was handsome of you, handsome. And after I treated you so meanly, too! Say, do you know how I feel? I feel like two cents!”

“Let us drop it,” said Jack, and walked away. But the man came after him, and his voice was full of emotion.

“Don’t go off that way. I want to tell you something. I—I acted like a fool the other day. It wasn’t fair at all. And now you’ve done the handsome thing. It was great, simply great! I thank you, and I ask your pardon at the same time. Won’t you shake hands?”

“Certainly!” cried Jack, and held out his hand, which the other grasped tightly. “It’s all right—only please give us a little more show when we’re on the march

after this.”

“You shall have the whole road—you deserve it!” answered the man, heartily. “This has taught me a lesson I’ll not forget,” he added, as he turned back to look after his wife and inspect the automobile. It took some time to repair the big machine, and in the meantime the cadets walked away, and Jack delivered the wheel to the owner.

“That was a great ride of yours,” said the boy. “And that jump into the auto was grand. Do you know that man?”

“No.”

“His name is Carl Reuterman. He is a rich brewer. He runs all over these roads, and he is rather careless. But I guess he’ll be more careful after this.”

“He’ll have to be—or he and his family will get into trouble,” returned Jack.

“Did he reward you, Jack?” asked Pepper, later on.

“No, and I don’t want any reward,” answered the young major. “I don’t risk my neck for pay.”

The march back to school came to an end that evening at seven o’clock. A hot supper awaited all hands, and the manner in which the students pitched in was astonishing.

“We’re going to have cold weather now,” said Pepper, on turning in. “There’s a heavy frost on the ground already.”

“Frost will be good for the nuts,” came from Andy.

“That’s the idea!” put in Henry Lee. “Let us organize a nutting party. I know where we can get a lot of nuts. The trees are just loaded with them.”

“All right, I’m ready any time Captain Putnam will let us off,” came from Jack. “But I don’t believe he will let us off this week, on account of the outing we have already had,” and he was right.

The cold weather continued, and there was a promise of snow in the air. The

week passed, and on the following Saturday the master of the Hall said all of the pupils could go out in the woods for three hours, if they wished.

“But you must be careful of two things,” he said. “Do not get lost, and do not poach on private grounds.”

“I don’t think I’ll get lost,” said Andy. He had been out in the woods a number of times.

The boys divided up into half a dozen parties, and set off with light hearts. Each party carried bags for nuts, and Jack had a pocket compass, in case his party should miss the way.

Just after they had started Dale came to Jack.

“Baxter is going up to Top Rock Hill,” said he. “I believe that is private property.”

“I was going there myself,” said the young major, “but not on private grounds. There are a good many trees outside of the inclosures.”

“I’ll wager Baxter gets into trouble,” said Dale. And he was right, as later events proved.

## **CHAPTER XIX**

### **THE RESULT OF THE NUTTING PARTY**

All the boys who accompanied Jack were good walkers, and it was not long before they were deep in the woods back of Putnam Hall. The clear, bracing air put them in good spirits, and more than one began to whistle as they went on their way.

“There is a barbed wire fence!” cried Pepper, as they began to ascend Top Rock Hill. “We can’t go over that, I suppose.”

“Here is a path to the left,” answered Andy. “And I don’t know but what it is the better of the two.”

Not long after that they struck the first nut tree. They sent up a dozen sticks and stones, and down came a perfect shower of chestnuts, so thick in fact that they had to “stand from under” until the nuts stopped coming down.

“We’ve struck a bonanza, first trip,” cried Dale. “This will fill one-third of our bags at least.”

They began to pick up the nuts industriously, and soon had the majority of them. Then they passed on up the hill and soon found another tree almost as good.

“Let us go to the very top of this hill,” said Jack. “We are sure to get a beautiful view from up there.”

For the time being nutting was forgotten, and they raced along, to see who should get to the top of the hill first. But Dale outdistanced the others with ease.

“No use talking, Dale, you are the champion runner of Putnam Hall!” cried Jack, enthusiastically. “If we had a game of hare and hounds you ought to be the hare.”



“And no hounds would ever catch him,” put in Pepper.

“Gosh, but running makes a chap hungry!” came from Stuffer.

“Have some chestnuts,” answered Andy.

“Yes, here are a few to start on,” came from Pepper, and he let several fall down the hungry youth’s back, inside his shirt.

“Wow! Let up!” ejaculated Stuffer, squirming around. “Don’t! They’ll scratch me all the rest of the day!”

“Stand on your head and shake them out, Stuffer,” suggested Jack, and in the end that was what the hungry youth had to do. But he got square that night by placing some chestnut burrs in Pepper’s bed, much to the Imp’s discomfiture.

The top of the hill gained, a grand panorama was spread out on all sides of them. To the westward were other hills, with streams winding along them, and to the eastward Putnam Hall and the broad lake, the latter lying like a sheet of silver among the trees and rocks.

“Isn’t it great?” said Jack. “Do you know, I wish we had brought a camera along. I’d like a photo of it.”

“We can come up some day and take pictures,” replied Andy. “The folks at home will be glad to see them.”

“Say, fellows, look over there!” came from Stuffer, a moment later. “Am I mistaken, or is that Dan Baxter and his party?”

“To be sure it is Baxter, Paxton, and Mumps,” answered Jack. He gazed a moment longer. “What are those men doing to them?”

“I can’t make out.”

“The men have sticks, and one has a gun!” exclaimed Pepper. “As sure as you are born, Baxter and his cronies are in trouble!”

“They went into private grounds, that’s what the trouble is, and those men have caught them,” said Dale. “Just the same, fellows, I’d hate to see any of our

cadets come to harm.”

“Baxter will earn what he gets, Dale.”

“Let us sneak closer and see what is being done,” said another. “We don’t want to see anybody shot.”

So it was agreed, and with their bags of nuts over their shoulders they hurried in the direction where they had located the bully and his cronies.

As they surmised, the party had poached on a private preserve, and the owner of the place, a hot-tempered old gentleman from Syracuse, and his three workmen, had caught them red-handed, with their bags loaded with the choicest kind of nuts.

To their consternation the old gentleman at first threatened to shoot the evil-doers, at which Mumps fell on his knees and begged for mercy. Then he ordered them to place all their nuts in a heap on the ground.

“Now, I’ll let you off on one condition,” he said, sternly.

“What condition?” asked Paxton.

“Oh, I’ll do anything!” howled the sneak of the Hall. “Only don’t have me arrested.”

“If the three of you will pick for me a full bushel of nuts I will let you all go,” said the owner of the preserve.

“Humph!” grumbled Baxter. “Aren’t you satisfied to rob us of those we have already picked?”

“I cannot rob you of what is already mine, young man.”

“I’ll pick nuts for you,” said Mumps, eagerly.

“So will I,” added Paxton, humbly.

“I’ll not pick any more,” came from the bully, defiantly.

“Very well, then, I’ll have you sent down to the Cedarville jail. I don’t think

Captain Putnam will like that, or your parents, either.”

“It’s a mean thing—to send a fellow to jail for a few nuts.”

“You saw my signs, and when you came in here you did it at your own risk. Men and boys have been hunting, fishing, and nutting in here until I am tired of it, and I shall make an example of you, unless you agree to do as I wish. I make this offer merely out of friendship for Captain Putnam.”

“I’m not going to pick any nuts,” came firmly from Dan Baxter. He had on an extra stubborn streak.

“Very well, then. Mike and John, make him a prisoner.”

Without ceremony two of the workmen leaped forward and caught hold of the bully. He tried to resist, but in a twinkling one of the workmen laid him flat on his back. Then his hands were tied behind him.

“Let me go!” he roared.

“You keep quiet or you’ll get a sound thrashing,” ejaculated the gentleman, whose temper was none of the best.

“I—I’ll make you pay for this!”

“Perhaps you’ll do a little paying for yourself, unless you wish to serve a term in prison.”

After this there came a spell of silence, during which Paxton and Mumps piled up as many nuts as they could.

“I want your names,” said the gentleman, taking out a note-book and a pencil.

“Mine is John Fenwick,” said the sneak, humbly. He felt there would be no profit in acting ugly.

“Now yours, young man?”

“Nick Paxton.”

“And now I want yours.”

“Perhaps I won’t give it to you,” returned the bully.

“Really! Mike, did you bring that horsewhip along?”

“I did that, sur,” answered the workman addressed.

“Don’t you dare to horsewhip me!” cried Baxter, and now for the first time he turned pale.

“Then give me your name.”

“Jerry Smoker.”

“Um! I believe I heard one of the others call you Dan,” said the gentleman, sharply.

To this the bully was silent.

“Come, give me your correct name—or it shall go hard with you.”

“Dan Baxter.”

“That’s better.”

“See here, if I help pick nuts will you let me off?” said the bully, after an awkward pause.

“No, it is too late now.”

This reply disconcerted the bully greatly, and he did not know what to say further. He had a vision of being taken to the Cedarville jail, and it caused him to shiver.

“That’s rough on Baxter,” whispered Jack, he and his chums having come closer during the conversation.

“Well, he brought it on himself,” answered Pepper. “The captain warned him not to go on private property.”

“He could easily do as Mumps and Paxton are doing,” put in Andy. “They are getting off easily enough.”

Not long after this the gentleman that owned the preserve told Paxton and the sneak of the Hall that they might quit gathering nuts.

“Let this be a lesson to you, John Fenwick and Nicholas Paxton,” he said, sternly. “I shall keep your names before me, and if I ever find you here again it shall go hard with you.”

“Can we go?” questioned Mumps, eagerly.

“Yes.”

“Come on, Nick.”

“Are you going to desert me?” cried Dan Baxter, in fresh alarm.

“I want them to go, and at once,” said the gentleman. “I can take care of your case without their aid.”

A little more talk followed, and then Paxton and Mumps shoved off, in the manner of two whipped curs, leaving the bully of Putnam Hall to his fate.

“Perhaps we ought to try to rescue Baxter,” whispered Jack to his chums. He was too generous-hearted to see any fellow cadet in trouble without trying to aid him.

“Don’t you attempt it,” put in Dale.

“But if Baxter is put in jail it will bring discredit to the whole school, Dale.”

“I’ll tell you what we can do,” came from Pepper. “To get to Cedarville, the owner of this place will have to take the Rumley Road. Let us get back to the Hall and tell the captain what is going on. Perhaps he can stop the party on the way to Cedarville and make a deal with the man who wants to have Baxter arrested.”

“That’s an idea! Come on!” cried Andy.

With their bags of nuts on their shoulders, Jack and his friends hurried away, down the hill and along the highway leading to Putnam Hall. Before they reached the school they had to take to a side road, and along this they fairly ran, so that they might not be too late with their news. As luck would have it, they

came upon the master of the Hall just as the latter was returning from a visit to the gymnasium.

“Oh, Captain Putnam, we have news!” cried Andy. “Dan Baxter is in trouble, and a man is going to take him down to Cedarville to have him jailed.”

“Baxter in trouble?” repeated Captain Putnam. His face grew serious. “Tell me the particulars.”

As well as they were able, they did so. The master of the Hall took in what they said in silence and his face grew stern.

“You are sure Paxton and Fenwick were allowed their liberty?” he said at last.

“Yes, sir.”

“Very well; I’ll meet Mr. Ringwood, and see what I can do about this. I am glad you told me.”

“We didn’t wish to see any of the cadets put in jail,” came from Jack. “It would bring discredit to the whole school.”

“Right you are, Major Ruddy. I’ll go out to meet Mr. Ringwood at once, and you can go along if you wish.”

## CHAPTER XX

### OUT IN THE COLD

It was not long after this that our friends and Captain Putnam reached the main road leading from Top Rock Hill to Cedarville. Scarcely had they done so than they saw a carriage coming along the road, containing Mr. Ringwood, Dan Baxter, and two of the workingmen from the preserve.

“Here they come!” cried Jack, and the captain ran out in the middle of the road and motioned for the carriage to stop.

“Hullo, is that you, Captain Putnam?” called out Mr. Ringwood, in a far from pleasant tone.

“It is, Mr. Ringwood, and I wish to talk to you.”

“I’ve got one of your students here.”

“So I see.”

“He’s a bad egg, captain. I caught him stealing my nuts. After that he was impudent to me.”

“I wasn’t impudent,” grumbled the bully.

“I just heard about it and I came out to meet you,” answered Captain Putnam. “Won’t you drive over to the Hall, and we’ll try to settle this matter.”

“If you wish it, captain. I had half a mind to have the young rascal arrested.”

“There will be no need to do that, Mr. Ringwood. I think I can punish him sufficiently for what he has done.”

“Very well, then; I’ll drive over.” And in a moment more the carriage was headed for Putnam Hall, and the captain and our friends trudged after it.

“You may go now, young gentlemen,” said the master of the Hall. “If I wish you again, I’ll call for you.”

This was a hint that they were not wanted, and off they went, across the campus and into the school by a side entrance, the others entering by the front way and going directly to Captain Putnam’s private office.

It was not until the next day that they learned something of what happened to Dan Baxter. From Peleg Snuggers the information went forth that the bully of the Hall was a close prisoner in a small room at the rear of the Hall. The window to this room was heavily barred, making the apartment a regular prison cell.

“The captain give Baxter a talkin’ to which would make your hair curl,” said the general utility man. “He laid down the law good an’ strong. He said he wasn’t goin’ to have no pupil a-gittin’ the academy in disgrace. Then he made Crabtree put him in a cell, an’ he’s livin’ on bread, soup, an’ water fer a week.”

“Phew! That’s pretty severe punishment!” cried Jack. “The captain must have been mad!”

“You git the cap’n riled up real good an’ you’ll see a reg’lar cyclone broke loose,” went on Snuggers. “I know him, because I worked fer the fam’ly before. He’s real tame alongside o’ what he was when he was an army officer.”

Mumps and Paxton had little or nothing to say. Each was given extra lessons to do, and did them without a murmur. They saw that the captain was much disturbed over what had happened and did not want to do anything to add to his anger.

Two days after the outing for nuts, came a light fall of snow, and then the weather grew steadily colder and colder. As a consequence, many outdoor games came to an end, and the students spent their off time either in the library of the Hall or the gymnasium.

The latter place was a favorite with Dale, who was beyond question the leading all-around athlete of the school. He was graceful on the rings and bars, and could jump and run with the best of them. The only one who could match him at all



was Andy, who did things on the flying rings which would have done credit to a professional acrobat or gymnast.

“Andy, you could go into a circus,” said Jack, after watching the agile youth.

“Perhaps I will go into a circus some day,” answered Andy, seriously. “I’ve heard that some daring fellows earn two or three hundred dollars per week at it.”

“They do,” put in Pepper. “But they risk their necks every time they perform.”

“I don’t see how you can do some of those tricks,” put in Joe Nelson. “As you do them, they seem as easy as pie, but when I try them, I can’t do them at all.”

“I guess I was born to it,” answered Andy, with a quiet smile. “Somehow it always came natural to me.”

“Must have circus blood in your veins,” said Pepper, and then there was a general laugh.

In his cell, Dan Baxter passed day after day in moody silence. He was allowed only his school books, and each day Josiah Crabtree or George Strong visited him to hear him recite. Only once did Coulter manage to see him on the sly.

“Mumps and Paxton can’t come,” said Gus Coulter. “They are being watched night and day.”

“They have deserted me, and they gave me away!” growled the bully.

“No, they haven’t deserted you,” answered Coulter. “And they didn’t tell on you.”

“Then who did tell on me?”

“Jack Ruddy, Pepper Ditmore, Andy Snow, and that crowd.”

“Are you sure of this, Gus?”

“Positive.”

“Then I’ve got an account to settle with them when I get out,” and the bully grated his teeth. He did not stop to consider that those who had informed on him

had probably saved him from a term in the Cedarville jail.

During those days spent by Baxter in his cell, Jack, Pepper, and Andy, along with a number of other students, had an exceedingly hard time of it with Josiah Crabtree. For some reason or other, the head teacher was feeling particularly cross, and he vented his anger on those under him, until they could scarcely stand it. He made them do all sorts of extra tasks, and “nagged” at them until some felt like open rebellion.

“It’s outrageous!” declared Andy. “Here I’ve got ten extra examples in algebra for nothing at all!”

“And just because I dropped my history on the floor, old Crabtree made me stay in half an hour,” grumbled Pepper.

“I’ve caught it, too,” came from Jack. “I missed in astronomy and had to study five pages extra. Mr. Strong or the captain never treated us that way!”

“I wish we had another teacher in old Crabtree’s place,” came from Dale.

“Captain Putnam can’t discharge him,” said Joe. “He’s got a contract, so Stuffer was telling me.”

“I wish we could duck him in the lake. The cold water might do him good,” went on Pepper.

“That’s a fine idea!” cried Andy. “It would certainly cool him off!”

One day Captain Putnam was called away to Albany on business. As it chanced, George Strong was also absent, so the Hall was left in sole charge of Josiah Crabtree.

“He will be more dictatorial than ever now,” said Pepper, and so it proved. During the day over a dozen students got into “hot water,” and at recess they held a secret meeting, to determine what had best be done.

“If we could only get him out of the building we might keep him out,” suggested Andy. “It’s going to be a cold night, remember.”

This idea took like wild-fire, and it was resolved to get Josiah Crabtree out of the

building by all means. Only the faithful were let into the secret, and they watched the teacher narrowly after the school session came to an end.

“I know how to do it,” said Pepper. And he unfolded his plot, to which the others listened eagerly. They saw Crabtree walk through a side hallway, and immediately hurried to a spot just around the corner from where the teacher was standing.

“Yes, we’ll meet at the gym to-night, at exactly ten o’clock,” said Pepper in a loud voice. “Be sure and be on hand.”

“All right—the gym at ten o’clock,” said Andy, in an equally loud voice. “We’ll have a fine spread!” And then the boys ran off before Josiah Crabtree could stop them.

The crabbed teacher heard what was said, and as soon as the cadets had vanished his face took on a crafty look.

“The gymnasium at ten o’clock, eh?” he murmured to himself. “A fine spread, eh? Not if I know it! Josiah Crabtree, you must capture them, and make an example of them!”

As the captain and Mr. Strong were away, he enlisted the services of Peleg Snuggers. It may be mentioned here that the other teachers came only during school hours, one living at Cedarville, and others coming but twice a week, to teach music and foreign languages.

At the proper time that night all of the pupils but Pepper and Andy went to bed. The latter hid themselves in the hallway, one near Josiah Crabtree’s room, and the other one downstairs.

At a quarter to ten the teacher came forth from his room, wearing his regular school suit. As the gymnasium was only across the campus, he did not feel it necessary to don his overcoat. He slipped to the rear of the school, summoned Peleg Snuggers, and both left the building.

“He has gone!” cried Andy, and rushing forward from his hiding place he locked the door. Then he and Pepper saw to it that all of the other doors and also the windows were secured.

“Wait, I’ll fix them better than that,” said Jack, and secured small wedges of wood. These were driven under the doors, and alongside of the window sashes, so that they could not be opened without great effort.

By this time fully a dozen of the cadets were out of their dormitories. Pepper and Andy went around summoning the others.

“We want your aid,” said Pepper, boldly. “Old Crabtree has gone outside and we mean to keep him out.”

“Everybody in favor of keeping him out raise their hands,” called out Andy, and fully sixty hands went up.

“Paxton, what do you say?” asked Jack. He knew Nick Paxton was the leader of the Baxter crowd during the absence of the bully.

“I’m not saying anything,” growled Paxton.

“Don’t you try to let Crabtree in,” came from one cadet. “We are going to let him have a regular freeze-out.”

As Gus Coulter had had trouble with the teacher, he was willing to keep the man out, and so, after some talk, it was decided that nobody should aid in letting the teacher get into the Hall building.

“If anybody tries it, he’ll catch it good and hard,” warned Pepper.

“So say we all of us!” shouted a score of others. “No sneak wanted here!” And some glanced at Mumps in a fashion that made that youth slink out of sight in short order.

Going to an upper window, Pepper, Andy, and Jack looked out, and saw Crabtree and Snuggers stealing softly around the gymnasium. After a look into several of the windows, the two men crouched down behind some bushes.

“This is the best yet!” whispered Pepper. “They think we haven’t arrived yet.”

“Let them wait,” returned Jack. “It will cool them off sure. It is nipping cold tonight.”

## **CHAPTER XXI**

### **THE BOYS "HOLD THE FORT"**

Quarter of an hour passed, and still Josiah Crabtree and Peleg Snuggers remained in the vicinity of the gymnasium, while the boys, from behind the window shades, watched all of their movements.

"They are cold enough," was Dale's comment. "See them slapping their arms."

At last the crabbed teacher could stand it no longer. Leaving the general utility man to remain on guard, he started back for the Hall at a brisk pace.

"He is coming!" whispered Jack. "Now, boys, don't make a sound."

Reaching the door, Josiah Crabtree tried the knob.

"Humph! Who could have locked that?" he asked of himself. "Certainly I did not. Snuggers must have the key."

"Ain't got no key an' I didn't lock the door, Mister Crabtree," said the hired man, on being questioned.

"Well, it is certainly locked now."

"Ain't nobuddy come here neither," said Peleg Snuggers. He was growing tired of waiting around in the cold.

"I'll try the other doors," came from Josiah Crabtree, and he hurried off once more. Of course he found everything tight shut.

"Somebody has locked us out," he muttered. "It must have been those boys. Perhaps they saw Snuggers and myself going to the gymnasium. Confound the luck!"

Again he walked around the Hall, trying all of the doors, and when he had done so, called to Snuggers:

“Have you a key?”

“No, sir.”

“They have locked us out.”

“You don’t say so! Who did it?”

“I don’t know.”

Josiah Crabtree pondered for a moment and then, walking back to the main door of the Hall, pulled the bell.

Ordinarily the bell pealed loudly, but now no sound came forth, for the clapper had been bent back by one of the cadets.

“Ha! they have disconnected the bell!” growled Josiah Crabtree. “The young scamps! I’ll fix them for this! Just wait till I get inside.” And then he began to thump on the door with his fist.

“He’s getting warmed up,” whispered Andy, grinning broadly.

“Never mind, it will keep his blood in circulation,” answered Jack, and all of the cadets present snickered.

“Are you going to open that door?” roared Josiah Crabtree, at last. “You young villains, open the door, I say!”

“My, but he’s getting complimentary, I must confess,” said Dale.

“Do you think the noise will wake up Mrs. Green?” asked one of the boys.

“No, she sleeps like a cow,” answered another. “Besides, her room is at the top of the building, and all of the upper doors are shut.”

“Open the door!” bellowed Josiah Crabtree.

“Open the door!” echoed Peleg Snuggers.

“Shall we answer?” asked Joe.

“Not yet,” returned Pepper. “Wait till he tries to break in. Then I’ve got another scheme to work on him.”

Finding he could do nothing at the door, Josiah Crabtree hurried to one of the windows.

“Now, fellows, is your chance!” cried Stuffer. “A little water from one of the pitchers—”

“Whoop!” came from Hogan. “It’s a bath he’s afther nadin’, sure!” And up the stairs he bounded. Water pitcher in hand, he approached a window over the one the teacher was trying to open. Then down came the water on the teacher’s head, wetting him thoroughly.

“Ouch!” roared Josiah Crabtree, and began to dance around. “Oh, the water has gone down my back! It’s ice-cold! Oh, I’ll pay you for that!”

“Thank you, no payment required!” said Hogan, softly, and closed the window again.

“Emerald, you’re a gem!” said Andy. “Won’t old Crabtree feel fine with a wet back on such a bitter night as this?”

“If you don’t let me in I’ll—I’ll have the law on some of you!” yelled Josiah Crabtree. “This is—er—preposterous! Open the door!”

“All the winders is tight shut,” said Peleg Snuggers, who had been making an examination. “I must say, I dunno how we are to git in, Mr. Crabtree.”

“We must get in,” fumed the teacher. “Why, my back feels like a—er—an icicle.”

“Sorry, sir.”

“If I stay out here I’ll catch my death of cold.”

“I’ve got an idee, sir. I might get a ladder and put it up to the second-story winders.”

“Yes, yes. Get the ladder at once.”

The general utility man hurried off to the carriage house and presently came forth carrying a long ladder.

“It’s all I can do to lift it, sir,” he said. “You’ll have to help me raise it.”

“I can do that.”

“They’ve got a ladder!” whispered Jack. “They are going to try to get into one of the upper windows.”

“Come on upstairs,” returned Pepper. “Say, has anybody got a blank cartridge left?”

Several had, having saved them from the encampment, and they were passed over to Pepper, who placed one in his gun. Then Andy loaded up likewise.

“Put on your caps, boys,” said Pepper. “Pull ’em down over your eyes, so Crabtree can’t recognize us in the dark.”

This was also done, and a score of students crowded into the room which the teacher and Snuggers expected to enter.

They had scarcely done so when there came an unexpected crash. In trying to raise the heavy ladder both Josiah Crabtree and Snuggers had allowed it to slip, and the end came through the window sash, shattering the window panes into a thousand pieces.

“Phew! That’s the time they did it!” exclaimed Henry Lee. “There will be some glass to pay for when this adventure is over.”

“Well, that wasn’t our fault,” came from Harry Blossom. “They should have been more careful with the ladder.”

“Snuggers, have a care!” roared Josiah Crabtree. “You have broken the window.”

“Twasn’t my fault!” howled the hired man. “Why didn’t you keep her from slippin’?”



“Hold the bottom of the ladder while I go up,” ordered the teacher, ignoring the question. “Be careful now. I don’t want to break my neck.”

“I’m a-holdin’ tight enough,” grumbled the hired man.

With caution Josiah Crabtree started to come up the ladder.

“Here comes the burglar, boys!” shouted Pepper, in an assumed voice. “He has broken the window. He deserves to be shot!”

“Yes, yes! shoot the burglar!” came in a shout. “Shoot him!”

“We’ll teach ’em that they can’t rob Putnam Hall even if Captain Putnam is away.”

“Stop!” screamed Josiah Crabtree. “I am no bur——”

“Take careful aim,” commanded Pepper, loudly. “All ready?”

“Boys, I am no bur——”

“All ready?”

“Yes, yes!”

“Boys, I command you to sto——”

“Fire!”

Bang! bang! bang! went three of the guns, the cadets shooting high up into the night air. With a wild scream of terror, Josiah Crabtree slid down the ladder, on top of Peleg Snuggers’ head, and both sank to the ground.

“There goes Mr. Burglar!”

“Run away, you robber! If you don’t we’ll give you another dose!”

“Oh, my poor head!” groaned Snuggers.

“They are shooting at me!” moaned Crabtree, scrambling up.

“They be takin’ us for burglars!” went on the general utility man.

“There are two of them,” came from above. “Shoot them, fellows! They must be regular desperadoes to try such a game as this.”

“Let us run!” screamed Peleg Snuggers, and set off at his best pace, with Josiah Crabtree at his heels. Neither stopped until he was safe in the shelter of the barn.

“There they go!” laughed Pepper. “I’ll wager they won’t come back in a hurry.”

“Shove the ladder off,” commanded Jack, and this was done, the ladder falling out across the campus.

“Of course they’ll come back,” came from Dave Kearney. “What shall we do next?”

“Sure an’ there is plenty av water,” suggested Hogan.

“That’s the ticket. Put the guns away, or we may arouse Mrs. Green after all, or somebody living at a distance.”

The guns were restored to the racks on the lower floor of the Hall, and this done, two students stationed themselves at each window upstairs, each with a pitcher of cold water.

“Here is where somebody is going to get a fine ducking,” said Bart Conners, with a merry twinkle in his eyes. Bart did not do much talking, but he was as full of mischief as the average cadet.

Soon they saw Josiah Crabtree and Peleg Snuggers sneaking toward one of the lower windows. The hired man had an ax.

“They surely mean business this trip,” whispered Pepper. “Give it to them!”

Down went one pitcherful of water after another, and in a trice both the teacher and the hired man were thoroughly drenched. They set up a howl, and Snuggers dropped the ax as he ran off with Crabtree by his side.

“Haven’t we had about enough?” questioned Jack, after a wild burst of laughter.

“Let’s go to bed, and be as mum as oysters,” said Andy, and this was agreed to. All of the upper windows were closed, and then some of the cadets unlocked the door below that had been open, and fixed the door bell.

“Now, then, not a word from anybody, on his life!” said Jack, and the word spread rapidly. Inside of five minutes every cadet was in bed, the lights were put out, and all became as silent as a tomb inside of Putnam Hall.

## **CHAPTER XXII**

### **JOSIAH CRABTREE IS NONPLUSED**

“What’s to do next, Mr. Crabtree?”

“I—er—I don’t know,” stammered the enraged teacher. He gave a shiver. “I am wet to the skin!”

“So am I,” came from Peleg Snuggers.

“I shall take cold.”

“An’ I’ll be after gitting the rheumatism.”

“I am half of a mind to invoke the aid of the law,” went on Josiah Crabtree, stalking around the barn to keep himself warm. “This is preposterous, outrageous, extraordinary!”

“It’s a blessed shame, sir, that’s wot it is.”

“It is strange that Mrs. Green was not aroused.”

“No ’tain’t, sir—she’s a heavy sleeper. She sleeps with an alarm clock on a chair beside her bed, to wake her up in the mornin’.”

“Snuggers, we must get into the school building in some manner.”

“Yes, sir.”

“Let us go around to the front once more.”

“I don’t want another duckin’, sir. It was terribul, that was!” And the general utility man shivered.

“Perhaps we can get under the shelter of the doorway.”

They left the barn once more, and sneaking around the campus, came at last to the front of the hall.

“Why, the door’s on a crack!” ejaculated the hired man. “I thought it was locked!”

“So it was locked!” returned Josiah Crabtree. “Can it be possible that the rascals have left the building?”

“Oh, Mr. Crabtree, perhaps they are after us with them guns!”

“I—I don’t think so. Anyway, let us get inside. Then we can lock the door on them. Some of the cadets must have gone crazy!”

The two passed into the Hall, and the teacher lost no time in locking and bolting the door. All was pitch-dark, and Josiah Crabtree scarcely knew what to do next.

“I don’t see nuthin’,” was Peleg Snuggers’ comment.

“It is not to be expected without a light,” answered the teacher, sarcastically. “Have you a match?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Then light up, and I’ll try to get to the bottom of this piece of villainy.”

“Are you certain we ain’t in danger o’ bein’ shot?” queried the hired man.

“Light up, I tell you!” thundered the teacher.

The hallway was soon a blaze of lights. Nothing appeared to be out of its place, and Josiah Crabtree passed from one classroom to the next, and then to the messroom, the kitchen, and to Captain Putnam’s private office.

“They have gone!” murmured Snuggers, and breathed a sigh of relief.

“They are either outside or upstairs,” answered Josiah Crabtree. “Come, we will go up.”

“Hadn’t you better get a club—or somethin’?”

“I’ll take this,” answered the teacher, and brought forth a heavy ruler. Then he gave the hired man a cane, and both mounted to the second floor of the Hall. Here all was as dark as it had been below, and again Snuggers was called on to light up.

Without further hesitation Josiah Crabtree pushed open the door of Dormitory No. 1. A glance inside showed him all of the cadets in bed, apparently fast asleep. He scratched his head in amazement.

“Am I dreaming, or is this a trick?” he murmured.

“Are the rascals there?” queried Peleg Snuggers.

“These—er—cadets seem to be asleep.”

“Asleep!”

“Yes, let us look in the next dormitory,” said Crabtree.

This was done, and then the other sleeping rooms were visited. Not a bed was found vacant, and all of the boys looked as if they were sleeping soundly.

“Snuggers, am I awake?” demanded the teacher.

“I reckon you are, sir. I know I ain’t asleep—an’ I ain’t dry nuther.”

“But what do you make of this?”

“I dunno, unless they be a-playin’ off on you, sir.”

“Did you recognize any of those who—er—attacked us?”

“No, sir.”

“But we were attacked?”

“Yes, sir.”

“We were doused with water?”

“Yes, sir—very cold water at that.”

“And we were fired upon?”

“Yes, sir—I heard the bullets whistle past our heads, sir,” added the hired man, drawing on his imagination.

“And yet all of these cadets are asleep—or pretend to be.”

“It’s a mystery, sir, that’s wot it is, sir. But what’s to do?” and the general utility man scratched his head.

For once in his life Josiah Crabtree was nonplused. He rubbed his chin and cleared his throat several times.

“If I thought they were playing off on me——” he began.

“They couldn’t have all been in it, sir,” interrupted Snuggers.

“I don’t know about that. But that’s the point—I do not know which to accuse.”

“Well, what do you want me to do?”

“I—er—I don’t know.”

“Hadn’t we better change our clothes an’ go to bed?”

“You may change your clothes, and I’ll do the same. But I am going to investigate further before I retire for the night.”

The pair separated, and Peleg Snuggers lost no time in getting to his room. Josiah Crabtree stalked to his own apartment and there proceeded to don dry clothing.

The head teacher was furious, but the more he mused over the problem before him, the more was he perplexed. He could not call all of the boys to account, and, to tell the truth, he was just a bit afraid of the whole school. With Captain Putnam and George Strong absent, there was no telling what the pupils might do.

“I don’t want to get shot, or something like that,” he told himself. “Perhaps I had better wait until the captain gets back.”

“Do you want me again?” came presently from Peleg Snuggers, from outside the door.

“No, you can go to bed. But sleep with one ear open, in case there are more disturbances.”

“Yes, sir; good-night, sir,” and the general utility man tiptoed away. “Don’t catch me a-gittin’ up again to-night,” he muttered to himself. “One sech duckin’ is enough fer me.”

“I fancy he has given up the battle,” said Pepper to his chums, after a long spell of silence.

“He is afraid of us.” came from Andy. “Those shots frightened him.”

“I’ll wager we hear something in the morning,” put in Jack. “We ought to bind every fellow to absolute secrecy.”

“Let’s do it!” cried Pepper. “We can visit every dormitory.”

This plan was agreed to, and soon a dozen cadets were making the rounds, and each student was made to promise on his honor not to say a word concerning the doings of the night.

“Let me catch you opening your trap and I’ll make it warm for you,” said Jack to Mumps, and the sneak promised faithfully to keep mum.

In the morning the cadets were on hand as usual, and they came down to roll call as if nothing out of the ordinary had happened. Josiah Crabtree was on hand, looking as dark as a thunder cloud.

“Phew, but his face is enough to sour the milk!” whispered Andy.

“Take care, he is watching us,” returned Pepper, and then the chums became silent.

Nothing was said during breakfast, and it was not until the school was assembled for the first session of the day that Josiah Crabtree opened up upon them.

“Last night a most disgraceful thing happened at this academy,” he began. “A



number of headstrong pupils locked me out of this building, and attacked me with their guns. I have some information concerning this affair, but I am bound to get at all the details. I, therefore, demand that each pupil tell all he knows of the affair. I shall ask each pupil by roll order. Dale Blackmore, what have you to say?"

"Nothing, sir," answered Dale, rising.

"Don't you know anything of this affair?"

"I have nothing to say," returned the cadet, stiffly.

"Um! Sit down. Harry Blossom."

"I have nothing to say, sir," answered Harry, as he arose.

"You know nothing?"

"I have nothing to say."

"Bart Conners!"

"I have nothing to say, Mr. Crabtree," answered the captain of Company B.

"Augustus Coulter!"

As Coulter arose, Jack, Pepper, Andy, and a number of others eyed him sharply.

"I—er—I don't know anything much," stammered Dan Baxter's crony. "I was—er—very sleepy last night. I heard some noise, but I didn't pay any attention."

"Really?" returned the teacher, sarcastically. "You must have slept very sound, indeed, not to have heard the gun-shots."

"That wasn't so bad for Coulter," whispered Jack to Pepper.

One after another the pupils were questioned, but all had nothing to say. Even Mumps said "Nothing to say!" in a voice that was as stiff as starch.

"He's afraid of his life," whispered Andy. "I told him he'd be treated to an icy bath if he said two words."

“School will come to order!” thundered Josiah Crabtree, after the name of the last cadet had been called out. “I shall inquire into this later on. We will now take up our studies for the day.”

“He’s beaten!” said Jack, and the young major spoke the truth. Try his best Josiah Crabtree could not get at the bottom of the mystery, and at last he had to give it up, for fear of being ridiculed by Captain Putnam and George Strong.

## **CHAPTER XXIII**

### **BURIED UNDER THE SNOW**

One morning the cadets of Putnam Hall awoke to find the ground covered with snow. The storm had started in about midnight, and was still raging, the wind sending the flakes whirling in all directions.

“Hurrah for the snow!” shouted Andy, as he rushed to one of the windows to look out. “Pep, this is glorious!”

“Fine!” came from the Imp. “Oh, but won’t we have a dandy time snowballing each other!”

“And building a snow house,” put in Stuffer. “I love to build a snow house, and after it’s all done, we can put benches inside, and a little table, and have——”

“Something to eat,” interrupted Jack. “Wasn’t you going to say that, Stuffer?”

“Yes, but—but how did you guess it?”

“Oh, I’ve got a way of knowing things,” returned the young major. “But this is grand and no mistake. Somehow, a good old snowstorm always makes me feel jolly.”

Pepper was at the window, and opening it a few inches he brought in a handful of snow. Gazing around he saw that Henry Lee was still sleeping peacefully.

“Hush!” he whispered, and going up to Henry laid the soft snow directly over his mouth. “Hi, wake up!” he shouted.

Henry started, and opened his eyes. Then he started to speak, when some of the snow dropped into his mouth, and he commenced to splutter.

“Wha—what—who—gug—gug—who put snow in my mouth?” he gasped, at last.

“Wake up, Henry!” sang out Pepper. “Don’t you see how it’s snowing?”

“Oh, well, you needn’t try to fill me up with it, Pep.”

“Get up, you’re missing it.”

Slowly Henry Lee arose and started to dress himself. Then Pepper turned away. Like a flash Henry ran to a window, got some snow, and whacked it on Pepper’s neck, allowing some to run down the Imp’s backbone.

“Great mackerels!” howled Pepper. “Let up! I’ll turn into an icicle!” And he began to dance around.

“It’s all right—you don’t want to miss the benefits of the storm,” said Henry, calmly.

The cadets were soon below, and snowballs flew fast and furious across the campus. All of the boys were happy, and all too soon they had to go in to breakfast and then take up their studies.

“I wish old Crabtree would come outside during recess,” murmured Pepper to Jack. “Maybe we wouldn’t do a thing to him, eh?”

“He’ll know better than to show himself,” answered Jack, and he was right, the teacher kept indoors all day.

But George Strong came out, and took a snowballing in good part. He even threw a few balls himself, showing that his aim was as good as any of the boys.

“He’s the kind of a teacher to have,” was Andy’s comment. “A fellow can’t help but take to him.”

The snow continued all of that day, and by nightfall was nearly a foot deep. It was very blustery, and in some spots the drifts reached up to one’s head.

“This will make traveling bad,” said Jack, and he was right. On the roads in that vicinity horses with their turnouts could scarcely get through.

Poor Peleg Snuggers came in for his full share of the snowballing. As soon as the general utility man appeared, he was bombarded from all sides, and had to run for his life.

## POOR PELEG SNUGGERS CAME IN FOR HIS FULL SHARE OF THE SNOWBALLING.

POOR PELEG SNUGGERS CAME IN FOR HIS FULL SHARE OF THE SNOWBALLING.

“Let up, please let up!” he bawled. “You ain’t fer killin’ an old man, be you?”

“The snow will do you good, Peleg. It will make you grow,” sang out Pepper.

“It will make you handsome,” put in Dave Kearney. “You want to be handsome, don’t you, Peleg?”

“It will teach you how to dance,” came from Harry Blossom. “See, he is dancing already.” And Peleg was dancing, with pain, for a big snowball had just landed in his left ear.

“Oh, dear, I knowed it!” he groaned. “The minit the snow comes, there ain’t no rest fer me. I’m goin’ to resign!” And then he rushed for the barn.

On the following day the sun shone brightly, and this caused the snow to pack down. A dozen of the boys set to work to build a snow house and a fort.

“This is going to be the biggest house yet,” announced Pepper. And he and his chums worked with a will. They kept at it during all of their spare time for two days, and when done the top of the house was fifteen feet high.

“This is a regular snow palace,” cried Andy. “Let us stick a flag on the top.”

“I don’t see how you are going to get it up there,” returned Jack. “If you climb up, now the windows are cut out, you’ll cave in the roof.”

“I’ll be careful,” said Andy, and ran off to get a small flag which they had had on their tent during the brief encampment.

In the meantime, Pepper and Harry Blossom were inside of the snow house, leveling off the flooring with their shovels. Jack went off to get a bench, and

Dale to get a stool.

Having procured his flag, Andy crawled up on the top of the house with care and placed it in position. Then he came down and went around to the doorway.

“Our colors are up,” he announced. “Say, it’s all right in here,” he added, looking around. “A fellow could live in here if he had to.”

“Why not, since the Esquimaux live in snow huts,” returned Harry. “It might prove pretty cold, unless a fellow could start up a fire.”

While the friends were talking, Dan Baxter came up, accompanied by Paxton and Coulter.

“Hullo, look at the snow house!” exclaimed the bully. “Let us make one.”

“I guess we can make a better one than this,” growled Paxton.

“Say, let us cave it in on ’em,” whispered Coulter.

“All right,” answered Baxter, eagerly. “How shall we do it?”

“Let’s all run up to the top. Come on!”

Andy had gone into the house, to aid Pepper and Harry, and nobody was near. Looking around, to make sure they were not observed, Baxter, Paxton, and Coulter ran up on the snow house and began to jump up and down. There came a crack, several others, and then with scarcely a sound the top of the snow house went down, burying the boys above up to their knees.

“Get out of this!” exclaimed Baxter, and pulled himself free, followed by his cronies. Soon they were clear of the snow and running across the campus.

It was at that moment that Jack re-appeared, followed by Dale.

“Hullo, the house has caved in!” ejaculated the young major.

“Somebody is under the snow,” came from Dale. “Don’t you see the end of that shovel moving?”

“Whoever is in there will be smothered to death, if we don’t get him out,” went

on Jack. "Come, get the snow out of the way as fast as you can."

The pair set to work, and in a moment more several other cadets were helping them. Then somebody ran off and called George Strong, who came to the spot on the double-quick.

"Yes, yes, we must get them out at once," said the assistant teacher. "It doesn't take much to smother a person under the snow. Work lively, boys!"

They did work lively, throwing the snow on all sides. The teacher worked with them.

"Look out that you don't hurt somebody with your shovels," said Jack, cautiously.

Soon he caught sight of a foot and then a leg. He began to pull, and George Strong aided him, and up came Harry Blossom, almost black in the face.

"Oh!" gasped the cadet.

"Who is under there?" demanded George Strong.

"Andy Snow and Pepper Ditmore," answered Harry. "Oh, get them out if you can! If you don't, they'll surely be smothered to death!"

"Yes, we must get them out," came from Jack. "Come on—work harder than ever!"

## **CHAPTER XXIV**

### **A CHALLENGE ACCEPTED**

It was soon noised around the Hall that two of the cadets had been buried alive in the snow, and the whole school gathered around the collapsed snow house, and as many went to work to dig out Pepper and Andy as could get close enough.

On the outside of the crowd stood Baxter, Paxton, and Coulter, and the face of each was pale and full of fear.

“I—I didn’t think it was going to end this way,” muttered Coulter, hoarsely.

“Hush!” returned the bully, fiercely. “Do you want to be found out?”

“That’s it—mum’s the word,” put in Paxton. “If we are found out, it may mean our dismissal from the school.”

“But if one or the other is dead——” Coulter could not finish the sentence. Baxter clapped a hand over his mouth.

“Shut up, I say!” he cried. “Not a word more.”

The workers had now gotten almost to the bottom of the snow house. Presently they uncovered the form of Pepper. Close beside him lay Andy. Both were partly unconscious.

“Give them air!” ordered George Strong. “Get back, boys!” And then the two sufferers were laid out on the snow and several went to work to revive them.

“Oh, I hope they get over it!” murmured Jack. He could not bear to think of anything serious happening to his chums.



For several minutes all were in doubt. Then Pepper began to move, and Andy gave a faint gasp.

“They are reviving!”

“Thank Heaven for that!” murmured Jack.

A little later the two sufferers sat up and stared around them.

“How do you feel, Pepper?” asked Dale.

“I—I don’t know. The—the house came down on our heads, didn’t it?”

“Yes.”

“I remember now,” came from Andy. “It came down awful sudden like, too.”

“Do you feel anyway ill, boys?” questioned George Strong, kindly.

“I—I’m weak in the knees,” answered Pepper, and Andy said the same.

“We’ll carry them into the Hall,” said Jack, and soon the two sufferers were made comfortable indoors. Andy soon declared he felt as well as ever.

“How did the snow house come to cave in?” questioned Jack, after the excitement had somewhat subsided.

“I give it up,” answered Andy. “The roof came down on us without warning.”

“Some fellows climbed up on the snow house,” put in Bart Connors.

“Climbed up on it?” queried Jack.

“Yes, three fellows. I saw it go down with them. Then the three fellows ran away as fast as they could go.”

“Who were those three fellows?” questioned Andy.

“I can’t tell you. I had been down to the lake looking to see if there was any clear ice for skating. I was too far off to recognize them.”

“Humph! that explains it,” murmured the young major. “The snow house was caved in on purpose.”

“I’d like to know who would be so mean!” exclaimed Andy. “Those chaps must have known that we were inside.”

“Perhaps they didn’t think it would be anything serious,” came from Stuffer, who was near. “Maybe they got scared after it went down, and then they ran away.”

The news that three cadets had caved in the snow house spread, and before the day was over Captain Putnam did his best to locate the offenders. But Baxter, Paxton, and Coulter said nothing, and they were not exposed.

“This was a mean and serious trick to play,” said the captain, on addressing the scholars. “Had it not been for the prompt work done to rescue those under the snow, one or more lives might have been lost. I wish to hear of no more such actions at Putnam Hall. If I learn who is responsible I shall punish that party severely.”

“Phew! we had a narrow escape,” said Baxter, when he and his cronies were safe in their dormitory. “Bart Conners saw us from the lake shore.”

“Yes, but he didn’t recognize us,” added Coulter.

“I hope no one else saw us,” said Paxton.

“I reckon we are safe. But we want to stop talking of it, or somebody may overhear us,” said the bully; and there the subject was dropped.

On the following day the boys had a big snow fight. Company A went into the snow fort to defend it, while Company B did its best to capture the stronghold. Andy and Pepper did not take part, as Captain Putnam thought it best for them to keep quiet. But the other lads went at the fight with a will, and the contest lasted for three hours, when the fort capitulated. During the fight Stuffer was hit a heavy blow in the ear, and Dan Baxter got a black eye from a “soaker.”

“I wish I knew who threw that soaker!” howled the bully of Putnam Hall. “I’d give him something, and don’t you forget it!”

“I think Jack Ruddy threw it,” said Mumps, although he had no reason for such a statement.

During the fight Jack and Baxter had had something of a row, and the bully was willing enough to believe what the sneak said. When Jack went down to the gymnasium after the fight was over, the bully followed him.

“You think you’re smart to hit me with a soaker,” he said harshly. “For two pins I’d knock you down.”

Jack was angry, too, and without answering he took two pins from his coat lapel and held them out.

“Do you mean that?” blustered the bully. He had not expected to have his challenge accepted thus quickly.

“I do,” was Jack’s cool answer. “You are itching for a thrashing, Baxter, and if you don’t shut up pretty quick you’ll get it.”

“A fight! A fight!” cried several cadets, and the news spread like wildfire that the young major was going to fight the bully of Putnam Hall.

“Baxter is too heavy for Major Ruddy,” said one.

“Jack will be knocked out clean and clear.”

“I don’t know about that. Jack can do some pretty good bag-punching,” said another, which was true.

“Don’t fight here, Jack,” whispered Dale, who was present. “You are sure to be found out, and then there will be a big row. Baxter wouldn’t like anything better than to see you lose your majorship.”

“But I am not going to take his insults, Dale,” returned Jack.

“Then fight some other place. I know a good spot. Down back of the bathing houses. There is a clear space there.”

“Are you going to fight?” blustered Baxter, doubling up his fists.

“If you wish to, Baxter.”

“But not here,” broke in Dale. “Come on back of the bathing houses.”

“Yes, yes, that’s a good spot!” came from several. “Come on!” And they hurried from the gymnasium.

“I’d just as soon fight here,” said the bully.

“Because you have nothing to lose by being found out,” retorted Dale. “Come on—unless you are afraid.” And he led Jack out of the building.

“I won’t——” began Baxter.

“Don’t be a quitter, Baxter!” cried several. “Come on—unless you really are afraid.”

“I’m afraid of nobody in this school!” roared Baxter. “I’ll fight him here or anywhere he wants. Just you see me do him up in no time!”

“Talk is cheap,” said Stuffer, who had come up. “After Jack is down and out I’ll believe you, not before.”

The crowd was soon at a convenient spot behind the bathing houses. Here the wind had swept the snow from the ground. The word had circulated thoroughly, and fully fifty cadets were assembled to see the fight.

“Watch him closely, Jack!” whispered Andy. “He may try to play you foul.”

“I’ll be on my guard,” answered the young major.

Each of the contestants took off his coat, and likewise his collar. Then they faced each other; and the all-important fight was on.

## **CHAPTER XXV**

### **HOW THE FIGHT ENDED**

It must be admitted that Jack was a little in doubt as to the outcome of the fight before him. Dan Baxter was large, and was something of a boxer and an athlete. In fact, he could fight better than he could learn his lessons.

“I’ve got to go at him from the start, otherwise he may wear me out,” the young major told himself.

With clenched fists the two cadets circled around, each watching for a chance to deliver a blow. Those watching the contest formed a large circle, and numerous were the words of advice given.

“Land him a good one, Jack!”

“Paste him hard, Dan!”

Suddenly Baxter’s fist shot out and landed on Jack’s breast, sending the young major back a step or two. Then Jack sent in a blow on the bully’s arm. Next came several hits which were of small consequence.

“Give it to him good, Jack,” came from Andy. “Don’t fool.”

“How do you like that?” cried the bully, and hit Jack a stinging blow in the cheek.

It was just what was needed to wake the young major up. All of his real fighting blood leaped to the surface, and an instant later he sent out his fist on the bully’s nose. Then, before Baxter could recover, he hit out once more, and struck Baxter on the chin, lifting him from his feet and sending him on his back in the snow.

“Hurrah! Jack has knocked Baxter down!”

“Time!” called out Paxton, and rushed to his crony’s assistance. He caught the bully by the arm and dragged him to his feet.

“Are you much hurt?” he demanded.

“What did—did he hi-hit me with?” stammered the fallen one.

“With his fist,” answered Dale. “I reckon it was hard enough, wasn’t it?”

“He struck me with something else—a stone,” cried the bully.

“No, I didn’t,” ejaculated Jack. He held up his open hands. “I haven’t a thing but my fingers and thumbs.”

Again the pair faced each other. Baxter was in a rage, and after a few light passes he rushed in and clinched. Around and around the ring went the two cadets, each trying to get the better of the other.

“Break away!” was the cry. “Break away!” But neither Jack nor Baxter paid attention. Baxter had Jack bent far over and was hitting him on the neck.

“That’s not fair!” cried Andy, but scarcely had he spoken when Jack ducked still lower, and like a flash Baxter was raised in the air and thrown over the young major’s back. He came down with a thud, and before he could get up Jack was on top of him.

“Do you give in, Baxter?” he demanded.

“I—er—I——”

“Get off of him!” cried Paxton. “That’s no fair way to fight. Let him up.”

“I’ll let him up,” came from Jack, and he leaped up and away. Baxter sat up, stared around, and arose slowly to his feet.

“Come on!” cried the young major. “Unless you have had enough.”

“Oh, I’m all right,” was the reply. “I’ll fix you yet; see if I don’t.”

Once more the pair went at it, hammer and tongs. Blows flew thick and fast, but to the majority of the boys it was easily to be seen that Jack was getting the

better of it. Baxter was almost winded, and stood up with difficulty. He felt that another blow or two would make him fall. Watching his chance, he tipped a wink to Paxton.

“Cheese it! Here comes one of the teachers!” called out Paxton. “Run for it unless you want to be caught.”

The cry was taken up on all sides, even though nobody saw the teacher. At once Dan Baxter stepped back and reached for his collar and coat.

“I’ll fix you another time, Jack Ruddy,” he muttered, and hurried away before the young major could reply.

Slipping on his own coat and adjusting his collar, Jack gazed around and then, with his chums, walked toward the gymnasium.

“That was a fake, I believe,” said he. “I don’t see anybody.”

“Paxton gave the alarm,” came from Dale.

“Baxter winked at him—I saw him do it,” said Stuffer. “I guess he wanted to stop. He was pretty dizzy. Another blow or two would have finished him.”

“Never mind, I’ll finish him some other time,” answered Jack. “He won’t behave himself until he is well whipped.”

Baxter did not stop until he reached his dormitory. He sank into a chair, and, later on, bathed his swollen face and eyes.

“He’s a pretty hard fighter,” said Paxton.

“Pooh! I am not afraid of him, Nick,” growled the bully. “The truth is I—I shouldn’t have tried to fight to-day,” he went on, lamely. “I’m not feeling well. My—er—my stomach is all out of order.”

“I knew there must be something the matter,” said Paxton, sympathetically. “You didn’t hit out like I expected.”

“Wait till I’m myself; I’ll lay him out cold,” said the bully, boastingly.

But for the present he was content to keep out of Jack's sight, and in public he said little about the contest. Behind it all he was frightened.

"I've got to be careful how I go at him," he told himself. "He knows how to handle his fists better than I thought."

After the fight matters remained quiet for some time to come. A brisk wind cleared some of the snow from the lake, and the cadets spent a large portion of their off time in skating. Some of the cadets built themselves ice-boats, and had not a little fun in sailing up and down the lake shore. One ice-boat was the property of Dale and Harry Blossom, and on an afternoon Coulter, Paxton, and Mumps made off with the craft, without asking permission to use it.

"That is what I call nerve!" Dale declared, when he heard the news. "Just wait till they get back! I'll give them a piece of my mind!"

"And so will I!" added Harry. "Our friends can use the ice-boat if they wish, but not such fellows as Paxton, Coulter, and Mumps."

The cadets who had gone off with the ice-boat did not know much about running such a craft, although Mumps knew all about ordinary sailing boats, having come from the Hudson River, as previously stated. The wind carried the trio out of sight of the Hall, and they sat down to enjoy themselves.

"This is all right!" said Coulter, enthusiastically. "Nick, we ought to build a boat of our own."

"Too much labor," grumbled Paxton. "What's the use, when you can get someone else's craft for nothing?" And he laughed.

"They'll be angry when they hear how we went off," came from Mumps.

"Perhaps, but I don't think they'll do anything."

Sailing with the wind was easy enough, and soon several miles were covered.

"We had better turn around," said the sneak of the school. "Remember, it won't be near so easy tacking back."

"Oh, don't turn back yet," said Paxton. "It's fine to spin along. Let her go!" And



on they went for another mile.

“Hi! hi!” shouted Coulter, suddenly. “Look ahead! What’s that?”

“It’s open water!” gasped Mumps. “Stop her! Lower the sail! We’ll be drowned!”

As speedily as possible they lowered the sail of the ice-boat. But the momentum carried them closer and closer to the water, and at last they had to jump out on the ice to try to save themselves. All rolled over and over.

“Help! I’ll drown!” shrieked Mumps, when he found himself in the water. He floundered around, and so did his companions. Then Paxton stood up.

“Stand up—it’s not deep,” he called out, and they stood up and found the water only up to their waists. The ice-boat lay near, floating around on its side. Not far off was the bank of the lake.

“Birr! how cold!” came from Coulter.

“Don’t sa—say a wo—word!” chattered Mumps. “I—I—can—can’t get my br—br—breath!”

“Haul the ice-boat in,” came from Paxton, and in disgust they brought the craft to shore. Here they huddled close together, shivering from head to feet.

“I—I wi—wish we ha—had—hadn’t ta—ta—ta—taken the con—confounded bo—boat!” chattered Mumps. “Oh, this is dreadful! I’ll be frozen stiff in another minute!”

“How are we to get back?” questioned Coulter. “If we sail back we’ll be frozen to death before we re—reach th—the Hall.”

They stared at each other in dismay. They were in a pickle truly, and did not know how to help themselves.

## CHAPTER XXVI

### FRIENDS IN NEED

While the boys were staring around helplessly, and shaking from head to feet from the cold, Coulter espied another ice-boat coming along the lake shore.

“Let us stop those chaps!” he called. “Come on! Run!”

The others needed no second bidding. Anything was better than standing still, and they set off at a dog-trot, and soon came up to the ice-boat. It was a craft belonging to Bart Conners and some of his intimates.

“Stop! Stop!” yelled Coulter, Paxton, and Mumps. “Stop! There is open water ahead!”

These cries were heard, and without hesitation Bart Conners turned his craft into shore, allowing it to slide deep into a snowdrift.

“Oh, pshaw! Why didn’t we think to run our boat ashore?” muttered Coulter. Such a simple move had never entered the heads of the ill-fated trio.

“What’s the matter with you fellows?” demanded Bart Conners. “Why, you look frozen to death!”

“W—we are—al—almost!” gasped Paxton. “Ca—can’t you help us?”

“Did your boat go into the water?”

“Yes.”

“Here’s a blanket, we’ve been using it for a seat,” sang out a cadet in Conners’ crowd. “Wrap yourself in that.”

“Here’s my overcoat, Mumps,” said another. “I’ve got my sweater on and don’t need it.”

“Coulter, you can take my overcoat,” came from Bart Conners.

The three wet cadets were willing enough to don the things handed out to them. But even with these dry coverings all were intensely chilled.

“Jump on and we’ll take you back to the Hall as fast as we can,” said Conners. “It’s dreadful to take a plunge in the lake in such weather as this.”

“Who lent you the ice-boat?” asked a cadet in the crowd.

“Oh—we—er—we only thought we’d have a bit of fun,” stammered Mumps.

“Phew! if you took that boat without permission, I guess you got paid for it,” was Bart’s comment.

The ice-boat was turned back, and as speedily as it could be done, they brought the craft up to the Putnam Hall landing. Here they met Dale and Harry.

“What do you fellows mean by running off with our ice-boat?” demanded Dale.

“It was a mean piece of business,” put in Harry. “You ought to be pounded good for it!”

“Don’t scold them now,” said Bart. “They’ve been punished enough. They got a ducking in the ice-cold water.”

“Oh!”

“The ice-boat ran into the open water, and they might have been drowned, only the water wasn’t deep enough,” put in another cadet.

“Where is the ice-boat now?” questioned Dale.

“In the open water near shore. I guess you can pull her in by throwing a line over her,” answered Bart.

Like so many half-drowned rats, Paxton, Coulter, and Mumps sneaked into the Hall, and up to their rooms. The news soon circulated that they had fallen into

the lake, and Captain Putnam ordered them to bed, and had Mrs. Green prepare some hot tea for them. In the meantime Dale and Harry took a ride on Bart's ice-boat, and soon succeeded in hauling the overturned craft to the firm ice once more. The ice-boat was not damaged, and a little while later Dale and Harry were sailing her as before.

"I hope that teaches those fellows a lesson to leave our things alone," said Dale, and it did teach Coulter, Paxton, and Mumps a lesson, at least as far as the ice-boat was concerned.

Following the adventure just narrated, came a series of heavy snow-storms, which are remembered even to this day at Putnam Hall. They lasted over the holidays, and many boys who had planned to visit their homes at Christmas had to forego that pleasure. One party that left got stalled on the cars just outside of Ithaca, and remained in the snowdrifts for twenty-four hours. Another party got as far as Cedarville, and after remaining there one whole day returned to the Hall.

That the cadets might not feel too blue because they were snowed in, Captain Putnam allowed them to do pretty much as they pleased during Christmas week. A fine turkey dinner was served on Christmas and on New Year's day, and the boys had a great deal of sport in the Hall and in the gymnasium. Captain Putnam allowed them to have some private theatricals, and Jack, Pepper, Andy, Dale, and several others gave a two-act drama entitled "The Boy from the Country." Andy was the country boy who comes to the city to seek his fortune, and Dale played the part of an old lady who knows the boy's rich uncle. The drama was full of fun, and was well received. Before the drama came a banjo solo by one of the cadets, and then a duet by two of the cadets who could sing remarkably well.

While the singing was going on, Pepper noticed Dan Baxter sneaking behind the stage, and pointed him out to Dave Kearney.

"I think he is up to mischief," he said. "I've got to go on in the next dialogue. Won't you watch him?"

"Sure I will," answered Dave, and hurried after Baxter. He was in time to see the bully throw something on the floor, just at the places where the actors and singers made their entrances and exits.

"Grease!" murmured Dave Kearney, after getting down and feeling of the stuff

with his fingers. “How mean! The boys would look fine, sprawling all over the stage.”

As soon as he had greased the floor Dan Baxter slipped back to his seat in the hall.

“Be careful,” said Dave, running around to those who were waiting to perform.

“Careful of what?” demanded several.

“Of grease on the floor. If you’re not, you’ll go sliding from one side of the stage to the other.”

“How did the grease get there?” asked Jack.

“Dan Baxter put it there—I saw him do it.”

“Say, he ought to be mobbed!” cried Andy.

“What a dirty trick!” came from another student. “We ought to pay him back for that.”

“Let us pay him back to-night,” suggested Stuffer.

So it was agreed, and it was also settled that nobody should say a word about the grease until the proper time came. The performance went on, each performer taking good care not to get too much grease on his soles, and stepping out with caution. At last the show was over, and the final curtain went down amid great applause and cheering.

“That was as good as a professional show,” declared Joe Nelson.

“Sure an’ it was betther nor some professional shows,” put in Hogan. “Wanct I wint to a show in the country—a travelin’ troupe ’twas—an’ they couldn’t act fer a sour apple. The b’ys got ancient eggs, an’ the stage was a soight to see afther thim players got out av town!”

The performance had lasted until half-past ten, and as soon as it was over the majority of the cadets retired to their dormitories. With the crowd went Dan Baxter, much disgusted that his joke had not turned out as he had anticipated.

“I suppose one of them found out about the grease, and he told the rest,” was the way he reasoned. “Hang the luck anyway! I don’t seem to be able to get square with that crowd, no matter what I do!”

Baxter was tired, and it was not long before he was in the land of dreams. How long he slept he knew not, but of a sudden he awoke, to find a handkerchief tied across his mouth. Then his arms were tied to his sides, his feet were fastened, and he was raised up out of bed by six persons and carried from the dormitory.

He was not greatly frightened, because he thought some of the others in the dormitory were playing a joke on him. He tried to see the faces of the cadets, but could not, for each of the party had a big paper bag thrust over his head, with two holes in front, for seeing purposes.

Baxter was carried downstairs to the lower floor of the Hall. Then the party made its way to a side door.

“Throw a blanket over him, fellows,” said one person, and then the bully was almost smothered. The next instant he found himself out in the snow and being carried toward the gymnasium. The building was soon reached and the door opened. Then the whole party went inside, and a lantern was lit.

“Now set the prisoner up, and we will decide his fate,” said one of the masked cadets, and then the bully was placed on an empty box. His heart sank within him, for he felt that he was not among friends, but among those who had good cause to be his enemies.

## **CHAPTER XXVII**

### **THE PUNISHMENT OF A BULLY**

“Look here, what do you intend to do with me?” asked Dan Baxter, as soon as he could speak.

“Punish you!” came from all of the masked boys.

“What for?”

“For many things.”

“I don’t know what I have done.”

“You have tried to bully us,” said one.

“You greased the stage at our entertainment,” answered another.

“You are always quarreling with us,” put in a third.

“You want to run things to suit yourself,” came from a fourth.

“You get Mumps to play the sneak,” added a fifth.

“I—I—don’t!” cried the bully, and began to turn pale. “I want you to let me go. It’s cold here!”

“You’ll feel warm enough before we get through with you,” answered one of the masked cadets, meaningly.

“If you—you hurt me, I’ll—I’ll——”

“Don’t threaten us, Baxter. If you do, we’ll treat you so much worse.”

“It’s a mean shame!”

“Stay where you are,” said the leader of the masked cadets—it was Jack. “If you move, it will be at the peril of your life!”

After that the crowd withdrew to a corner, leaving Baxter alone. The bully wanted to escape, but he was afraid to try it. The masked cadets held a consultation lasting several minutes.

“Just the thing!” was the cry. “Just the thing!”

“Now what do they intend to do?” asked the bully of himself. “Something awful, I’m sure!”

“Baxter, we have decided on your fate,” said one of the masked boys. It was Pepper, but he disguised his voice well.

“What are you going to do?”

“We are going to brand you first and then march you out into the country, so that you can’t find your way back to Putnam Hall.”

“Brand me! March me away! Don’t you dare to do it!”

“Blindfold him first, fellows!” came from Andy, and the bully’s eyes were quickly bound tight with a handkerchief.

“Now heat up that iron,” came loudly from one of the masked cadets. “I think that a B on his forehead will look beautiful.”

“What are you going to—to—put a B on me for?” asked Baxter, with a shiver.

“B stands for Bully, and that is what you are, Dan Baxter. Hurry up with that iron, boys.”

“No! No!”

“The iron is getting hot!” came from Dale. He had stepped to one of the windows and brought in a sharp-pointed icicle.

“Nos. 3, 4, 6, and 7 will hold him, while Nos. 1 and 2 perform the operation. No.



5 can remain on guard.”

“If you brand me, I’ll—I’ll——” began the bully.

“Silence! If you dare to cry out, we’ll brand you on the cheeks as well as the forehead.”

“I won’t stand it!” roared the bully and started to get from the gymnasium, bound as he was. But they tripped him up with ease, and as he went headlong, one cadet sat on his breast and another on his legs, rendering him helpless.

“Now then, the iron!” called out Stuffer. “Brand him well.”

The icicle was brought forward, and at the same time one of the boys cut a little lock of hair from his head and lit a match. Then the icicle was run over Baxter’s forehead in the form of the letter B. At the same time the lock of hair was lit and the smell of the burning hair was allowed to reach the bully’s nose.

“Oh! Oh!” yelled Baxter, squirming greatly. “Let up! Don’t burn me! Oh, I’ll be marked for life! Oh, this is outrageous! Don’t, I beg of you! Please let me go! I’ll—I’ll do anything if you’ll only let up on me!”

“Let up now,” whispered Jack. “He may get a fit! He is almost scared out of his life!”

“Now then, the blanket and the old boots,” came from Andy, and the victim of the hazing was provided with a big pair of old rubber boots and a heavy horse blanket.

“What’s this for?” asked the bully.

“For your long tramp into the country,” was the answer.

“I don’t want to go out into the country this cold night! Let me go, please do!”

“It’s too late to beg, Baxter. You have been a bad boy, and you must take your medicine.”

“I’ll have the law on you!”

In a minute more the gymnasium door was opened and the victim was marched outside. He was well blindfolded, so that he could not see where he was going. The masked cadets led him into the woods, around the boathouse, and then made half a dozen turns, so that Baxter was completely bewildered.

“Here’s the old shanty,” said Jack, in a loud voice, when they came to a halt. “Put him into the garret and leave him.” And then Baxter was marched into the carriage house of Putnam Hall and made to mount the ladder to the loft. Here he was tied to a post, but in such a loose fashion that he could get free with ease.

“Now, Baxter, listen,” said Jack, still in an assumed voice. “You are probably four miles from Putnam Hall. Don’t try to get away, or you may get into more trouble. To-morrow night we’ll come back and finish our job.”

“I—I can’t stay here so long. It’s cold and I—I ain’t got anything to eat.”

“Well, make the best of it,” was the cry, and then the masked cadets scampered off, and a few minutes later were safe in their dormitories in the Hall.

With a sinking heart Dan Baxter listened to them depart, and then gave a deep groan.

“I—I can’t stand this!” he muttered to himself. “It’s dreadful! And to think they branded me, too. What will Paxton and the others say!”

The loft was not a particularly cold place, for the windows were tightly closed. Waiting to make sure that the crowd had gone, he pulled himself free from his bonds.

When he placed his hand to his forehead he could scarcely believe the evidence of his senses. He could feel nothing of the branding—his forehead was not sore—it did not hurt! What could it mean?

“They must have tricked me!” he told himself. “What a fool I was to raise such a howl! How they’ll laugh at me for it! But it did feel just as if I was being burnt!”

All was pitch-dark around him, for the masked cadets had taken the lantern with them. He stepped forward and ran into a low beam, giving his forehead a severe bump.

“Ouch! Nothing fake about that!” he muttered, dancing around. “I’ll have to be careful, or I’ll break my neck. Wonder how far I am from the Hall and what sort of a place this can be?” He felt around and grasped some old spider webs. “Some half tumbled down shanty, I suppose. Perhaps I’d better make myself at home until morning,” and he crouched down and hid himself in the old horse blanket. He remained awake half the night, finally falling off into a troubled doze.

When Baxter awoke it was early morning and still dark. He felt cold from head to feet and gave a shiver.

“I’d give five dollars to be back at the Hall,” he muttered to himself. “Wonder if I can walk the distance before it gets too light? If any person sees me on the road with the rubber boots and this horse blanket they’ll take me for a lunatic.” He gave a deep sigh. “I suppose I must be two miles away, at least. They said four, but maybe they piled it on.”

Several times the bully thought of starting out but gave it up, thinking he might lose his way; but when it became lighter he took a look around the loft and presently descended the ladder to the ground floor of the carriage house.

“Hi, you tramp! Wot be you a-doin’ up there, tell me that?” cried a voice from the other end of the building.

“I’m no tramp, sir,” answered Baxter. “I am—Peleg Snuggers!”

“If it ain’t Master Baxter!” ejaculated the general utility man, who had just started in on his morning work. “Well, I never! How did you git here?”

“What place is this, Peleg?”

“Wot place? Why, the carriage house, o’ course.”

“What!” yelled Dan Baxter; and at that instant he was by far the maddest boy the school ever contained.

“Sure. Wot did you think it was, eh?”

“Never mind. Is the back door to the Hall open?”

“Yes.”

“Then I’m going in,” answered the bully, and ran off without another word.

## **CHAPTER XXVIII**

### **THE RESULTS OF A FIRE**

That morning Dan Baxter did not appear and it was reported that he was sick.

“He acts to me as if he were going to die,” announced Mumps, when appealed to. “I don’t know exactly what is the matter with him.”

“Can this be true?” asked Pepper of Jack. “I’d hate to think that Baxter got sick through what we did to him.”

“More than likely he is shamming,” said the young major, and he was right. But to make sure Captain Putnam sent for Doctor Framley, a physician of Cedarville, who made a careful examination.

“He is nervous, as if he had been frightened, that is all,” announced the medical man. “Let him keep quiet for a day or two.”

Baxter had hoped to scare his tormentors into thinking that they were responsible for a serious spell of sickness. When this plan failed he quickly got around as before. He tried his best to find out who had hazed him, but the cadets kept their secret well.

On the day following the hazing Jack chanced to go down to the lake front. He was just entering the boathouse when, to his astonishment, two men stepped forth. They were the individuals he had seen several times on the mysterious sloop.

“Say, what do you want here?” he demanded, but instead of replying the men hurried away, up the lake, and then in the direction of Cedarville.

“Well, of all the mysteries I ever struck,” exclaimed the young major. “Now, what can those chaps be up to? This is at least the third or fourth time they have

come here, and nobody seems to know anything about them.”

When Jack returned to the Hall he lost no time in visiting Captain Putnam’s office.

“Perhaps you’ll laugh at me, sir,” he said. “But I want to report those two men again.”

“Again!” cried the master of Putnam Hall. “Where did you see them?”

“At the boathouse. I went down there for a skate strap. They were just coming out.”

“Did you speak to them?”

“Yes, I asked them what they wanted. They didn’t answer, and hurried away on the Cedarville road.”

“Did they take anything out of the boathouse?”

“I don’t know.”

“I must assuredly investigate this, Major Ruddy. Let us go to the boathouse together.”

This was done and they took a careful look around. Nothing was missing.

“Why can’t we follow them up once?” questioned Jack. “We ought to be able to overtake them in a cutter.”

“A good idea. I’ll have Snuggers get a cutter ready at once. Get your overcoat and your gloves.”

In a few minutes they were on the way, the captain driving and Jack sitting by his side. They drove all the way to the village, but saw nothing of the men.

“Perhaps they turned off on a side road,” said the young major.

“It is possible.”

There was nothing to do but to return to Putnam Hall. This they did; and for the

time being the subject was dropped.

At the end of the week, Jack, Pepper, Andy, and Dale got permission to visit Cedarville, one to buy a pair of skates, and the others to get various things. They set out on foot, thinking nothing of the rather long walk before them.

Just before reaching Cedarville they came to a side road, leading to a spot called Brierroot Grove. A short distance up the road was a two-story cottage, located behind a hedge of boxwood.

“Look!” cried Andy, pointing to the cottage, “Am I mistaken, or is that place on fire?”

“It’s the chimney smoking,” answered Pepper.

“No, it’s a fire coming up through the roof around the chimney!” burst out Jack.

“Let us go to the fire!” sang out Dale, and suiting the action to the word, he turned down the side road, and the others followed at his heels.

By the time they reached the cottage the place was burning fiercely throughout the second story and around the roof.

“I don’t see anybody,” said Pepper. “Perhaps the place isn’t occupied.”

“Maybe tramps set it on fire,” suggested Dale.

“I see two men!” cried Jack. “Well, I never!”

“What is it, Jack?”

“The men from the sloop! Here is where they must have been putting up!”

The cadets ran into the yard of the house and to the front door. They had seen the two men pass in and out, carrying some furniture.

“How did this start?” called out Pepper to one of the men.

At this cry both men turned around to gaze at the youths. Then one spoke to the other in a low tone, and off they ran to the rear of the cottage, leaped a rail fence, and disappeared from view in the woods.

“Stop!” yelled Jack, but the men paid no attention.

“They are the queerest chaps I ever met!” declared Pepper. “I believe they must be crazy.”

“Help! help!” came in a weak cry from the cottage.

“Somebody is in there!” said Dale.

“It’s a woman,” returned Jack. “Come on!” And he ran into the cottage.

The others followed. The smoke was growing thick, and at first they could see nothing. Then they saw an old woman with a crutch, trying to hobble down a pair of stairs.

“Don’t let me burn up!” she screamed. “Don’t let me burn up!”

Running to the old woman, Jack caught her in his arms. It was an easy matter to carry her to the open air. Here he sat her down on an old horse-block which was clear of snow. She was trembling so she could not speak.

It was easily to be seen that the cottage was doomed. The village of Cedarville boasted of nothing better than an old hand engine and a bucket brigade, and to get the engine through the snow was next to impossible.

“Let us take out what furniture we can,” said Jack, and this they did, and also carried out some clothing, a lamp and a few pictures. While the building was burning a crowd of thirty or forty folks collected.

“It don’t belong to the old woman,” said one of the farmers to Jack. “It belongs to Mr. Eggers, a rich man of Ithaca. He let her live in it rent-free, because it wasn’t worth much.”

“Then the old woman didn’t lose much,” replied the young major. “Who is she?”

“Her name is Mrs. Cowen. Nobody knows much about her, except that she has a brother who lives near the head of the lake.”

The old woman was taken to the nearest cottage, and there, after the fire was at an end, Jack went to interview her.



“I’m goin’ to live with my brother now—I ain’t goin’ to live alone no more,” she murmured.

“We got out most of your furniture.”

“Twasn’t mine—it belonged to the house. The old hair trunk was mine. Did ye save that?”

“Yes.”

“Then I don’t care much—brother Jim wants me anyway.”

“I want to know about those two men who were stopping at the cottage,” went on Jack. “Who are they?”

“Ain’t they around?”

“No, they ran away.”

“Humph! It’s just like ’em. They were the strangest! Allers doin’ somethin’ queer-like.”

“Did they board with you?”

“Kind of—when they were to home. They went out a good deal. They each paid three dollars a week. Sometimes they got their own meals, too—when I wasn’t feelin’ well.”

“Do you know their names?”

“No, ’ceptin’ one was Bart an’ tudder Paul. They had some scheme for getting a million dollars.”

“A million dollars?”

“Yes. They were after a fellow they called George. They said he had the secret.”

“I guess they were crazy,” answered Jack. “Have you any idea where they could have gone to?”

“No.”

The old woman could tell no more, and a little later Jack left her, and told his chums of what he had learned.

“Maybe the fellows will leave the neighborhood, now the house has burned down,” said Pepper.

“We must watch out for them,” put in Andy. “They ought to be captured and interviewed.”

## **CHAPTER XXIX**

### **THE DISAPPEARANCE OF GEORGE STRONG**

Two days after the fire came another snow-storm, which lasted the best part of a day and a night. After that the weather cleared rapidly, and it became quite warm.

“I’m going to Malville,” said George Strong, on Monday afternoon. “I shall be back early in the morning.”

“Very well, Mr. Strong,” answered Captain Putnam.

Malville was a small settlement back of Top Rock Hill, and George Strong said he had a distant relative there, whom he wished to see. He set off in a cutter, and Jack and Pepper chanced to see him depart.

“Have a good time, Mr. Strong!” shouted Pepper, pleasantly.

“Thank you, Ditmore, I am going on business, not pleasure.”

The following morning passed, and the assistant teacher did not appear. Captain Putnam took his place in the classroom, and also taught during the afternoon.

“This is strange,” he said to Josiah Crabtree. “I expected him back by ten o’clock, or noon at the latest.”

The next day passed, and still George Strong did not show himself, nor did he send any message to explain his absence.

Captain Putnam was much worried, and the absence of the assistant upset matters in the school. All of the cadets began to talk of the affair.

“Maybe his horse ran away and threw him out on the rocks,” said Stuffer.

“If I was the captain I’d investigate,” came from Harry Blossom.

“He said he was going on business,” said Pepper. “Perhaps the business took longer than he expected.”

Another day passed, and both the master of the hall and his cadets grew worried. Josiah Crabtree was very sour, for he had to perform some of the duties assigned to the missing teacher.

“He should have sense enough to come back,” said he severely.

“Something is wrong, that is certain,” answered Captain Putnam. “I am going to investigate to-day.”

When the boys heard that the captain was going to drive to Malville Jack, Pepper, and Andy begged to be taken along.

“Perhaps we can be of assistance,” suggested the young major. “That is, if anything has happened to him on the road.”

“Very well, I’ll take the big sleigh and a team, and you can accompany me,” answered the captain.

In the end the party to go out numbered five, for Dale went along also. The team was powerful, and in spite of the hills and the snow Malville was reached in three hours. They found the cottage of George Strong’s relative, and were surprised to find it locked up.

“Nobody has been at home for a month,” said a neighbor.

“Did you see anything of a man with a cutter around here yesterday, or a day or two before?”

“No, sir.”

“You would have seen him, had he stopped?”

“I think so. Our family generally see everything that is going on around here.”

The neighbor could tell no more, and Captain Putnam and the cadets were

nonplused.

“He must have gone somewhere!” declared Pepper. “The question is, where?”

“Let us ask the folks around town if they have seen him?” suggested Dale.

This was done, and at last they met a blacksmith who had seen George Strong on the road a mile outside of Malville.

“He was stopping by the roadside, and two odd-looking men were talking to him,” said the blacksmith. “They seemed to be arguing about something.”

“Wait!” burst out Jack. “Tell us how those men looked, if you can.”

The blacksmith did so, and they listened with interest.

“The mysterious men, I’ll wager a biscuit!” burst out Pepper.

“Exactly what I think,” came from Jack.

“Don’t you remember what the old woman told you?” came from Andy. “She said those chaps were talking about a man named George!”

“That’s it! Those men must have been hanging around Putnam Hall because Mr. Strong was there.”

The cadets looked at Captain Putnam, whose face was a study.

“You may be right, my lads,” said the master of the Hall, slowly. “But that doesn’t explain what the men wanted of Mr. Strong, or where Mr. Strong has gone to.”

“I’m satisfied of one thing,” said Jack. “Those men were up to nothing good.”

“Perhaps they robbed Mr. Strong of something, and threw his body into the snow,” suggested Dale.

They listened to all the blacksmith had to say, and then took him along, so that he might point out the exact spot where the interview had taken place. It was near a turn in the road, where the snow had drifted but little.

“Here are many footprints,” said Pepper, pointing with his hand.

“It looks to me as if there might have been a struggle,” came from Andy. “See how the snow is dug and scattered about.”

“It does look as if something had been going on,” answered the captain. “See, the footprints lead along this path and into the forest.”

“Here are the tracks of the horse and cutter!” shouted Dale, who had wandered down the road. “They go into the woods, too. Do you know what I think? I think those men either killed Mr. Strong, or made him a prisoner, and then they carried him off!”

“Let us follow the tracks of the cutter,” said Jack, and this was done; the blacksmith accompanying them.

“It’s a nasty business,” said the blacksmith. “If those odd-lookin’ men killed your teacher they ought to be hung fer it!”

The tracks of the horse and cutter led into the forest, and then along a cliff overlooking a stream now thickly covered with ice and snow.

“I see a little shanty!” cried Andy.

“Where?”

“Over yonder at the edge of that next cliff.”

“Smoke is coming from the chimney,” said Dale, an instant later. “That shows somebody must be in the place.”

“Let us approach with caution,” came from Captain Putnam. “There is no telling how those strange men will act if they are there.”

“Better cut a few sticks,” suggested Jack, and got out his jackknife. They soon had sticks, and the blacksmith cut a good-sized club.

“If they be des’prit characters they’d better give me a wide berth,” said he.

Slowly they drew closer to the shanty. Just to the rear of the building was an

open shed, and here they saw the cutter, with the horse tied in a corner and blanketed.

“What a shame to leave a horse out in such weather as this!” cried Pepper.

“Those men must be in the shanty,” said Captain Putnam. “I sincerely trust that we find Mr. Strong unharmed.”

“Let us slip up behind the trees,” said Andy. “We ought to try to capture them, or something, on the sly.”

With caution they crept up behind the trees, and then walked slowly toward the shanty. Some bushes helped to screen them, and soon they stood at the very door to the place.

“Somebody is talking!” whispered Jack. “Listen!”

At first they heard only a murmur, but presently they made out what was being said.

“Yes, sir, George, it’s a million and nothing less!” one of the strange men was saying. “A million, eh, Bart?”

“A million!” came from the other man. “A million, and all in cash, too! We want no bonds or stocks.”

“Stocks?” one of the mysterious men laughed harshly. “Stocks? Do you want me to become poor again? Cash! It’s cash we want, George!”

“What an easy time we can have on a million!” returned the other queer individual.

“If you would only listen to reason!” came from George Strong. “I do not know what has put this into your head. I haven’t a million dollars, or anything like it.”

“You have!” came from both.

“You are acting very foolishly, Bart. And so are you, Paul. That failure has turned your heads. If I——”

“I want that money, and I am going to have it!” roared the man called Bart.  
“Hand over the million or I will shoot you!”

And drawing a pistol, he pointed it straight at George Strong’s head.



## **CHAPTER XXX**

### **A LUCKY ESCAPE—CONCLUSION**

“Those men must be crazy!” cried Jack.

“I believe both of them are as mad as March hares,” returned Captain Putnam.

He tried the door, to find it locked. Putting his shoulder to the barrier he burst it open, and the whole party stormed into the shanty.

“Oh, Captain Putnam!” cried George Strong, joyfully. “I am very glad that you have come.”

“Put down that pistol!” ordered the master of the Hall, sternly, and looking the man named Bart straight in the eyes. “Put it down, I say!”

The man hesitated an instant, and then allowed the weapon to drop at his side.

“I wasn’t going to shoot anybody,” he said, humbly.

“You had better give me the weapon,” went on Captain Putnam, and wrenched it from the man’s grasp.

“Ha! they are attacking us!” shouted the other man. “Bart, we must fight for it!” And with a wild spring he leaped upon Jack, and caught the young major by the throat.

“Le—let up!” gasped Jack, and then he could say no more, for his wind was completely cut off. Then the other man began to fight, so that the captain and the blacksmith had their hands full trying to subdue him.

Seeing Jack’s predicament, Pepper, Andy, and Dale rushed at the fellow called Paul and dragged him backward. But he would not let go his hold upon the

young major, and Pepper hit him over the wrist with the stick. Then the man's hand dropped, and Jack staggered back.

"We must make him a prisoner!" cried Andy, and they caught the man and held him, while Jack got a rope from the sleigh. Soon the other man was also bound. George Strong had had his hands tied behind him, and he was quickly released.

"You do not know how thankful I am that you came," said the assistant, warmly. "I—I imagine things were getting black for me."

"Let me go!" thundered the man called Bart. "I want my million dollars!" And he glared wildly at George Strong and at the others.

"Do you know these men at all?" questioned Captain Putnam.

"I do, sir. I am sorry to say they are distant relatives of mine—third cousins. Both of them used to be rich, but they went into an oil speculation, and it failed, and they lost almost all of their money. That seemed to turn their heads, and somehow they got a notion that I was holding back a family treasure from them, a treasure they said was worth one or two million dollars."

"Is there such a treasure?" asked Jack, curiously.

"I don't think so, although the story is told in our family that one of my ancestors, during the Revolution, buried a pot of gold to keep the English soldiers from getting it. But the amount could not have been anything like a million."

"Those men were around the Hall a number of times," said Jack. "They were the mysterious fellows I mentioned a long time ago."

"Yes, they came to see me on the sly if they could. I believe, had they gotten the chance, they would have carried me off in their sloop."

"They ought to be put in an asylum," said Captain Putnam. "It is not safe to allow them their liberty."

"With your permission. I'll turn them over to some of my relatives in the West," answered George Strong. "I know they can manage them."

“As you please—but keep them away from the Hall in the future.”

At first the two prisoners were furious, but when their fury subsided they became very humble, and both began to cry.

“We wanted only our rights,” whined one. “If I had a million dollars, I could take an air-ship to the North Pole or the moon, or anywhere.”

“He is certainly mad,” said Andy. “What a dreadful condition to be in.”

Late in the day the prisoners were taken to Cedarville, and George Strong telegraphed for a relative to come at once and take charge of them.

“They may be crazy, but they told me something which I think may be true,” said the assistant teacher to the boys. “They said they were watching around the school at the time you had the big snow house, and they saw three cadets run up on top and cave it in. I questioned them, and I am almost certain Coulter was one of the boys and Baxter another.”

“It would be just like that crowd,” exclaimed Pepper, bitterly. “If Baxter and Coulter were in it the other fellow must have been Paxton or Mumps,—I mean Fenwick, sir.”

“They said they were all big boys.”

“Then it must have been Paxton. That crowd always hangs together for mischief.”

As soon as they arrived at the Hall, Pepper tried to locate the bully and his chums. The only cadet he could find of the crowd was Coulter.

“So, Coulter, it was you who helped to cave in that snow house, eh?” he said, catching the cadet by the arm.

“Who—er—told you,” stammered Coulter.

“Oh, don’t deny it.”

“I’m not denying it,” was the bold reply. “What are you going to do about it?”

“That!” cried Pepper, and hit Coulter a stinging blow in the mouth, which loosened two front teeth. Then a regular fight ensued, and Coulter was badly whipped. Paxton also received a thrashing at the hands of Andy, while Baxter only escaped punishment by keeping out of sight excepting during school hours.

“Now, maybe, they’ll keep their distance for a while,” said Pepper. But he was mistaken, the bully of the Hall and his cronies were not subdued, and what they did in retaliation will be told in another volume, to be called “The Putnam Hall Rivals; or, Fun and Sport Afloat and Ashore.” In this book we will meet all of our friends once more, in games and adventures as exciting as any of the past.

George Strong felt much relieved when a relative from the West came to take the two crazy men away.

“I never want to see them again,” said the assistant teacher. But he did see them, and they did their best to cause him no end of trouble.

A week after the rescue of George Strong some of the cadets learned that Captain Putnam’s birthday was at hand. They asked the master of the Hall if they could celebrate, and he gave the desired permission. Money was raised among the cadets to present the captain with a fine set of encyclopedias, and of this gift Captain Putnam was justly proud.

“All things considered, you are doing very well,” said the master to his pupils. “I am proud of you, and happy to think that Putnam Hall is earning such a good reputation for itself.”

“I shouldn’t want to go to a better school,” said Jack. “It just suits me exactly.”

“So say I,” came from Pepper. “Of course we might do without Baxter and that crowd——”

“Every school seems to have its bully,” put in Andy. “All we can do is to make him keep his place.”

“Don’t bother with Baxter!” broke in Dale. “Let us enjoy ourselves.”

Just then Stuffer burst into the dormitory, his face wreathed in smiles.

“Come to the mess-hall!” he called out. “Such a spread! I’m going to eat the

meal of my life!”

“That settles it,” laughed Jack. “Hurry up, all of you. If Stuffer gets there first, there will be nothing left!”

And they rushed down the stairs pell-mell; and here let us leave them and say good-bye.

THE END

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- Obvious typographical errors were corrected without note.
- Illustrations were moved to the appropriate place.

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