

# DICK AND LARRY FRESHMEN



FRANCIS LYNDE

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DICK AND LARRY

FRESHMEN



[Eight straight times he carried it toward Rockford's goal](#)

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# DICK AND LARRY FRESHMEN

BY

FRANCIS LYNDE  
*Author of* THE DONOVAN CHANCE

ILLUSTRATED BY

GEORGE AVISON

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## DICK AND LARRY: FRESHMEN

# I

### THE BRIDGE SCRAP

They were not twins; they were not brothers or even relatives. For that matter, at the moment when their train was clattering over the last few miles of the long journey from the far-western home-land to the college town where they expected to spend the next four years, the joint name by which they were to be known at the take-off had not yet been coined. But, as everybody knows, there is no accounting for college nicknames. They are handed you right off the bat, and that's all there is to it.

To make the "twin" thing still more of a joke, they didn't look much more alike than Little Lord Fauntleroy and Huck Finn. About the only feature they had in common was a rich stain of brown sunburn, acquired in a summer of railroad building in the Timanyoni Mountains of western Colorado. Dick Maxwell, son of the general manager of the Nevada Short Line, was possibly twenty pounds the lighter of the two, and he had the fine-lined face and easy manner of a fellow who has never had to think of how his clothes fitted, or what to do with his hands; while Larry Donovan—but Larry deserves a paragraph to himself.

He had the window seat in the Pullman section, and was staring out at the rather monotonous Middle-Western farmstead landscape hurtling past with that sort of half-shy look in his good, wide-set eyes which is the first symptom of homesickness. The big-framed, curly-headed fellow, who had been Dick's partner on the summer job, was the son of an ex-locomotive engineer on the Short Line, and he owed his college chance partly to the good work he had done on the railroad-building job, and partly to the generosity of Dick's father. In a grim, workmanlike way, he was determined to make the utmost of the chance; but that fact didn't say anything whatever to the other fact that this was his first long-distance jump from the home circle.

"Why the wan look to starboard, Larry?" Dick asked with the grin which, on his face, was never more than a good-natured, quizzical smile. "Thinking about the little old home shack back in Brewster, and how far away it has gone?"

Larry turned slow eyes upon his companion.

“Don’t see how you can take it so easy,” he grumbled back; and then, after a moment’s thought: “Maybe I can, too. You’re used to being away from home and mixing and mingling with people. I’m not.”

Dick smiled again.

“Not getting scared out already, are you?”

“No; it isn’t scare; it’s—well, I don’t know just what you’d call it. But I’d give a lot if we were settled down, and I knew what to-morrow’s job was going to be, and was boning for it out of a book.”

Dick turned short upon the wisher.

“See here, Larry,” he said; “don’t you go starting in at Old Sheddon on the wrong slant. You did it in Brewster High—you know you did; never came out to class doings, or anything. I remember you told me once that the fellows and girls didn’t need a ‘greasy mechanic’ to fill out the list. Dad says there’s a lot more to college than just sticking your nose in a book, and I believe it. You’re going to miss it by a long mile if you do the turtle-in-a-shell act.”

What Larry Donovan might have replied to this little lecture on turtles and their habits was forestalled by a panorama of suburban homes flitting past the car windows, a grinding of the brakes, the rumbling of the train across a bridge, and the long jump was fully taken.

Being strangers from afar, the two Freshmen did not expect to be met at the station, and they were not. But Dick knew what to do and where to go.

“A ‘Sheddon’ street-car is what we want, and there’s one coming, right now,” he said; then: “Hoo-e-e-e! Look at the green caps on it. I thought we’d be the only early birds, but it seems we’re not.”

They didn’t get seats in the small trolley car, because the seats were all packed and jammed, and so was the aisle; but they crowded in, some way. While they were stowing their grips, a thick-bodied fellow, with a wide mouth and a voice like that of a megaphoning yell leader, asked Dick where they were from.

“Brewster,” said Dick, as if the name of the small home city were enough to

identity it anywhere.

“And where in the cat’s name is Brewster?” boomed the big voice.

“I’ll tell you—strictly in confidence,” Dick replied, wrinkling his nose. “It’s in Timanyoni Park.”

Right then and there the nickname was born.

“Ho, fellows!” roared the megaphonic chap, commanding the instant attention of the packed carful, “we’ve got ’em, right here; the only original stem-winding, stem-setting doodle-bugs from the wild and woozy—the Timanyoni Twins!”

Dick laughed with the rest of the carful, and Larry felt himself blushing a dark, dark red under his masking coat of sunburn—which is as good a way as any of telling how this sudden thrust into the limelight affected each. Beyond the christening, Dick fell easily into talk with the megaphonist—Wally Dixon, by name, and hailing from somewhere in Missouri. But Larry was soberly uncomfortable until they left the car to lug their grips down a cross street which skirted the Sheddon campus.

The “Man-o’-War” was the house they were looking for, and they found it—a respectable two-storied dwelling, as little like a ship as might be—on a corner facing the Mechanical Engineering Laboratory. Dick’s father had written ahead to engage their room, and it was good, motherly Mrs. Grant herself who opened the door for them.

Mrs. Grant proved to be as hospitable as she looked. There were to be six fellows in the house, she explained; two Juniors who had been there the year before, and four Freshmen. One of the Juniors had arrived, but the other and the two additional Freshmen were yet to come. Dick and Larry were to make themselves at home, and the arrived Junior, a husky-looking chap named Merkle, would show them their room.

Merkle did the showing—to a large, plainly furnished room on the second floor—and took an upperclassman’s privilege of casting himself into the one easy-chair while the newcomers unpacked their grips.

“Where are you fellows from?” he asked.

This time Dick did not try to be funny. “Brewster—western Colorado,” he

replied.

“Some little jump, I’ll say,” Merkle commented. “Ever here before?”

“Nope.”

“Then you’ll want to know some of the Sheddon traditions; every college has ’em. If you know ’em beforehand, it’s easier.”

“Shoot,” said Dick; “we’re here to learn.” Then, with a fine assumption of uninformed innocence: “Where can I get one of those sweaters with an ‘S’ on it, like the one you’re wearing?”

“That’s the first of the traditions,” returned the big Junior, with a little frown; “not to be fresh with your elders.”

Dick apologized handsomely.

“That *was* fresh,” he admitted. “I can see that the green cap is going to fit me like a tailor-made suit of tights. Please forget it, and tell us some of the traditions.”

Merkle briefed them. No smoking on the campus—which didn’t hit either of the “twins” because as yet they didn’t smoke anywhere—no cutting of class or college celebrations; no backing down when they were asked to take part in any of the college activities; no shirking of the “try-outs” for the various athletic teams.

“Lots of other little stunts that you’ll absorb as you come to ’em,” Merkle concluded; adding: “Of course, you’ll both be in the bridge scrap. *You* can’t do much but make a loud noise on the side-lines, because you’re not beefy enough”—meaning Dick; “but you”—with a nod for Larry—“you look fit enough to heave a locomotive off the track. Played on your High School eleven, didn’t you?”

Larry nodded, and Dick explained: “Half-back; he’s too modest to tell you so himself. But what about this bridge scrap?”

“It’s the pure quill,” said Merkle. “Dark night; single-span concrete bridge about a mile back in the country. Sophomores defend it; Freshies try to rush it. Two

upper classes on hand to keep the murder list as low as possible. You'll like it."

"What do we get out of it if we win?" Dick demanded.

"Undying fame—and the right to paint the numerals of your class on the portal arch. It's been eight years since a Freshman class did it."

Dick nodded.

"Sounds pretty all right to me."

"And how about you, Curlyhead?" Merkle turned to Larry.

At this, the Donovan downrightness came to the fore.

"I'm not aiming to play horse," he said, speaking slowly, as his habit was when he was appealed to. "I came here to study."

The upperclassman's frown was portentous, as became his dignity.

"See here, Donovan," he returned; "I can tell you one thing: you won't get very far if you begin by knocking the college spirit. You'll not be urged, or even asked, personally, to go with your class into the bridge scrap. But unless you can flash up a doctor's certificate to show that you're physically unfit—well, I wouldn't want to be in your shoes after the fact; that's all."

"Larry's all right," said Dick, hastening to make peace. "He's just too modest to brag. When does this bloody event eventuate?"

"Pretty early in the game: fellows don't get down to brass tacks in their college work until after it's come and gone. You'll have all the notice you'll need. What schools do you enter?"

"Civil for me; Mechanical for Larry."

"Good on the Civil end; I'm one of 'em myself," said Merkle, extending a ham-like hand. "You'll like the Dean. He's some Ranahan on field work." Then, heaving himself up out of his chair: "There goes Mother Grant's little supper tinkle bell. You'll register in, Wednesday, and then you'll have a day or so to shake yourselves into place. Sheddon's a good old dump, but if you've been brought up by hand, you may find her a little raspy on the nerves, as all

engineering schools are likely to be. But she's fair and square and just. You get about what you go out after. Let's jump down and bite a piece o' pie."

With two days to spare before the Registrar's office would open, the "twins" had time to look about a bit. Finding that they had the freedom of the campus and its buildings, they made a round of the different schools, "rubber-necking," as Dick put it.

In addition to being the technical end of a State University, Sheddon was—and is—a considerable university in itself. The "rubber-neckers" wandered through building after building; Agriculture, with its up-to-date farm machinery, spotless dairy, and model farm; Chemistry and Pure Science, with their splendidly equipped laboratories; Electricity, with wonders to which their High School course had barely introduced them; Civil Engineering, with its museum of surveying instruments; and Mechanical, with its laboratory, big lecture-rooms, testing lab., foundry, blacksmith-shop, pattern-shop and machine-shop complete to the smallest practical detail.

Larry Donovan warmed up with his first touch of real enthusiasm as they were inspecting the shops. He had worked in the home railroad shop to earn money for his High School course.

"This is something like!" he exclaimed. "Let me get into my overalls and jumper, and I'll be right at home here. Just look at those lathes—motor-driven and up-to-date to the last bit of polish on the face-plates."

With his customary ease of fitting himself into whatever niche he happened to drop into, Dick made a good many acquaintances during those preliminary days, and was hail-fellow-well-met with a score and more of his classmates by the time the registration was over and the student body was getting its assignment cards filled out.

But with Larry it was altogether different. While Dick made friends who told him what to do and how to do it, Larry plugged along on his own—and made hard work of it. Of course, this was strictly his own fault; but even at this early date in his college career he was beginning to draw a line which was later to give him no end of trouble and heartburnings.

As well as he knew Dick—and they had been the closest of friends in the home High School—he was already asking himself if Dick's ready acceptance by

everybody wasn't due to the fact that Dick's father was general manager of a good-sized railroad. Admitting that accusation—and he was admitting it almost before he knew it—it was only a step over to the other side of the misleading equation: if a fellow's ranking in Sheddon was going to be based upon the social or financial prominence of his family, what sort of a show did the son of a crippled ex-locomotive engineer stand?

It was after supper on the day when they got their assignments, and the two had gone to their room to “chop the first air-hole in the study ice,” as Dick put it, that Larry's attitude got its first public airing, so to speak. And some mention of the impending bridge scrap was what opened the door.

“No,” said Larry, frowning, “I'm not in on that, or any other side-line foolishness, Dick. As I told Merkle that first evening, I'm not here to play horse. My assignment card is full enough to keep me good and busy, and if I can claw through this first semester without flunking something, I'll be lucky.”

Dick squared himself behind the study table and looked his room-mate in the eye.

“You're side-stepping, Larry,” he broke out accusingly. “It isn't the work that makes you say that. You know perfectly well that you can run rings all around me, with your little ‘it's dogged as does it,’ when it comes to the study part. You've got some other reason up your sleeve. What is it?”

Larry tried to set the real reason in presentable shape. But, after all, it didn't sound so very good when he voiced it.

“I was a workingman before I came here, and I'm a workingman yet.”

“Granny!” Dick scoffed. “We're all workingmen—or, if we're not, we'd better be.”

“You know what I mean,” Larry insisted; adding: “I'm not kicking. It's the way it is out in the world, and I suppose there is no reason why it shouldn't be that way in college. You've made an armful of friends already, while I know maybe half a dozen fellows well enough to nod at 'em. Sometimes they nod back, and sometimes they don't.”

“Fiddle!”—Dick seemed to be carrying an overload of derisive ejaculations. “You've simply got the bug, Larry! If you let it keep you from being a real

You've simply got the bug, Larry: if you let it keep you from being a real Sheddonian—pep, college spirit and all—it'll bust you, world without end."

"I can't help it," said the workingman glumly. "I didn't make things the way they are made. Here's a sample of it: You've met Eggleston—the dandified chap that rooms two doors down the street. I happened to butt up against him to-day, and he introduced himself and asked if I were the son of Mr. Herbert Donovan, the big consulting engineer, of St. Louis. When I said No; that my father was a locomotive engineer; he froze up until you could hear his skin crack."

"Bosh!" snorted Dick, trotting out another of the derisives. "If you're going to let a snob like Harry Eggleston set the pace for you—"

The interruption was a hoarse cry from the street: "Freshmen out! All Freshmen out!" Dick opened the window and stuck his head out.

"What's broke loose?" he asked.

"Turn out! The Sophs are paintin' one of our fellows green down in Adams's field barn! Turn out!"

Dick shut the window and went to get his cap.

"You're coming, aren't you, Larry?" he said; adding: "This is a class job, you know."

Larry shook his head.

"Might as well begin in one place as another, Dick: I'm not in on the rah-rah stuff."

Dick Maxwell's temper was easy-going, but about once in a blue moon it got away from him.

"That's yellow, and you know it!" he flamed out; and with that he was gone. But he had scarcely reached the sidewalk before Larry was at his elbow.

"I can't stand for that—from you, Dick," was all the explanation that was offered; and, of course, Dick was instantly penitent.

"I'm a liar!" he blurted out contritely. "Nobody knows better than I do that there

isn't a single yellow drop of blood in you, Larry. There goes a bunch of our fellows now—let's run."

The hazing episode proved to be merely an incident. Enough Freshmen were rallied to rush the field barn in Adams's back forty; the artistic Sophomores were scattered; and the victim, who proved to be the big, husky "Aggie," Welborn, who roomed at Mrs. Grant's, was rescued. Of course, Welborn was a sad sight. The artists had stripped him and he was well daubed with green paint. Nevertheless, he was cheerfully triumphant. "I got five of 'em, b'jing! before they got me," he gloated, with a grin that the green paint made peculiarly hideous. "Whadda you reckon'll take it off?"

"Turpentine," suggested somebody in the mob of rescuers; and two of the light-footed ones ran for a drug store.

With the worst of the paint removed, Larry and Dick took Welborn home, where they commandeered the bath-room and worked over him until he was well-nigh blistered but clean.

"Gosh! talk about Turkish baths!" gurgled the big victim, as they were sousing him for the final time in the tub of hot soap-suds. "I'll say this beats 'em a mile high! Wait till we got those Soffies at the bridge! I'm goin' to take a stick along and notch it every time I put one of 'em to sleep."

"Well?" said Dick to Larry, after they had tucked the cheerful victim into his bed, and were once more in their own room, "changed your mind any?"

"Not a minute's worth!" was the gruff reply. "It's all tom-foolishness, and I don't want any of it in mine."

"But you'll turn out for the bridge scrap, won't you?—for the honor of the class?"

"Not so you could notice it," Larry refused; and with that he stuck his face into a book.

For some days the "shaking-down" process which every college has to go through at the beginning of the scholastic year went on—with small satisfaction to any sober-minded member of the faculty, or to fellows who, like Larry Donovan, were not yet imbued with that elusive thing called "college spirit."

Hazings, some of them mild, and some not so mild, went on nightly. Freshmen, unwarily out after dark in numbers too small for defense, were paddled, painted, and made to do stunts ridiculous, and sometimes rather harrowing.

After the Welborn incident, Larry refused to pay any heed to the nightly call of “Freshmen out” and Dick forbore to urge him. But at last a night came when the call—unheeded when it was raised from the sidewalk—was hurled in at short range by Welborn himself. He found Larry alone, poring over his mathematics, as was his usual custom.

“Hey! what the dickens are you hived up here for, when the Soffies are out in force and murderin’ us?” he roared. “You’d sit here with your nose in a book while they’ve got your side-partner, Dick Maxwell, half naked and chased up a tree back of the athletic field? You haven’t any red blood in you, Donovan; that’s what’s the matter with you!”

Larry jumped up so suddenly that his chair went over with a crash. “Show me!” was all he said; and a minute later he was racing at Welborn’s heels, down the street and across an open lot to where half a dozen yelling Sophomores were doing a scalp dance around a big black-walnut tree. In the higher branches of the tree to which they had driven him by throwing clods at him a slender figure in a close-fitting suit of underwear was picked out by a light of a small bonfire. And the autumn night was cold.

Welborn spoke for the first time as he and Larry were hurling themselves over the fence. “B-better get some more of the fe-fellows!” he gasped. “There are too many of ’m for just us two!” But Larry acted as if he hadn’t heard. “Come on!” he said; and, two to six, they went in.

It was a warm little tussle for a few minutes, with most of the rules eliminated. Like Larry, Welborn had played foot-ball; and, again like Larry, he had the weight. Bucking the dancing ring as one man, they broke the line; and another tackling rush dissipated it.

Back in their room, Larry once more planted himself before his book, but as he opened it, he said to Dick, without looking up: “You may count me in on that bridge business, if you like. I don’t ‘savvy’ that sort of thing, as you know; but those fellows need a lesson—and they’re going to get it. No; don’t make any mistake,” he went on, as Dick was about to offer congratulations. “I haven’t any ‘class spirit’ or ‘college spirit,’ or whatever you call it. But when they hit you,

they hit me; that's all."

The night of the bridge scrap—which, by Sheddon tradition, was to end all hazing—came in due course; a night a bit cloudy, and, by consequence, as dark as Erebus. Quite early in the evening the class began to gather, and the cries of "Freshmen out!" "All Sophomores out!" began to be lifted in the college suburb streets very shortly after supper.

True to his own traditions, Larry sat down at the study table and boned his Math. for the next day, resolutely shutting his ears to Dick's agonized protests to the effect that all the fun would be over before they could get in on it. It was half-past eight before the boner shut his book and announced his readiness. But while he was getting into his oldest clothes and overalls, he once more defined his position.

"Don't you get 'hope up' about me, Dick. I'm going in on this because it seems to be a job that has to be done before the Soffies will mind their own business and let us alone. That's all there is to it, so far as I'm concerned."

"Maybe you'll have another angle on it before we get through," was all that Dick said in reply; and they set out.

As Dick had predicted, they were a little late; when they reached the streets they found them deserted. But they knew the location of the bridge, a mile back of the campus; and the mile was covered at a dog-trot.

Though they had been tardy for the assembling, they were in time for everything else. While the night was dark, the battlefield was luridly illuminated by flaring gasoline torches. The bridge was a modern concrete structure of a single long span over the small river; broad, and with footways at the sides protected by parapets breast-high. At either end was an ornamental portal arch, and it was upon this that the winning class was permitted to paint its year numerals.

When Larry and Dick arrived upon the scene, the Sophomores had taken possession of the bridge, and the Freshmen were massed in the road. Upperclassmen—Seniors for the Sophomores and Juniors for the Freshmen—were "frisking" the combatants for weapons. No fellow with good red blood in him would go into such a conflict armed; but in a bunch of six or eight hundred undergraduates there are always a few "yellows," and they had to be searched.

As the Juniors in pairs searched the green caps, others followed with strips of white cloth to be worn on the arm as a distinguishing mark by the attackers. “Fair play!” was the oft-repeated caution of the upperclassmen; and dire punishment was promised to the fellows who should break this tradition.

Dick plunged into the thick of things as soon as he had been searched and marked; but Larry stood aside, grimly sizing up the situation. The first thing he remarked was the time-immemorial handicap of Freshman classes, namely, the lack of leadership which is the natural consequence in a body of fellows getting together for their first united effort. Wally Dixon, the big-voiced young Mechanical who had given Larry and Dick their joint nickname on the day of their arrival, was commanding and shouting and trying to bring some sort of order out of the chaos; but he was not making much headway.

The searching and marking finished, the upperclassmen laid down the iron-clad rules of the game. Slugging was prohibited, but anything less than a knock-out went. Prisoners could be taken by either side, but they had the privilege of escaping and rejoining their own side if they could. Time would not be called until one side or the other was clearly victorious.

When all was ready, the Freshmen made their first charge, with Dixon trying to get team play by forming his men into a flying wedge. Larry, from the half-back position into which he had mechanically dropped, saw at once that it was going to fail. The Sophomores were massed solidly all the way across the bridge, and the loosely-formed wedge doubled up like a handful of sand and went to pieces when it struck the obstacle.

For a shouting, ear-splitting five minutes there was a hilarious free-for-all, in which a dozen or more of the attackers were taken prisoner and shoved to the rear under guard. Then the defenders charged in their turn—good, old-fashioned mass play, this was—and drove the disorganized mob of Freshies off the bridge and a hundred yards or so up the road.

In the little lull which followed the return of the Sophomores to their stronghold, there was dazed confusion in the ranks of the defeated, with Dixon trying in vain to rally them into fighting shape again. Into the midst of things Dick Maxwell hurled himself like a human bombshell.

“Fellows!” he yelled, “what we’re needing is a leader! Dixie, here, is doing his best, but it isn’t good enough. Isn’t that so, Wally?”—appealing to the big voice.

“You said a whole mouthful,” Dixon admitted, with splendid class spirit. “I’m only pinch-hittin’ for the right man. Who is he, Maxie?”

“I’ve got him right here!” Dick shouted, dragging Larry forcibly into the inner circle. “Here’s an old codger that’s handled grown men on a railroad job! Climb in, Larry, and tell us what to do!”

Of course, Larry would have backed straight out if he had been allowed to. But even at this early period a lot of the men knew Dickie Maxwell, and were perfectly willing to take his word. “Donovan! Donovan! What’s the matter with Donovan? There’s nothing the matter with Donovan! He’s all right, you BET!” the shout went up; and Larry found himself elected.

“If you will have it that way,” he yielded gruffly. “What I don’t know about such foolishness as this would fill a rain-water hogshead. But if the job’s got to be done, we’ll do it: just get that rubbed into your hides—every last one of you. We’re going to do it!”

“Bully for the Timanyoni Twin! Tell us how!” yelled the mob.

“Listen, then: we can’t buck that line solid, and get anywhere. Those fellows have been together long enough to know team play, and we haven’t. I want twenty men who can swim, and who aren’t afraid of getting wet. Volunteers come over to this side of the road. You other fellows mass across so they can’t see what we’re doing.”

He had his twenty in a half-second—and forty more on top of them. Rapidly he made his selection, with Wally Dixon for a captain. Not knowing more than a handful of the men, individually, he picked chiefly for size. Since his plan bulked large on the side of secrecy, he took the twenty apart and gave them their instructions. After which, they vanished in the darkness—not in the direction of the bridge.

“Now for a little drill work!” Larry called out, going back to the army proper. “Let me show you what a flying wedge really ought to be,” and for as much as fifteen minutes he kept them forming and re-forming in the road, the only shirker being Dickie Maxwell, who stood aside with his eyes fixed upon a certain point in the woods backgrounding the farther end of the bridge. And in the meantime, most naturally, the thus-far-victorious Sophomores were hurling all sorts of

epithets across the dead-line, singing and shouting like the pack of young barbarians which, for the moment, they were.

Larry was forming his charging wedge for about the twentieth time when Dick, straining his eyes, saw a tiny match-light flare, lasting no longer than an eye-wink, on the farther bank of the river a few yards above the bridge approach. Instantly he darted across to Larry. “Six—fourteen—five!” he yelled, giving the old foot-ball signal; and Larry leaped to his place at the cutting edge of the wedge. “This time we GO!” he bellowed: “*Now, then*—for all you’re worth, and hang on till the last man of you is dead!”

Once more the defenders of the bridge met the charge gamely. Their front line bent, buckled, straightened itself again, and flying detachments from either flank tried to cut the splitting point of the wedge off from the tremendous shoving force behind it. Larry, head down like that of a butting ram, and his racking elbows boring a path straight into the crowding mass, seemed to bear a charmed life. Dragging hands clawed at him, fists beat upon him. Once a slugger, meanly taking advantage of the turmoil, kneed him in the stomach; but still he kept his feet and held on.

It was only a matter of minutes. While [the Sophomore front line was buckling for the second time](#) a wild yell went up from their rear. The small guard they had left to hold the northern end of the bridge had given way at the charge of the twenty huskies Larry had sent to swim the river, and in another half-minute the yearly class struggle had passed into history. Larry’s ruse had been the simplest of tricks, but even a simple trap works if it has never been tried before. Caught between two fires, the bridge defenders broke in confusion, and after that, it was every man for himself and a get-away.



[The Sophomore front line was buckling for the second time](#)

Of course, Larry had his reward—and Dick, too, for that matter. For an uproarious half-hour the victorious Freshmen marched back and forth over the bridge, carrying the “twins” shoulder-high and shouting themselves hoarse for Donovan and Maxwell, the class, Old Sheddon, and the epoch-marking scrap which would put Freshmen numerals on the portal arch for the first time in eight years.

But after it was all over; after the shouting, singing mob had made its way back

to the college suburb and dispersed, and Dick, hero-worshipping in proper fashion by applying the contents of Mother Grant's arnica bottle to the handsome array of bruises Larry had acquired in the battle, ventured to add a little adulation of his own to the class leader's triumph, Larry cut him off morosely.

"None of that from you, Dick!" he growled. "I know just how much and how little all this shouting and yelling is worth, and so do you. To-morrow morning nine-tenths of those fellows won't know me when they meet me on the campus. For just about that percentage of them I'll drop back and be just what I am—a workingman and the son of a workingman. They wanted a hard-hitter to-night, and I happened to be it. But that's all there is to it. No more rah-rah stuff for me."

"But you can't—you simply *can't* go through college with that sort of a slant on things!" Dick protested, almost tearfully. "It isn't human! You're simply batty on that 'workingman' stunt. Why, those fellows you captained to-night will black your shoes—do anything on top of earth for you, if you'll only let 'em!"

But "letting them" was the hitch that Larry Donovan, in the very beginning of his college career, was allowing the stubborn part of his own character to knot around him. There is no variety of pride quite so unreasoning as poverty-pride; and when Larry tumbled into bed a little later, it was with the fixed idea that he was going to be *in* college without being *of* it; that he would hoe his own row and let others do the same; a determination which, farther along, was to lead to—but of that more in its proper place.

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## II

### THE OFFISH WORM

“Say, Maxie; what the di—hinkle is the matter with that red-headed room-mate of yours, I’d like to know?”

It was the beginning of the college year, and Old Sheddon was settling into its stride. On the campus, between classes, two first-year men were heading for their rooms and a study period. Wally Dixon, the bigger of the two, was the one who asked the disgusted question about Larry Donovan.

“Larry’s a good old scout,” said Dick Maxwell, dodging a small problem that he himself was unable to answer. “He’s a regular fellow, all right, when you come to know him.”

“Know him?” roared Dixon; “I’d like for you to tell me how anybody ever gets to know him! Look at the way he acted after you, or somebody, got him out for the class scrap at the bridge. He was a pink winner that night, with the neat little Indian-fighter trick that he pulled, and everybody on the job knew it. But when some of us went to him the next day to find out which of the class offices he’d like to have handed him, he bluffed us cold!”

“Don’t you go and lay that up against him,” Dick urged. “It’s—it’s just his way, you know.”

“Well, if anybody should ask me often enough, I’d say it’s a mighty queer way. Acts as if he had a grouch against the world.”

Dickie Maxwell, loyalest of chums, hardly knew what to say. Dixon was the son of a wealthy Kansas City packer, and Dick felt that it would be next to impossible to make him understand Larry’s attitude. For that matter, he, Dick, couldn’t understand it himself. Beginning with workmanlike contempt for what he called the “boys’-play” side of college life, Larry’s grouch, or indifference, or whatever it was, was developing into something a good bit like antagonism toward everything but the daily study grind, and what he could get out of that.

“I’ll say he’s heading in to be a worm,” Dixon went on; “worm” being Sheddon slang for a fellow who scamps the college “activities” and lives and moves and

has his being in the classrooms and study periods. "He's ripping material for the athletic squad, and if he had even a whiff of college spirit he'd be showing up in the try-outs. You ought to labor with him, Maxie; he's needing it."

The two parted at the campus gate, and when Dick reached his room at Mrs. Grant's, he found Larry scowling over a problem in his trigonometry.

"Chuck the grind and talk to me a few minutes," was Dick's greeting as he came in. Then: "You're cutting all the athletic try-outs, Larry. What for?"

Larry's frown deepened. "I don't see why I can't make you understand," he broke out half impatiently. "You, and most of the other fellows, I'd say, are here mostly to have a good time—or that's the way it looks to me. I'm not. I'm here on borrowed money—no, hold on," he protested, when Dick would have interrupted, "I know your father doesn't look at it that way, but I do. And because it is borrowed money, I want to get the worth of it."

"Well," Dick retorted, "that's just what I'm scrapping about. You won't get the worth of it if you go on cutting out a good half of what college ought to mean to a fellow. I'll bet you fairly ache to go on the field every time the bunch takes a try-out."

"If I do, I take it out in aching,"—glumly.

It was the same old thing. As the son of a workingman, Larry, as we have seen, had early drawn a line upon the off side of which he had taken his stand stubbornly. College, as it appeared to him, was a place where rich men's sons came to study as little as possible, and where a workingman was admitted only upon sufferance, as you might say.

Now when a fellow goes about with a chip on his shoulder there are plenty of people who will oblige him by knocking it off. Larry had already had kindnesses not a few shown him, and even hilarious adulation when—dragged into it bodily by Dick—he had taken part in the class "scrap," and had led the green-caps to the first Freshman victory won in eight years. But, on the other hand, a few snobbish fellows had "shown him his place," as he put it, and it is human nature to see the thing you are looking for, and to miss the things you've already made up your mind don't exist.

"I don't think you're doing yourself, or Old Sheddon, fair justice," Dick said at

length. "If you were thick-headed and had to bone hard to keep up, it would be different. But you're not—and you don't."

"Listen," said Larry; "those fellows in the athletic bunch are out after 'material,' but that is just as far as it goes, Dick. They'd take me on as a sort of promising chunk of bone and muscle—and that's all. I'm not in their class."

Dick flapped his hands in despair.

"You're the limit, Larry! That 'class' notion of yours, in free-for-all America, is simply bunk!"

"Is it?" Larry queried sharply. "I can prove what I say. Look at little Purdick—waiting on table in Hassler's restaurant to earn his way: does anybody ask him to get in on any of the try-outs? Not so you could notice it. Look at Jungman, tending furnaces and wheelbarrowing ashes: Saturday, when some of the fellows were going for a hike, one of 'em said: 'Let's make Jungman take time off and go with us.' Were there any frantic shouts of approval? Not on your life. Instead, Banker Waldrich said, 'Oh, nit! he isn't our sort.'"

Again Dick made the gesture of despair.

"I guess you're hopeless!" he gave up; and with that he went to get his own book.

Though he said this—meaning it at the moment—Dick didn't let up on the athletic urgencies; and faithfully, in season and out of season, he labored with Larry. As sometimes happens, even in an engineering college, a Freshman class had entered with rather scanty material in it for the class teams. And, since the 'Varsity teams have to grow up out of incoming material, the athletic "scouts" were digging hard for Freshman candidates. Unhappily, however, the fellows who approached Larry always seemed to rub him the wrong way of the grain; or he thought they did, which amounted to the same thing.

After all, it was less Dick's urgings than a word spoken by Mr. Waddell, the pattern-shop instructor, that turned the tide. It was on an afternoon while the try-outs were still going on, and Larry was doing a little extra work in the shop. Passing through, the instructor stopped at Larry's lathe, and there was a little talk turning upon Larry's absence from the athletic field when everybody else was there.

Much to Larry's surprise, the instructor took sides with Dick and the other urgers: it was a student's duty to uphold, not only the honor of his college in class work, but in the "activities" as well. Larry thought it all over soberly, and that evening made a large and generous concession to Dick.

"This athletic business," he began, without preface; "I've about made up my mind to try out for the foot-ball squad."

The sudden shift nearly knocked Dick speechless, but he caught his breath and pounded the shifter on the back.

"That's the right old stuff!" he exulted; "Gee-gosh! but you make me glad all around the block!"

"Hold up," Larry amended; "I don't want any more credit than belongs to me. I'm going in because I guess I owe it to Old Sheddon. But I'm not kidding myself any, whatever. If I get in and play a good game, the bleachers'll give me the glad hand. But off the field I'll still be Larry Donovan, mechanic, and the son of a mechanic."

"Confound your picture!" said Dick, half laughing and half provoked, "you ought to have a licking, and if I were big enough I'd give you one! Why, you poor fish, don't you know that your good, sane, 'workingman' ancestry is the thing you ought to be most thankful for? It is the foundation upon which the real America is built!"

Larry grunted and looked up suspiciously.

"Where'd you get all that flowery stuff?" he demanded.

"I read it in a book," Dick confessed brazenly. "Just the same, it's so."

The next afternoon Larry reported to Brock, the head coach, at the gymnasium, offering himself for the try-outs.

"What have you done?" snapped the square-faced, broad-shouldered man-picker who was filling the Sheddon teams.

"Little High School baseball and foot-ball."

"What nlace in foot-hall?"

What place in foot-ball.

“End one year; right half the next two.”

The shrewd gray eyes of the coach swept him up and down.

“H’m; you were the bridge-scrap leader, weren’t you? Come in here and strip and let’s have a look at you.”

Larry took his “physical” without a flaw; heart action perfectly normal, weight within a pound and three ounces of what his age and height called for, chest expansion well above normal. In addition, his summer’s work on the railroad-building job in the Colorado mountains had made him as hard as nails.

“You’ll do,” said the coach, and sent him to the field.

If he had been twice as finical as he was, he couldn’t have found any fault with his reception. The memorable bridge scrap was still fresh in mind, and his subsequent refusal to turn out for athletics seemed to be forgotten on the spot. Naturally, he was cast at once for Freshman foot-ball; and after a hard-working hour in the field he went to the showers with his blood dancing and with the feeling that perhaps, after all, he had been overhasty in jumping to the conclusion that his family’s station in life had anything to do with the way the fellows were regarding him.

But the good effect of this first little dip into the bigger pool was all spoiled while he was dressing in the locker-room. The steel lockers were arranged in double rows, with dressing alleys between; and in the next row two of his fellow classmen, McKnight and Rogers, out of sight but, unhappily, not out of hearing, were discussing him.

“Well, the offish worm turned out, at last, didn’t he?” McKnight was saying. “That’s Dickie Maxwell’s doing, I’ll bet. Don’t see how Maxwell can room with a fellow like him.”

“He may be a grouch, but he certainly can play ‘feet-ball,’” Rogers replied. “I’d hate to have him on a team against me.”

“He’s the rough stuff”—this was McKnight again—“but that’s about what you’d expect. They say his dad’s a section-man, or something, on a railroad. Queer how such fellows break in.”

“Oh, cut that!” said the other voice, in a tone of marked disapproval. “Can’t you ever forget that you were born with gold fillings in your teeth, Knighty? My father was a house carpenter, if it comes to that.”

“But he didn’t stay a house carpenter,” was the quick retort. “Just now he’s the head of the biggest contracting firm in the State of Iowa.”

“That doesn’t cut any ice, Knighty. You’ve got to take a fellow for what he is; not for what his father is or was.”

“That is exactly what I’m doing with the ‘worm.’ Donovan may be all right on the team, but I’d hate to see myself rooming with him.”

Larry was fully dressed by now, and he didn’t wait to hear any more. And it was only human nature again that made him remember bitterly what McKnight had said, and forget the sensible and ameliorating Rogers’ replies.

“Things break all right for you this afternoon?” Dick asked that evening after he and Larry were hived in their room.

“Oh, good enough, I guess,” was the morose reply.

“Coachie didn’t turn you down, I don’t think!” chuckled the class recruiter. “Foot-ball squad, of course?”

“Freshman team,” said Larry, without looking up.

“Good! You’ll get inoculated with the real, old, simon-pure college spirit, after a bit, Larry.”

“Don’t you believe it for one single minute!” Larry flamed out hotly, in the remembrance of his wrongs. “I’m in, and I’ll stay in because I’m not a quitter. But I haven’t changed my mind a single atom!” And he repeated, for Dick’s benefit, the talk he had overheard in the locker-room; or rather, to be strictly accurate, he repeated McKnight’s part of it.

“You see, it’s just as I’ve been telling you,” he wound up in a burst of contemptuous passion. “They’re glad enough to use me as a promising bunch of bone and muscle, and that’s all. I’ll stick, for the sake of what Sheddon’s going to give me. But when it’s over, I’ll still be fighting on my side of the fence—

which isn't Ollie McKnight's side by a thousand miles!"

True to his determination, Larry "stuck," and after a few days of practice the Freshman team found that it had acquired a prize. Larry played with the same grim resolution that he put into his classroom work. Playing first at end, he was presently given his old High School position at half-back. For this position he was well qualified, having weight enough to buck the opposing line, combined with the speed necessary to circle the ends and slip through tackle.

It was in one of the preliminary practice games with the 'Varsity that he made his mark. As usually happens, the big fellows ran away with everything in sight, but after the game, just as Larry was leaving the locker-room, Brock, the head coach, stopped him.

"I've been watching your play this afternoon, Donovan," he said brusquely. "You have the makings of a good half-back in you. How do you stand in your classroom work?"

"All right, so far, I guess," Larry replied.

"We begin playing the schedule next week," Brock went on. "How would you like to go along as a sub? Of course, I couldn't put you in the Conference games, but there'll be others."

You'd have to be a college Freshman yourself to know how this hit Larry. It is only about once in an elephant's age that a raw Freshie is ever singled out as even a remotely possible substitute on the big team. But right there the growing bitterness got in its work. Once more he was being taken up for his brawn, and maybe a little for his brain, but not for anything else.

"I guess I'm not available," he said, and it came out a lot more bluntly than he had meant to make it.

"All right," returned the coach. "It's up to you, of course." And that ended it.

After this little talk with Brock, Larry played all the harder in the practice games—which was the way he was built. Back in the old life, which now seemed so far away, he had wiped engines in a locomotive roundhouse; and because it was a disagreeable, dirty job, he always did it just a little more than thoroughly. Here was another engine-wiping job, he told himself; and, since he had undertaken it,

he would go through with it.

Matters and things ran along this way until the foot-ball season was well started. There were class games on the home field, in one of which the Freshmen, clinching their success in the bridge scrap, literally wiped the earth with the Sophomores in a score of 47 to nothing, and public acclaim—what there was of it—gave the credit, or a good share of it, to a certain red-headed, big-boned half-back, whom nothing seemed to be able to stop.

Meanwhile the 'Varsity was playing around the circle, and having hard luck. Not once, as yet, had there been occasion to call out the “snake dance” and “night-shirt parade” with which Sheddon victories were celebrated. Through all this, Larry seemed to be the only member of the student body who remained unmoved. Day after day he plugged along, religiously giving his afternoons when his team was called out; but that was all.

“Larry, you’re a fright—simply a fright!” Dick stormed, one evening when the news had come of another defeat for the “Blacksmiths.” “How you can go on, just as if nothing was happening, when——”

“Might say nothing *is* happening—to me,” put in the offish one grumpily.

“Of course it’s happening to you!” Dick yelled. “Aren’t you a part of Old Sheddon, I’d like to know? Haven’t you any heart at all?”

Larry jumped up and tramped across to the window which, in daylight, looked out upon Engineering Lab., and gave a cornerwise glimpse at the athletic field. When he turned back to face Dick his lip was shaking.

“It *does* get me, Dick! I’ve fought it—fought it just as hard as I could. I know the fellows don’t like me, and a lot of ’em are calling me a ‘worm.’ Just the same, it’s breaking my heart to see Sheddon losing this way! I——” and he turned to the window again, quickly, this time, as if to hide something that he was ashamed to let Dick see.

In a second Dick was beside him.

“Larry, you old sorehead—you don’t know how much good it does me to hear you s-say that!” he stammered. And then, in a steadier voice: “You’re all wrong about the fellows not liking you: *they’ll like you just as much as you’ll let them.*”

There isn't a worth-while fellow in Old Sheddton that cares a hoot whether you're rich or poor. If you'd only loosen up——"

Larry did "loosen up" the next day when he was on the field with his team; and it was Oliver McKnight, son of any number of millions of Consolidated Steel, who applied the loosening twist. In an intermission, McKnight came and flung himself down beside Larry.

"Say, Donovan," he began abruptly, "you ought to push my face in. Four or five weeks ago I said some things about you to Cal Rogers that gave you a good right to hate me straight through the four years. Of course, I didn't know you were overhearing me; but that only makes it worse—looks as if I didn't have the nerve to say such things to your face. I was a mucker; and ever since, I've been trying to dig up sand enough to come and tell you so."

There was more than a drop of good, warm, Irish blood in Larry Donovan's veins, as his name would indicate, and for an impulsive half-second he wanted to throw his arms around the pampered son of Consolidated Steel. He didn't quite do that, but he did say what was fitting.

"That's all right, Mac—perfectly all right. You just forget it. I won't say that it didn't rub me the wrong way at the time, but——"

"Thanks, old scout," McKnight broke in. "I've had that on my chest until I'm sore as a boil. What chance do you think we're going to stand to lift the hoodoo to-morrow?"

The morrow was the day set for the "Blacksmiths" to play Rockford Poly on the home field. Rockford was not in the Conference, but it had a strong eleven, and even the best friends of the Sheddton team were saying that they hadn't a chance in the world. But at McKnight's question Larry scraped around and found a bit of the newly boosted college loyalty.

"We'll never say die till we're dead," he asserted. "We've got to get in with both feet and put a barrel of pep behind our fellows to-morrow. We simply can't *let* them lose!"

"Gorry! it sure sounds good to hear you talk that way. But we're lame, Donnie. Since Critchett and Johnson were laid out in that game with the down-State eleven, we've been sewed up. Brock's put in all of his subs, first and last, and

they've fizzled on him, one after another. Shebbie's been keeping in wire touch with the team, and he says we'll have to have new material here to-morrow for Brock to draw from."

It was here that Larry showed that he could be generous.

"You're the best all-round man on the Freshman, Mac, and here's hoping for you," he said; and he meant it.

"Not on your cabinet photo!" retorted the son of much money. "If it comes down to us, you're It. You'll be here on the field, won't you?"

"Sure thing!" said Larry; though, up to that heart-mellowing moment when McKnight had made the *amende honorable*, it had been anything in the world but a sure thing.

Dickie Maxwell saw a new light in his room-mate's eyes that night as they settled themselves on either side of the study table, but Dickie had a wise streak in him which came to the surface once in a while, and he forbore to say anything. But, just before they turned in, Larry had his say.

"You remember that bleat that I made about Ollie McKnight four or five weeks ago, Dick?" he asked.

"Yep."

"I guess I was pretty thin-skinned about that. Mac's all right. He came to me to-day and squared things like a man. I'm telling you because I beefed to you about what he said; but you're not to let it go any further."

The day of the Sheddon-Rockford game was all that could be desired, weather-wise. A light frost during the night—not enough to hurt the field—put a keen tang in the air: but the sun was like the one in Alice in Wonderland—shining with all its might. A "pep" meeting of the student body had been held the night before, and when the game was called there wasn't a vacant seat on the bleachers.

The Rockford team, big fellows, to a man, showed up in fine form, and it was evident from the kick-off that it was to be a fight for blood. Brock's men, playing for the first time in the season on their home field, and with all Sheddon present to shout encouragement, did their best; but it wasn't quite good enough

present to shout encouragement, did their best, but it wasn't quite good enough. At the end of the second quarter the score stood 7 to nothing in favor of the visitors, Rockford having pushed the ball over for a touch-down and kicked goal—at which the trainload of rooters who had come over from Rockford were yelling their heads off.

“Our offense is pitiful!” Larry told Dick in the intermission. “Shubrick acts as if he'd been crippled, and he's the only back that's any good. Brock ought to take him out.”

As he spoke, one of the subs came running up to them, breathless with excitement.

“Donovan!” he panted, “coach says get on your uniform, quick! He's going to put you in Shubrick's place next half!”

For a moment Larry stood as if dazed. But the next instant he was racing for the gymnasium with Dick at his heels.

While Larry fairly jumped from his “civies” into his foot-ball togs, Dick talked excitedly. It was a chance—biggest chance that had ever been given a Sheddon Freshman—Larry could put it through—he *must* put it through; and things like that.

“I'll be found trying,” was all Larry said; but there was a “do-or-die” grin to go with the promise as he jerked his belt tight, grabbed up his headgear, and started for the field on a run.

A moment later he was reporting to the coach. The members of the team were stripping their sweaters preparatory to the dash on the field for the second half.

“I'm not going to start you, Donovan,” said the coach, putting an arm across Larry's shoulders. “You sit on the bench with me and I'll send you in when you're needed.”

Sitting quietly beside the coach, Larry looked on while Rockford took the ball and, by superior weight and superb interference, pushed it over for another touch-down just as the third quarter ended. The goal was missed, and with just fifteen short minutes left to play, the score stood Rockford 13, Sheddon nothing.

Suddenly Brock gripped Larry's arm.

“Now’s the time. You take Shubrick’s place. Remember to report to the referee. Then, after the first play, tell Clark to run 43—with you back—that’s you, just outside tackle on the right; and then to call you back on the other side and run 44—that’s off tackle on the other side. Tell him to keep on running you as long as you can gain. You’re our only chance, boy!—and I believe you’ll pull us out of the hole!”

Larry didn’t speak; he merely grinned and dashed on the field with his fists clenched so tight that his finger-nails were white, and with his teeth set.

“Donovan for Shubrick at right half!” he snapped at the referee. “Shubrick out!” shouted the referee; and a moment later blew his whistle for the resumption of play.

Sheddon had received the kick-off on the thirty-yard line. On the first down, Shubrick had been thrown for a loss. Clark, Sheddon’s quarter, did not wait for the coach’s instructions. He had seen Larry play and knew his power. As soon as Larry was in position, Clark barked his signal: “Formation right! Donovan back! 32—43—59!” The ball came to Larry on a direct pass from the center. Starting toward opponent’s tackle, he swerved suddenly to the right and found his hole just inside of the end. Rockford’s full-back got him, but he had gained five yards.

“Good boy, Larry!” yelled Dugald, the big Sheddon captain, helping him to his feet. “Do it again!”

“Watch me!” Larry grinned, jumping back to his position.

And, sure enough, he did do it again, on the same play, only this time for seven yards and a first down. By this time the Sheddon bleachers were beginning to realize that something was happening. There had been little cause for joy in that section of the stands during the first half. But now business was certainly picking up.

“Who’s the new man?” the cheer leader called to the coach.

“Donovan!” the coach shouted back; and then the cheer leader turned to the stands and held up his hands.

“Everybody get into it!” he yelled. “Fifteen for Donovan!” and the fifteen might

have been heard in the next county.

Larry heard them just as he got the ball for the straight third time. The opposing end had crowded in close to stop him, so Larry simply ran around him, taking the ball to Rockford's ten-yard line, where Rockford's quarter-back brought him down by a beautiful diving tackle.

Immediately Rockford's coach sent in several substitutes in an attempt to stem the tide and prevent a score. The Rockford captain was walking up and down, slapping his linemen on the back, and urging them to "get low," while the Rockford bleachers answered Sheddon's chant of "Touch-down, Sheddon! Touch-down, Sheddon!" with a prayer to "Hold 'em, Rockford! Hold 'em, Rockford!"

Sheddon's full-back shot into the line for a scant yard. He tried again, but could add only two more. Two more downs to make seven yards and a touch-down. Sheddon's rooters stood up. Something was wrong. First came cries from individuals: "Give it to Donovan!" Then the stands roared out, "Give it to Donovan!"

Rockford knew then that it was to be given to Donovan, and quickly set themselves to stop him. This time the signal was for a mass on left tackle. But Larry saw at a glance, as the ball came into his hands, that the Rockford players were bunched just where the play should go ... and in the same glance he saw that there was a hole through right guard. Leaving his interference, he shot through the hole, dodged the full-back, and dived across the goal line.

Dugald kicked goal, while the Sheddon stands rang with the name of Donovan, and the Sheddon players patted him on the back and called him "Good old Larry!" The score was now 13 to 7, and Sheddon could win with another touch-down and goal.

"How much time to play?" Dugald asked, as Sheddon lined up to receive the kick-off—Rockford having chosen to kick.

"Ten minutes!" answered the timekeeper.

"Come on, fellows—we can do it!" Dugald cried; and the team answered him in bellowing unison, Larry's voice ringing out with a new-found happiness: "Sure we can do it! Let's go!"

But it was not so easy, this time. Rockford began to watch Larry, and every time he took the ball it seemed as if the whole Rockford team was on top of him. But steadily Sheddon pushed the ball down to Rockford's fifteen-yard line, only to lose it on a fumble. Rockford kicked out of danger, and Sheddon again started the march to victory. Then the timekeeper announced four minutes to play—and the goal was sixty yards away!

Dugald came out of the line and spoke low to Larry.

"Larry, you're the only one who can gain. Can you stand to take it every time?"

"Give it to me!" Larry answered, gritting his teeth.

Eight straight times the ball came to him, and [eight straight times he carried it toward Rockford's goal](#). He followed no signals—merely took the ball and bucked, dodged, fought his way forward. Rockford knew he was coming, but they came to know that they could not stop him. The bleachers were now giving forth a continuous roar; and when, on the eighth try, Larry carried the ball over for Sheddon's second touch-down, he knew, as every man on the field knew, that he had won for Sheddon—for Dugald made the victory an assured fact by kicking goal, thus making the final score 14–13.

It was from no lack of college spirit that Larry Donovan did not turn out that night to join in the song-singing, cheer-bellowing "snake dance" wherewith Sheddon celebrated its victory. A bruised ankle—that he didn't know was lamed until the game was over—kept him in his room, and it was here that Dick found him when the long, noisy parade wriggled its way back to the campus after having shouted itself hoarse all over town.

"How's the old foot-knuckle by now?—hurt much?" inquired the celebrator, peeling off the white night-shirt which was the regalia for the parade.

"Nothing to weep about," said Larry. "It'll be all right in a day or so. Parade over?"

"Fellows were just coming across the campus when I skipped out. Going to disband at the gym., I guess," he added, stepping to the window to look out. Then: "No, by jinks! They're coming this way: Larry, you old snipe, they're coming for you!"

Pallid panic leaped into the eyes of the temporarily crippled substitute half-back.

“Oh, for pity’s sake, Dick—can’t you stop ’em?” he gasped.

But it was too late to stop them. Already the white-robed mob was filling the street in front of Mrs. Grant’s. “Donovan! Donovan!” it yelled; and Larry, with Dick to help him, had to hobble to the window, which Dick threw open.

They didn’t demand a speech; all they wanted was to see him. When he waved awkwardly to the surging mass, a roar broke forth. Then, with the cheer leader to time it, they gave him the Sheddon series.

When the crowd broke up, Dick led the cripple back to his chair, and for quite some little time Larry sat with his head in his hands, staring down at an open book which might have been printed in Sanskrit for all that the words in it meant to him. Dick waited as long as he thought he ought to. Then he said: “How about that ‘workingman’ class line now, Larry?”

Larry looked up, and the good gray eyes were suspiciously bright.

“They’ve broken it down for me, individually, Dick; but it’s here, just the same—you know it is. I had a bit of good luck this afternoon, and for that they’ve taken me in. But there are lots of others who won’t be taken in; little Purdick, and Jungman, and dozens that I could name.”

“Well?” said Dick, as one who would say, “What are you going to do about it?”

“I’ll tell you what I’m going to do, Dick,” Larry shot back, much as if he had read Dick’s unspoken question; “I’m going to make it my job to break the combination—or as much of it as can be broken from my side of the fence. Old Sheddon ought to be one and indivisible, all through the year, just as it is on the day of a foot-ball victory. I’m going to do what one fellow can to make it so.”

Dickie Maxwell started to gasp, but caught himself in good time. “That’s the right old stuff!” he chanted heartily. “Go to it, old scout, and when the pinches come, I’ll be there to help.”

Yet, later, it was Larry who was to do the helping—but that does not belong to the story of the Offish Worm.

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### III

## THE LAME DOGS

Old Sheddon, calling itself pretty strictly an engineering school, is peculiar in one respect: it has no dormitories on its campus. Its two thousand (more or less) undergraduates live in clubs, fraternity houses, and with the neighbors. Practically everybody in the college town takes roomers and boarders, and among these private houses the “Man-o’-War” was popular for two reasons: Mrs. Grant was a most motherly home body; and her pies were, as Dickie Maxwell put it, “simply out of sight.”

Dick and Larry had the largest of the upstairs rooms, with two windows on the side toward the street and the campus. While the college year was still in its infancy, it began to be remarked that these windows were seldom dark in the evening. Which meant that at least one of the room’s occupants knew what he wanted and was going stubbornly after it.

“Great Peter!” Dick complained, one evening after the Thanksgiving game had closed the foot-ball season, “aren’t you ever going to take any time off at all, Larry? See here; I’ve got an ‘invite’ to a blowout at the Omeg house to-night, and it includes you. Cut out the studious stuff for a change and surprise yourself by coming along to mix and mingle for an hour or so.”

“Nix on the social stuff,” grumbled the big, red-headed fellow at the study table; “I’ve got two English themes to write.”

“Which means that you don’t want to go,” Dick charged discontentedly.

“All right; you can put it that way, if you like. You know what I think about the frats.”

“I know you’re a howling crank about ’em. You haven’t a single argument against ’em that’ll hold water.”

“Sure I have. But I haven’t time to trot them out for you now. Got these themes to chew on, and after that——”

“Yes; and after that, your lame dogs will begin to string in. You’ve got the

wrong slant on the cripples, Larry; the faculty has the right one. If a fellow can't keep up with the parade, out he goes. And he ought to go."

"I can't see it that way—not for the kind of fellows who have taken to dropping in here. They want to stay in college—want to make good. And most of 'em only need a little boosting and jacking up."

"Well," said Dick, hustling into his good clothes, "I'm mighty glad I don't have to look at it through your spectacles. I don't want to be a pack-mule before my time."

When he was left alone, Larry dug for the themes. English was his "black beast," as a Frenchman would put it, and he had to work like a Turk for it—that is, if Turks ever do work. In his time—which was only yesterday—managers of the nation's great industries were beginning to say that the technical colleges were paying too little attention to English; that they were turning out engineers who couldn't write an ordinary, every-day business letter. Hence the technicals, Old Sheddons among them, were stressing the English course.

Larry's home surroundings hadn't been particularly conducive to the growth of literary English. In the Donovan home "ain't" and "he don't" and "might of" had their places at the fireside, along with split infinitives, plural verbs in the wrong places, "let him and I," telephone answers like "this is him," and a lot of other expressions that the grammar books call "colloquialisms." So he had to labor pretty heavily in "English I."

But in Mathematics it was exactly the other way around. Here the big, athletic Freshman soon became known as a "shark," and a good-natured "shark" is an institution not to be undervalued in any college. Before the foot-ball season closed, Larry was acquiring a small following of "lame dogs"; fellows who had to be helped over the stile, if they were going to get over at all; hence, Dickie Maxwell's wail about pack-mules and such.

Down underneath the good-nature which prompted these helpings, Larry had a sort of ill-defined motive which was more or less to his credit. As a son of a workingman he had entered college with the feeling that he was going to be looked down upon, and certain fellows with more money than sense had either thoughtlessly or maliciously helped the feeling to grow. But in the better part of him, Larry was too square and man-sized to become that bitterest of all things, the college grouch, so he had begun to open out a bit on the side of the helpings,

this though he was still hanging on to the idea that between the son of an ex-locomotive engineer and, let us say, a member of the richest Greek-Letter fraternity, there was a gulf fixed, great and impassable.

Dick had been gone a full hour, and the second of the English themes was well on its way to completion when the door opened and little Purdick slid in. At first sight, anybody would have said that Charles Purdick had certainly missed the mark by a broad mile in choosing an engineering course. Undersized, with a thin, eager face and pale-blue, tired eyes, he looked more like a candidate for a sanitarium than anything else.

“Hello, old scout!” said Larry in a cheerful growl. “Thought maybe you’d be showing up. Drag out that easy-chair and flop. Had a tough day?”

The undersized one tried to laugh his weariness off.

“If you ever have to work any part of your way through, don’t you take a restaurant for it,” he advised; adding, “I don’t mind waiting on table and having to refuse the tips—I’m sort o’ case-hardened to that now. But the dish-washing sure does get next to me.”

“I’ll bet,” said Larry. “At home I was lucky; have a sister two years younger than I am. But that’s all that saved me. Stuck on the trig, again?”

“I’m always stuck on the trig. If I didn’t love machinery so well, I’d think I’d made the mistake of my life in coming to Sheddon. Yet the High School Math. didn’t bother me so much.”

“Pull up your chair and let’s have a crack at it,” said Larry. “I looked it over just after supper, and it isn’t so awfully rocky, this time.”

With the trigonometry lesson but fairly begun, another of the lame ones dropped in; then a third and fourth. Larry didn’t “baby” the mental mendicants—not any; on the contrary, with the exception of little Purdick, he was gruffly sarcastic with them, calling them cripples, and demanding to know how long it was going to be before they’d throw the crutches away. It was the wise thing to do, but Larry didn’t do it because he was wise; it was chiefly impatience with a bunch of fellows the majority of whom hadn’t made the most of their preparatory advantages while they had them.

Purdick, the first to come, was the last to go. After the others had dropped out one by one, he told Larry why he was lingering.

“You’ve been rattling good to me, Donovan, and there’s something I ought to tell you,” was the way he began the thing that had to be said.

“All right; spill it,” said Larry.

“This fellow Underhill, in your section; you had a racket with him after the football game with Rockford Poly, didn’t you?”

“Not much of a racket. He was standing, with a bunch of his own kind, on the gym. steps as I came from the showers, and was busy black-listing the coach for having put me in: said it was a disgrace to Sheddton to use a ‘mucker’ on the ‘Varsity, and then chucked in some things about my home folks that I don’t take from anybody.”

“Did you hit him?”

“No; I tried it, but the others got between. Then I guess I did a fool thing. Underhill’s father is the head of a firm of railroad contractors. A couple of years back this firm had a job on our home railroad, and it did so much crooked work that the contract had to be cancelled. Dick told me about this one day when Underhill had gone out of his way to cold-shoulder me.”

“And you slammed that in Undy’s face?”

Larry nodded. “I was hot, and didn’t have any better sense.”

Little Purdick wriggled uneasily in his chair.

“It’s snitching, in a way, I suppose, but I’ve got to tell you, Donnie. Underhill and his bunch eat at the restaurant, pretty often. They talk before me just as if I wasn’t there—as I guess they would before any ‘menial.’ Underhill’s got it in for you. I overheard him tell the other fellows of his crowd that he was going to make Sheddton too hot to hold you; he said the university wasn’t big enough to hold you and him at the same time.”

“That was just bunk,” said Larry contemptuously.

“I don’t know,” Purdick returned slowly. “He’s got all the money there is in the

world; and a spender always gets a crowd around him—of the kind that'll do his dirty work for him.”

“How come you know so much about it, Purdy?”

“It's up to me to know. This is my second year in Sheddon. I was here last year and flunked out—had to take the work over again. I guess I'm not much good, anyway.”

Larry had his own opinion about that. What he suspected was that Purdick had had to do so much outside work for the money-earning that he hadn't had time, or the needed energy, for study—which was the fact.

While Larry was arriving at the fact, Purdick got up to go. But at the door he turned, and his face was white and the hand on the door-knob was shaking.

“Donovan, I hope you'll do that fellow up, cold!” he snapped, with his pale eyes ablaze.

“Ump!” said Larry. Then: “Why the sudden burst of fury?”

“You know, perfectly well. He and his kind are always putting you and me and our kind to the wall—squeezing the life out of the working classes. They got my father between the millstones and ground him till he died! But our time's coming; and when it does come—look out!”

“Here, you firebrand—come back here!” Larry called; but the door had slammed and the lame dog was gone.

For some little time after Purdick had left him, Larry sat at the table with his square chin propped in his cupped hands. Class distinctions, as between rich and poor, had never troubled him very much in his home life. There hadn't been any hard-and-fast line drawn in the home High School, or, if there had been, it was fellows like himself—sons of workingmen—who drew it.

Naturally, while he was working spare time in the railroad shop and roundhouse, he had heard more or less talk about labor and capital, and about the battle that would one day be fought to a finish between the two; but most of this had gone in one ear and out the other. Dick Maxwell's father, who, besides being general manager of the railroad, was a fairly wealthy mine owner, was the only “capitalist” he had ever known, and there was certainly no fault to be found with

capitalist he had ever known, and there was certainly no fault to be found with him.

But the Underhill tribe—new-crop rich, somebody had called them—was another matter. Of course, Bryant Underhill, Sheddon Freshman, wasn't responsible for what his father did; but he was evidently willing to have sins enough of his own to answer for.

Then, on the other side, here was little Purdick, type of the down-trodden; spiteful and vindictive; the stuff out of which anarchists are made. Larry drew a long breath. Even in this early stage of it, college life was opening up some pretty large fields.

As to the Underhill threat—that he, Larry Donovan, was to be forced to leave Sheddon—Larry dismissed this promptly. Quite likely Underhill, helped by his own set, might try to start something; but, if so, he wouldn't get anywhere with it.

That was the way Larry left it when he went to bed that night; and by morning he had forgotten the threat. But the morning ushered in a day to be marked in the calendar with a letter in charcoal black; a day in which everything seemed to go wrong end to.

It began in "Practical Mechanics." In Sheddon three of the engineering courses—Electrical, Mechanical and Civil—include so many hours a week of shop work. At that moment Larry's section was in the blacksmith's shop; fifty students at fifty forges doing actual blacksmithing, under an instructor who was himself a skilled workman.

Having grown up with tools and forges and machinery, Larry thought of the shop work as an easy walk-over, and so it had been up to this day of helpless botchings. But now he couldn't seem to get anything right. The hour was given to welding, and the metal simply wouldn't weld. Larry cleaned his fire again and again; put it out once and built it over afresh; and still he made nothing but botches.

"You'll have to do better than this, Donovan," warned the instructor, at the close of the futile hour. Then he added something that wasn't quite deserved. "You fellows who have had a bit of outside shop experience mustn't think you know it all. I can't give you anything better than a cipher on this morning's work."

With this for a send-off it wasn't very strange that the entire day went wrong. Larry blew up in English, went to pieces in Physics, made a mess of his drawing hour, and even stumbled in Math.—in the very lesson in which he had successfully coached his “lame dogs.”

“This sure has been one beautiful day!” he growled to Dick, when they were settled in their room for the evening. “I’ve gone bunk on everything I’ve touched!”

“Oh, that’s nothing,” said Dick easily. “Everybody has a day like that once in a while. You just got up on the wrong side of the bed this morning; that’s all.”

Very sensibly, Larry tried to let it go at that; but, oddly enough, it refused to “go.” Day after day the failures continued, usually beginning with the shop work and then spreading, like a contagious disease, to everything else. In the foundry his flasks “fell down,” and the castings came out looking as if a dog had gnawed them. In the pattern shop, plane-irons that he had whetted to a razor-edge nicked and spoiled the job. In the machine shop it was even worse; every machine tool he tried to use bucked on him and ruined something.

Of course, there were consequences—mighty unpleasant ones. With poor markings, or what you might call no markings, he was called before the chief of the shop staff, warned once that he would have to pull his standing up, warned a second time, and then, one morning, a faculty notice came. He was falling below passing grades in everything but Mathematics. If he couldn't do better, the faculty would reluctantly be obliged to conclude that he hadn't sufficient preparation for a college course.

“I don't know what is the matter with me,” he confessed to Dick on the day when the faculty notice came. “I’m just all shot to pieces. Why, Dick, I don't know myself any more! Things that used to come as easy as rolling off a log stump me as if I'd never heard of them before.”

“Not sick, are you?” Dick queried sympathetically.

“Only in my fool head and hands. I break everything I touch; and when I get a question in class, I simply blow up. I don't blame the professors. Anybody would think I was solid ivory from the neck up!”

Dick shook his head. “I can't understand it any better than you can, Larry. But

there's a reason, if you could find it. You're not worrying about anything, are you?"

"Home matters, you mean? There's nothing to worry about at home. No; my grief is right here, with myself." Then, with a look of wretchedness that was pretty foreign to the good, wide-set eyes: "It'll break my heart, Dick, if I have to flunk out. And I'm headed straight for it now, sure as a gun!"

Dickie Maxwell got up and began to walk the floor with his hands in his pockets. Finally he said: "Say, Larry; how much do you know about Psychology?"

Larry grunted. "Nothing; except that I don't take much stock in it. Why?"

"I've been messing in it a little lately. There's a lot of the stuff that I don't understand, but there are some things that I do. For instance, if you get off on the wrong foot in a sprint, the wrongness is likely to stick to you through the whole race."

"Everybody knows that much," Larry admitted. "But what has that got to do with my 'busting'?"

"I was just coming to that. If you blow up in something in the morning, you're likely to go on blowing up all day."

"All right; that's exactly what I do."

"Your section has shop work in the mornings, doesn't it?"

"Yes."

"And it's in the shops that you begin to go bad, isn't it?"

"For two solid weeks I've been breaking or spoiling everything I've touched."

"There you are. With such a send-off, old Doctor Psychology would say that, unless you should fetch yourself up with a round turn, you'd be likely to go on foozling all day. And that's what you do."

"You've said it. But that doesn't get me anywhere."

"Wait: we've chased it back to the shop work. Now let's take another tack. Have

you got any 'lame dogs' in the shops—fellows that follow you around and try to get helped?”

“Yes, one; fellow named Crawford. He is sticking to me yet, though goodness knows there isn't any reason why he should.”

“Hah!” said Dick, dropping into a chair. “Snitty Crawford, eh? I don't much like that big fumbler, Larry.”

“I don't either. But he's such a miserable dub in Prac. Mechan., that I felt as though somebody ought to give him a boost.”

“Know him any, outside of the class work?”

Larry shook his head, and Dick went on:

“It just so happens that I do. He's the worst sort that ever gets into college; a fawner on some fellow with more money than brains. Off the campus he's Bry Underhill's shadow.”

Larry jumped as if some one had slapped him. In a flash little Purdick's warning, long since forgotten, came back to him—“a spender always gets a crowd around him—of the kind that'll do his dirty work for him.” Could it be possible——

“Say, Dick,” he broke out savagely; “do you suppose anybody could have been framing me up to ‘bust’ on this shop work, right along?”

“Why—if you had an enemy that hated you hard enough: I'll admit that's what I had in mind, Larry; but it can't be. A fellow who would do such a thing as that couldn't stay twenty-four hours in Old Sheddon.”

“Couldn't he?” Larry said; but that is all he did say. And when Dick would have gone on to talk more about the present-moment sad state of affairs, the “shark” stuck his nose in a book and seemed to have lost all interest in the subject of his critical standing—or his no-standing—in the Registrar's records.

But the next morning, in the shop-work period, he was as sharp-eyed as a cornered rat. His job—“exercise,” they called it—that morning was to turn a piece of round shafting to fit the hole in a pulley. Lathe work was one of the things he had learned fairly well in the old home railroad shop, and he ran the

roughing chip in a few minutes. Setting the tool for the finishing chip, he stopped the lathe and turned to the bench behind him to try the gauge in the pulley-hole. As he did so, somebody passed between him and his lathe, and he looked up quickly. It was Crawford.

That was enough to make him extra cautious. Before starting the lathe again he examined the reading of the micrometer scale on the tool-rest. The mischief had been done. The tool had been advanced, just the least little fraction in the world, but it was enough. If he had let the tool run without resetting, the piece of work would have been spoiled.

With this for a starter, he not only kept his eye on Crawford during the entire period; he also put the fellow next to him on the watch. Three separate times the “lame dog” set traps for him into which he would have blundered helplessly if he hadn’t been forewarned. Once, in a screw-cutting exercise, the gears were changed on his lathe, and it had been done so deftly that he wouldn’t have believed it if the gears themselves hadn’t proved it. Again, it was a sly loosening of the tail-stock clamp, which would have let the work fall out when the lathe was started. Lastly, it was a “cut-in” on the wiring of the lathe motor, which would probably have burned out the motor if the current had been switched on.

Larry, seething inwardly like a pot ready to boil over, corrected the sabotage in each case before any harm was done, held on grimly, and said nothing. Before the shop period was over, the psychological reaction had begun to set in. Now that he knew that the fault wasn’t his own; hadn’t been his own at all; he was able to take a fresh grip upon himself. Gorman, the shop instructor, gave him the final little upward boost when he came around to examine and stamp the work of the period.

“Now, that is something like it, Donovan,” he said, in warm approval. “Glad to see that you’re getting back to your old form. You get ‘tens’ all around, this time. Keep it up and you’ll work off some of the discredits you’ve been earning.”

It was on the tip of Larry’s tongue to tell the instructor the real reason for the discredits, but again he held himself in. The matter, as it stood, lay between himself and Crawford—and possibly Underhill—and he set his teeth upon a frowning resolve to make the plotters answer to him and not to the faculty.

With the mystery of his stumblings thus completely solved, he went to his other

assignments for the day with the handicap lifted. Straight “A’s” were his grades for that day, and his various instructors marveled as much over his sudden “come-back” as they had over his equally sudden slump.

It was at the close of the gymnasium half-hour, late in the afternoon, that he caught Crawford. The spoiler of records was on his way to his room, which was in a street reached most easily by cutting across a field lying back of the campus. Larry tried to keep cool; meant to keep perfectly cool; but his hand shook a little when he laid it on Crawford’s shoulder. “I’ll walk a piece with you,” was all he permitted himself to say; and as if some inner sense was telling him that something was about to happen, the big-bodied, hulking culprit kept step in silence.

After they had crossed the stile into the field, and were thus off the university grounds, Larry wheeled short upon the sham “lame dog.”

“You’ve been doing me dirt, Crawford, and this is payday,” he snapped, trying to say it calmly. [“Will you peel your coat?”](#)



[“Will you peel your coat?”](#)

A frenzied outburst of denial was the answer to this. Like any fellow who would stoop to the things he had been doing, Crawford was a shrinking coward at heart; this though he would have tipped the scale at twelve or fifteen pounds more than Larry.

“Oh, good gosh!—hold on—somebody’s been lying to you!” he protested. “I \_\_\_\_\_”

“Cut it out,” said Larry. “I caught you at it in the shop this morning, and I’ve got Dowling for a witness. You did everything you could think of to make me get a goose-egg marking, and you’ve been doing it right along for two weeks. What did you put into my fire in the blacksmith shop so that I couldn’t make a weld? Tell the truth!”

Crawford hung his head. “It was only a joke,” he mumbled. “I just put a li’l pinch of sulphur in the fire, to see what you’d do.”

“A joke, was it? And I suppose it was a joke to knock my flasks down in the

foundry, and to nick my planes and chisels on the pattern bench. Now, one question more: who put you up to all this?"

For some little while Crawford wouldn't answer this direct question, filling the air with shrill protestations of his innocence of any malicious motive, and the like. But Larry pinned him down savagely.

"Out with it! I want to know whom you were working for."

It came out at last—because it had to.

"Bry Underhill—and some of the other fellows—said you were a 'mucker' and oughtn't to be allowed to stay," was the final hang-dog admission.

"So much for that part of it," said Larry grittingly. "Now, I'm going to give you your choice. As I said, I've got a witness to what you did to me in the shop to-day. I can go before the faculty and get you canned. It's up to you to say whether you'll take that, or pull off your coat right here and stand up to me like the man you'll never be."

By this time Crawford was snarling—not like a man, but more like a trapped fox.

"If you make me fight, I—I'll kill you!" he stormed; but he did take his coat off and fling it aside.

Then and there, in the dusk of the evening in Farmer Holdsworth's stubble field, was staged the historic battle of the year. It is said that a cornered coward can always fight if he is driven to it, and Crawford made the saying good, hurling himself upon Larry in a mad-bull rush that was meant to end in a clinch in which his superior weight would give him the advantage. But when the clinch arrived, Larry was not there; there was nothing there but a stiff forearm with a fist at the end of it against which Crawford pushed his right eye vigorously.

In the next rush it was his nose with which he endeavored to push the hard fist aside. Larry hadn't much "science," but it doesn't ask for any great amount of skill to let a frenzied maniac beat himself silly if he is sufficiently bent upon doing it. One thorough and rather prolonged round settled it. At the end of the one-sided boxing match Crawford was down, and either couldn't or wouldn't get up; could—or would—do nothing but gasp out that he had enough.

Larry did the decent thing—and did it as reluctantly as he ever did anything in his life—hailed the thrashed coward to his feet, took him across the field to his boarding-house, helped him get rid of such of the battle marks as the bath-room appliances could remove. All this in grimmest silence. But as he was leaving he claimed the victor's privilege of having the last word.

“You go to the fellow whose boots you’ve been licking and tell him what you got from the ‘mucker.’ And when you do it, you may tell him from me that he can have the same, or a little better, any time he’s man enough to ask for it. And one other thing, Crawford. You stay out from under my feet from this time on. If you don’t, you’ll get it again.”

One of the problems that has never been satisfactorily solved, and perhaps never will be, is how the news of a thing done in privacy gets wings of the wind to scatter it abroad. Larry thought that the brief and brittle mix-up, staged in the growing dusk in Farmer Holdsworth's wheat field, had been wholly without witnesses. But that same evening, after supper, Dickie Maxwell leered knowingly at him across the study table.

“So you chased up my little hint and whaled the daylights out of Snitty Crawford, did you?” he laughed.

Larry glanced up frowning.

“Who told you anything about that?” he demanded.

“Gee! everybody knows,” Dick crowed. “I don’t know who started the little news item on its rounds. But you ought to have the thanks of every decent fellow in Sheddon. Crumb-catchers like Snitty make me sick.”

Larry nodded soberly.

“Yes, Crawford got his; but, after all, he was only a poor tool in Underhill's hands. It runs in my mind, Dick, that I'm still in debt—to Underhill and the whole money-rotten gang that he runs with. After the foot-ball game I made up my mind that I wasn't going to draw any more rich-and-poor lines, or let them be drawn against me; that I'd stand for Old Sheddon as a whole. But if these gambling, betting, money-spenders want a fight, they can have it. It's the old battle, and I guess it's got to be fought out—here and everywhere else.”

“That's all right,” Dick said. “But you've got to be sure and win it.”

For a little while Dick was silent. When he spoke again it was to say: "I suppose my father is what you'd call a rich man. Does that mean that you're against us all, Larry?"

"Not against you, Dick; but I've got to stand with my kind. And that brings on more talk. In a way, I'm little better than Crawford; he's a hanger-on of the rich fellows, and I'm a pensioner on your father. I know he has consented to call the money he is advancing me a loan, but after what's happened I can't take it any more. I've got to be consistent. I can't fight on both sides of the fence at the same time."

"*Larry!*" Dick exclaimed.

"I know. It sounds ungrateful, and all that; but I've made up my mind—made it up this morning. Prof. Zippert will get me odd jobs of tutoring in Math. if I want them, and will put in a good word for me with Waddell and Gorman, so I can help out in the shops. I may have to live cheaper than I can here at Mrs. Grant's; but that's all right."

"You—you'd break with me, Larry?"

Larry Donovan looked straight into his room-mate's eyes.

"Never, Dick; not until you want me to. But I can't hold with the hare and run with the hounds. You'll have your friends, and maybe I'll have mine. And they won't be the same."

Dickie Maxwell threw his head back and laughed—because it was the saving thing for him to do, just then.

"You're crazy, Larry; as crazy as a loon! But I'll not lay it up against you. Tomorrow, after you've cooled down a bit from this run-in with Snitty Crawford, you'll see things in a better light. You see, I know you of old."

But college brings out a good many things that don't envision themselves in a High School course; and Dick Maxwell had yet to learn how stubborn a mule—and how loyal a friend—Larry Donovan could be in a time of trial.

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## IV

### DICK'S DROP-OUT

"You've made up your mind then, have you, Dick?"

Larry Donovan had his small drawing-board on the study table and was working out a tangled problem in "projections." Dick Maxwell had just tossed his books aside and was walking the floor, hands in pockets; his habit when there was anything to be argued about.

"I don't know why I shouldn't fall all over myself to jump at the chance," he returned. "Dad was a member of the Omegas, right here in Old Sheddton, and, as I've said, they've given me a bid. I think it's mighty nice of the fellows." Then: "I didn't expect you'd give me the glad hand. You've been sort of prejudiced against the frats from the first, haven't you?"

"Maybe some of it *is* prejudice," Larry admitted, wanting to be perfectly fair; "but to me the whole fraternity idea seems to take a wrong shoot. If any place in the world ought to be democratic it's a college. When little bunches of the fellows pull off to one side and shut out the rest ... well, that's bad enough; but when, on top of that, they try to run things——"

"The fraternities don't try to run anything but themselves," Dick defended. "That's only your idea, Larry."

This was entirely true. When we look through the battered old telescope called Life, we see mostly what we are expecting to see; and with his workingman's eye Larry wasn't expecting to see much good in anything as exclusive as a fraternity.

"Maybe they don't openly try to run things," he countered. "But they stand together and hold themselves as being a lot better than us fellows on the outside. You know they do."

"Well," said Dick, grinning, "they get the pick of the fellows from each incoming class, or try to: why shouldn't they be better than the leavings?"

Larry's answering grin was perfectly good-tempered. They had threshed this

matter out a good many times in the past.

“Present company excepted, I take it,” he put in, adding: “I’m one of the ‘leavings,’ you know.”

Dick sat down, chuckling delightedly.

“I just wanted to see how you’d take that,” he explained. “You have the one big necessary qualification—angelic humility. You’ll do, all right.”

“Do for what?”

Dick got up and put an arm across Larry’s shoulders.

“You hump-backed old greasy grind!” he chanted; “did you swallow the notion that I was going to duck out and leave you to wallow all alone in the mire of your own splendiferous conceit? It’s a dead secret yet, but I’m allowed to whisper it to you. You’re due to get a bid to the Omegas yourself!”

For a little time Larry merely stared down at the demonstration drawing he was making and said nothing. For a fellow with a good bit of Celtic blood in his veins, he was a trifle slow in grasping the full significance of a thing. As we have seen, Dick’s charge that he was prejudiced against the Greek-Letter fraternities was quite true. Moreover, he believed that his argument against them was sound: that they did make for a drawing apart and the formation of small cliques. And beyond this, there was that workingman’s grudge. If the fraternities were not all made up of the sons of rich men and money-spenders, the one or two that he knew most about seemed to lean that way; and, quite as certainly, some of their members looked down as “riff-raff” upon the “leavings,” which, in Old Sheddon, as in many other universities and colleges, comprised a good half or more of the student body.

On the other hand ... well, up to that moment Larry hadn’t been admitting that there was any “other hand” worth mentioning; had fully and firmly decided that there couldn’t be—for him. Yet it takes a pretty strong resolution to be able to hold out when common old human vanity is appealed to. In a sort of flashlight picture Larry saw himself as one of the chosen ones, ensconced in the big, comfortable, not to say luxurious, frat house just across the street from the main entrance to the campus; still Dick’s loyal running mate and chum, and making good his standing with the other fellows in the house by winning an “S” for

himself and the brotherhood in athletics.

What if, after all, his ideas about the rich and poor distinctions were all wrong? It certainly looked that way when the exclusive Omegas were intending to give *him* a bid. So his protest, when he made it, was really no protest at all.

“If they should take me in, it would be entirely on your account, Dick; and I couldn’t stand for that.”

“Not by a thousand parasangs! Those things go by secret ballot; Carey Lansing explained all that. I had nothing to do with it—couldn’t have, because I’m only a ‘pledge’ myself.”

“Well, then, there’s the money. I’m a lot too poor to hold up my end with that bunch.”

Dick sat down and squared himself aggressively.

“Now, see here; let’s fight that out, once for all,” he argued. “Before we left home, my father, acting for the railroad company, offered to pay your way through college as a sort of prize for the good work you did last summer on the Little Ophir Extension. A week ago you told me you were sore at all the rich people, and were going to fling the money back in their faces and earn your own way.

“I hope you’ve thought better of that by this time; and if you have, I’ve only this to say: Dad expects you to have all the advantages here that I shall have; he told me so. He—or the company—will pay your frat dues just as cheerfully as they will your tuition and board bills—you know they will.”

Truly, Larry did know it; hence the knees of his continued protest grew weaker still.

“It’s kind of an honor, I guess,” he admitted soberly. “Yet I can’t change over all at once. I’m slow; slower than Christmas, Dick. You know that. I’ll have to have time to think it out.”

“Sure you will!” Dick agreed, reaching for his cap. And a moment later he was gone; to one of those social doings which were by this time cutting pretty deeply into his evening study hours.

Larry had been alone for some little time when his door opened to admit Havercamp, a Junior and the editor of the college paper.

“Hello, Donovan!” he boomed; and as Larry reached for a chair: “No, I can’t stop—just on my way over town to put the *Micrometer* to bed. What college activities are you in?”

Larry shook his head. “Trying to break into athletics a little, as you know.”

“Sure I know! Didn’t I see you put the wallop into the Rockford Poly game? That’s what brings me up here. I want you on the *Micrometer*—athletic reporter.”

“But, see here,” Larry objected; “I can’t write for little sour apples!”

“You’ll never learn any younger. Dig in and try it; you can begin right away and hash up something snappy about basket-ball. You know how the athletic frenzy dies out after foot-ball, and we want to keep the door slamming. Go to it; good exercise in English One. If you ball things up at first, we’ll help you out. That’s all. Good-night!”

Larry turned back to his work with a little prideful glow; added to that other glow which had come upon Dick’s announcement as to the intention of the Omegas. It was the first time he had been asked to take part on any of the extra-curriculum activities, and though he doubted his ability to write anything that anybody would print, he was perfectly willing to try.

Consequently, a little later he went over to the gymnasium where two of the basket-ball teams were practicing, got duly interested, and sat up until nearly midnight wrestling with his first attempt at writing for print, grinding out a couple of columns, which, by the way, Havercamp blue-penciled to a short and snappy stickful in the next issue of the *Micrometer*.

A couple of evenings after this, Larry found himself holding a reception—that is, a little bigger reception than usual—in his room at Mrs. Grant’s. Apart from the lame dogs, who came pretty regularly, sundry other fellows had discovered that Dick Maxwell’s red-headed room-mate was what you might call a heaven-born mathematician, that he was good-natured, and that an evening spent in his company was likely to result in better Math. markings for the spender.

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For that reason the evening in-droppings were growing quite frequent, and when, on the night in question, the callers included Carey Lansing, a Senior, and Grand Satrap, or whatever you call it, of the Zeta Omegas, Larry thought nothing of it.

“Just wanted to see how you looked in action, Donnie,” Lansing said, explaining his own butt-in. “The fellows tell me you are a whale in Math. Where did you get it all?”

“Oh, I don’t know,” said Larry. “I never did have much trouble with figures.”

“You’re in luck. Freshman Math. is plenty stiff in Sheddon. I fell down all over it in my first year. I remember there was one problem—old ‘seven-fifty-four,’ we used to call it—that was a regular bear trap—caught the last man of us in my year.”

“Seven-fifty-four?” Larry queried. “Why, we have that in to-morrow’s assignment. Here it is,” and from a sheaf of demonstration sheets he took one covered handsomely with figures and illustrative drawings.

“That’s the old boy,” said Lansing, running his eye over the sheet; and from that he went on, talking easily of his Freshman days and their trials and tribulations.

As Lansing talked, Larry was watching the clock rather anxiously, hoping Dick would come in. In his bones he felt that Lansing was waiting for a chance to say something about the coming bid for membership in the Omegas—possibly the bid itself would be made. And Larry was not yet ready with his answer. Ambition, a keen hunger and thirst to be one of the particularized, was pulling one way, and something else—he couldn’t quite give it a definite name—was nervously putting the brakes on.

As it turned out, the clock-watching wasn’t needed. Dick came in before the room was cleared, so Larry had the excuse he had been waiting for; the chance to plead his *Micrometer* assignment and get away to the gymnasium without leaving his drop-ins with no host.

During the basket-ball practice games through which he sat making notes for Havercamp’s blue-pencilings, Problem 754, the one to which Lansing had called attention, was ambling around in the back part of his brain; and in the process of recalling it, step by step, it suddenly occurred to him that in a certain small particular the demonstration he had shown Lansing was at fault; the result was

all right, but in one place the value of the  $x$  plus  $y$  had been assumed and not proved.

“Queer how I came to make such a bonehead crack as that,” he muttered, as he walked back across the campus; and when he reached his room and found everybody gone, and Dick—for a wonder—in bed and sound asleep, he looked on the study table for the demonstration sheet, meaning to correct the slip.

Oddly enough, the sheet wasn't to be found. He had either misplaced it, or it had disappeared during his absence. Since it was wrong, anyhow, he did not search very long or carefully; instead, he sat down and painstakingly made another sheet, correcting the error that had appeared in the original; did that, and then went to bed and forgot the incident.

But the next day in class he was pointedly reminded of it. Blackboard demonstrations were called for and Problem 754 was given out. Having the processes at his finger-ends, Larry got through quickly and returned to his seat. Once there, it was only natural that he should look on to see how the other members of the section were getting along. To his astonishment he saw that three of the blackboard workers were demonstrating the problem exactly as he had done it on the sheet of paper that had disappeared; copying it precisely, with the  $x$  plus  $y$  error and all!

On a bit of paper torn from his scratch pad Larry jotted down the names of the men who were apparently copying from the lost sheet, and that evening, after supper, he asked Dick if he knew the names of the Freshmen who had already been pledged to the Zeta Omegas.

“Sure I do,” was the ready reply. “There are seven of us. Got a list somewhere. Here she is: I'll call 'em off.”

Without explaining anything, Larry took out the list he had made in class and checked it silently as Dick read from his list. It came out exactly as he thought it would; the three men whose names he had written down were among the pledges to the Omegas. The double mystery of the disappearance of the faulty demonstration, and its reappearance in three separate places on the blackboards, was solved. Lansing had merely pocketed the solution, which he supposed was the correct one, and had given it to at least three of the Freshman pledges to his own fraternity.

It was altogether in keeping with Larry's make-up that he did not explain his reason for wishing to know the names of the Omeg pledges; that Dick's query as to what he was driving at should be given a "turn-off" answer. But the incident revived all those earlier and antagonistic questionings about the fraternities. Twist and turn it as he would, he couldn't make Lansing's action square with his own ideas of fairness.

But he was not quite fair himself in charging the act of one fellow up to a whole fraternity, or rather to fraternities as a whole—though this he did not realize. As he summed it up, it amounted to just this: if any member of a frat was able to "get by," all the other members could get good marks without working for them; which, when you come to look at it, was putting a part for the whole with a vengeance—arguing a suit of clothes from a small bunch of wool on the sheep's back, as you might say.

He did not go so far as to say that the incident would determine his action when, or if, the bid should be made. Nevertheless, it did set him balancing again on the fence of indecision. But, after all, it was little Purdick who gave him the push in the direction in which he was finally to fall.

It was two evenings later, and Purdick was the only drop-in; with Dick gone out somewhere, as was coming to be his nightly habit. After the séance with the trigonometry, which was Purdick's bugbear, the handicapped one sat back in his chair with his hands clasped behind his head.

"I'm making the most of you while I can, Donovan," he said, with a tight-lipped smile. "When you hitch up with the Omegs I'll lose you."

"Who said I was going to hitch up with the Omegs?" Larry demanded.

"Oh, I don't know just who said it; such things always get around." Then: "I'm sorry."

"What makes you sorry?"

"A lot of things that I have no right to say to an Omeg pledge."

"I'm not a pledge—not yet."

"You mean that I'm free to say what I please?"

“Sure you are. That is one of the privileges of this shop.”

“You’ll say I’m prejudiced, and maybe I am. But you must remember that I’m a year older in Sheddton than you are. I don’t condemn the frats as a whole; some fellows are just naturally joiners, and I suppose they can’t help it. But this particular frat, or at least the Sheddton chapter of it, stands for everything that I despise, Donovan. Two-thirds of the men in it are rich men’s sons, and the pace they set is pretty swift. Last year they lost four of their pledges—canned and sent home.”

“Why were they canned?”

“The faculty reason was that they fell short of classwork requirements. But the reason why they fell short can be jammed into one word—dissipation. Oh, you needn’t look so horrified; it was what they, and all their world, would call ‘gentlemanly’ dissipation; a little card-playing for money, a little drinking, occasional midnight suppers over in town—that sort of thing.”

“Do you mean to tell me that the faculty lets things of that kind go on, in a frat or out of it?” Larry demanded.

Again little Purdick’s smile was thin-lipped.

“Sheddton isn’t a training school for wayward youth, Donovan; it’s a college for men. Prexy will tell you that the faculty refuses to assume responsibility for your morals; that your character is supposed to be established before you come here. And he’ll probably add that your behavior off the campus will show up in your class markings, and that if these fall below the dead line—as they will if you run with the fast set—you’ll be sent home.”

“Short and sweet,” Larry commented with a grin.

Purdick was silent for a time. Then: “I’m sorry for another reason, Donovan. I thought you were one of us.”

“How do you mean?”

“You are a workingman, and the son of a workingman. You ought to stand with your class.”

“But if I don’t believe in ‘classes’?”

BUT IF I DON'T BELIEVE IN CLASSES :

"You've got to believe in them, because they *are*. You can gloze it over all you want to, but that doesn't change the fact. You've got to take sides, whether you want to or not."

"I don't see it that way at all," said Larry stubbornly, meaning that he was beginning to try mightily hard not to see it that way.

"You'd better see it. You're here for the same thing I am: that's to get an education. If the doing of it is going to make you over into the kind of fellow that's ashamed of his folks and the way they live and have to live—"

"That'll be about enough of that kind of talk, Purdy," Larry exploded. "I'm not built that way."

Little Purdick closed his eyes.

"All right; we won't argue about it. But I'll take you on another tack. You may not know it, but you've already got a following here. I guess it began when you pulled the 'Varsity out of the hole in the Rockford Poly game; anyway, you've got it. If you really believe what you say—that there isn't any such thing as 'classes,' or oughtn't to be—it's up to you to do the biggest thing that's ever been done for Sheddou. But you'll lose the chance if you go into a frat."

Larry shook his head. "You've got me a mile over my depth, now, Purdy. What are you raving about?"

Purdick went on, still with his eyes closed.

"I can see you getting a bunch of the fellows—regular fellows—around you in a frat that would be a frat in the sure-enough meaning of the word; a sort of brotherhood that wouldn't know either rich or poor or anything else but just the college fellowship. I can see the thing growing and growing, until after a while even the Greek Letters themselves would see the beauty of it and help it along. I..." he stopped suddenly and sat up with a bitter little laugh. "Forget it!" he broke out harshly. "I take spells like that sometimes when I'm not responsible for what I say. Good-night," and he was gone.

For some little time after Purdick went away, Larry sat with his chin propped in his hands, the good gray eyes staring at the opposite wall and seeing nothing.

Once more he was stumbling around in the valley of indecision. What Purdick had said about being loyal to his clan—the work-for-wages clan to which his father and all of his people belonged—had stirred up all the old questionings. Was it true, what Purdick had asserted, that college, or the fraternity and social side of it, would turn a fellow against his own people? Larry couldn't believe it; and yet....

That was the moment of all moments when he had to remember Monty Brown, Montmorency Haliburton Brown—to give him all of his name. Monty was the son of the Brewster night engine-hostler, and a little money left by a great-aunt for that particular purpose had taken Monty to an Eastern college. Larry had a sudden mental flashlight picture of Monty Brown's return to the bosom of his family for the long vacation the summer before; a be-tailored, be-barbered thing, smelling of pomatum, contemptuous of his good, honest, workaday family, and holding himself far too dandified to associate with his old school-fellows of the Brewster High. Was it possible that college could do such a thing as that for him—Larry Donovan? He set his teeth hard upon a resolve to turn his back squarely upon every influence that even threatened to lean that way.

Purdick's little pipe-dream—about the big frat which shouldn't be like the exclusive Greek Letters—he dismissed at once, though not without seeing what a chance it would offer for some real leader to do a fine thing for the “left-outs.” But he had the good sense to see that this was no job for a green Freshman, however popular he might be. It would need the prestige of an upperclassman—a Junior, at least—and even then it might have a hard row to hoe.

Notwithstanding the fact that his decision was now finally taken, it was a good bit of a trial to convince Dick that it was his job to tell the Zeta Omegas that, for reasons that needn't be gone into, Freshman Larry Donovan did not wish to be considered as a candidate for fraternal honors. Of course Dick argued, painstakingly, almost pathetically. Being fully committed himself, he could see only one side of the argument, and he was convinced that Larry was throwing away his one best college chance. But Larry stood firm.

“It's your everlasting ‘workingman’ prejudice, Larry!” Dick flamed out at the last. “You'd rather stand alone than come in with a bunch of fellows who have nothing against them except that, perhaps, some of them won't have to work with their hands for a living when they get out of college!”

“Call it that if you want to,” said Larry; and he turned to his books with a frown and a sigh. He knew, of old, that it was no use to argue with Dick, and it was costing him something to realize that they had come to a parting of the ways; that the time was at hand when they would no longer be chums in that intimate chumminess which had held unbroken from the time when they had sat across the aisle from each other in the grade school at home.

A few days later the fraternity initiations—postponed that year rather beyond the usual period—began, and Larry saw numbers of his fellow classmen, Dick among them, doing all sorts of absurd and ridiculous “stunts” at all hours of the day and night; saw them and passed by with a grin in which there was a bit more than a tincture of good-natured contempt.

Next came the parting, when Dick packed up his belongings and moved them over to the big frat house opposite the campus portal on the other street. This was a sort of sorry business, as it was naturally bound to be, but of the two, Larry carried off his part of it rather better than Dick did.

“Have you made up your mind yet what you’re going to do?” Dick asked, as he was jamming the last of his things into his trunk and sitting on the lid to make the hasps catch.

“About the room, you mean? Mrs. Grant says I can keep it alone, but I know she can’t afford that.”

“I feel like a yellow dog, dropping out on her this way when it’s too late in the year for her to make other arrangements,” Dick said, getting up to stand on the trunk lid.

“It’s all right with her—that part of it,” Larry offered, “though, of course, she’s sorry to lose you.”

“Not half as sorry as I am to go.”

Larry let out a cheerful bray and called it a laugh.

“Can’t eat your cake and have it too, can you? But I guess you needn’t worry about Mrs. Grant. I expect she’s used to having the frats swipe her star boarders, long before this.”

There was the snuttering chuckle of a motor truck in the street below a

There was the sputtering chuckle of a motor truck in the street below, a clumping of heavy boots in the hall, and then the voice of Mrs. Grant telling the expressman which room to go to. Dick knelt before his trunk to lock it—which gave him a chance to turn his back upon his room-mate.

“I didn’t mean Mrs. Grant, altogether,” he mumbled; then, twisting about suddenly, with the queerest look on his face that Larry had ever seen there: “You mustn’t drop me, Larry—just because I’m going into the Omegas. I-I don’t believe I could stand for anything like that.”

It was just here, with the expressman tramping along the upper hall and looking for the door to which he had been directed, that the warm Irish Donovan blood came to the fore.

“Don’t you lose a minute’s sleep about that, Dickus!” he burst out, dropping into the use of the old school-boy nickname. “They say that blood’s thicker than water, but there are some other things just about as thick as blood. We’ve knocked around together too long to let a little thing like a frat dig a ditch between us now. When you need me I’ll be right there with both feet. Don’t you forget that.”

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# V

## THE RED-WAGON SCHOLARSHIP

Larry's parting word to Dick had been altogether hearty and cheerful, as we have seen; but after the parting had settled down into a fact accomplished, Larry spent some pretty lonesome evenings. Not because there wasn't company enough; there is always plenty of that in any college boarding-house, to say nothing—in Larry's case—of the lame dogs that came straggling in to get a boost over the mathematical hill. But an evening roomful of more or less hilarious and racketing fellows isn't everything; and after the crowd broke up there was always the empty chair on the opposite side of the study table, and Dick's bed, made up and never slept in, to remind Larry of his loss.

Meanwhile, there was Mrs. Grant to be considered. After a week had gone by without any move having been made to put anybody in with him, Larry cornered the motherly person one afternoon in the lower hall and asked her about it.

"If you could find somebody you'd like to room with, of course I'd be glad," said the house-mother. "But I don't like to ask you to put up with a stranger."

"You know of somebody?" Larry asked.

"Yes; there is a young man here taking post-graduate work for his Master's degree. He's in the Chemical, and he'd like to come."

Larry had an instantaneous and rather disquieting picture of himself rooming with something worse than an upperclassman—a man who had already been graduated, who was probably working against time, and who would be likely to object most strenuously to the lame dogs and other visitors.

"Will you let me look around a little and see if I can find somebody first?" he asked; and the reply was as kindly as his own mother could have made it.

"Certainly I will. Mr. Agnew seems to be a very pleasant gentleman, but he is at least ten years older than you are, and on that account ... as I say, if you can find somebody you'd like to room with—anybody you'd pick out would be all right with me."

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Larry fairly ducked at the mention of the “Chemical’s” age. That would settle it for fair. Why, good goodness—a fellow that old would have forgotten all about his undergraduate days and what he did himself when he was in the braying stage.

“I’ll look around,” said Larry hastily, and made his escape.

That evening, when there were half a dozen fellows in the room, Larry noticed again a thing he had been noticing for a week or more; which was the fact that little Purdick had stopped coming to the Man-o’-War—that he hadn’t shown up since that evening when he had outstayed the others to say his say about the frats and the classes and masses.

Also, Larry, trying to hammer the proper method of working a trig. problem into Ollie McKnight’s not any too mathematical head, was conscious of a duty unfulfilled. He had been meaning to look Purdick up and had neglected doing it.

“Hey, Belcher!” he called to a fellow stretching himself lazily on the bed that used to be Dick’s, “have you seen anything of Purdy lately? He’s in your section.”

“Nary a rag,” said the lazy one. “Dried up and blown away, I guess.”

McKnight looked up from his figuring pad.

“Friend o’ yours, Donnie—this Purdy person?” he asked.

“Sure,” said Larry.

“Ump. He’s having one fine, large, tough time, so the fellows tell me. Flunked out last year Freshman and had to take the work over. Nothing much to him but grit, but he’s got a peak load o’ that. Works in Hassler’s to keep going, but I haven’t seen him there for a week or so. Darned shame a fellow like that can’t get a little boost over the humps, I’ll say. If Old Sheddon had any heart she’d have scholarships, or something, for ’em.”

Larry let Purdick drop for the remainder of the session; but the under-thought, that he’d been neglecting something, kept trotting along just the same; that, together with the “flop-around,” as he was calling it, of one Ollie McKnight. From something that had been mighty nearly a snob at the beginning of the year, the son of Consolidated Steel was actually thawing down into a human person

the son of Consolidated Steel was actually drawing down into a human person with decencies and sympathies a good bit like those of other fellows. That word about the Purdicks just now, for example.

At the half-past-nine-o'clock dispersal, when the roomful went straggling out by ones and twos, McKnight was still working on his final trig. problem. When he finished it he stretched himself luxuriously in his chair and stuck his hands into his pockets.

"Once more I can face Old Figures without batting an eye," he exulted. Then: "You're all kinds of a decent chap, Donnie."

"Don't I know it?" Larry grinned. "But I'm not as decent as I might be. If I were, I'd have looked Purdick up before this time. Maybe he's sick."

"Still worrying about that poor little rat, are you? I don't wonder at it, if he's a friend of yours. He needs somebody to worry for him."

"I wish I could worry to some good purpose, Ollie."

"Money?" said McKnight.

"If I had it—yes. I'd like to stake him for his course. Some of the fellows can romp their way through on the work-out track and it doesn't hurt 'em. Purdy's got the nerve for it, but that's about all he has got."

For a long minute McKnight sat trying to balance his pencil, end up, on one finger and apparently giving his entire attention to the accomplishment of the impossible feat. When he spoke again it was to say: "Donnie, once upon a time I was low-down enough to call you a 'mucker': you're not one, but I am."

"I don't get you," said Larry, and he meant it.

"I can mighty nearly put it into words of one syllable. I'm nineteen years old, Donnie, and up to date I can't remember that I've ever done one single thing for anybody but Ollie McKnight—that is, nothing that has cost me anything."

"Well, perhaps you haven't had to."

"That's it; I haven't. It's been Dad's money, ever since I can remember. If I wanted to throw a few dollars to the birds, I threw 'em—and got some more

where they came from. It didn't cost me anything."

"You don't have to tell me about it," said Larry, meaning only to save the confider from possible future embarrassment.

"Don't you go and trig the wheels," McKnight put in quickly. "I'm not often taken this way, and it'll do me good to unload and get it out of my system. What you said about little Purdy a few minutes ago—that you'd boost him through if you had the money—snagged me good and hard."

"How was that?"

McKnight dug into a pocket and fished out a letter. It was typewritten on a Consolidated Steel letterhead, and he folded it over until he came to a paragraph near the end.

"Listen to this, and you'll see what I mean," he said; and then he read from the letter: "'So you want a new car to enable you to cut a dash with the college boys and girls, do you? I was sort of hoping, Son, that your break into Old Sheddon would make you understand that there are some other things in the world besides having a good time, but it seems it hasn't. But it's all right with me. I've put two thousand dollars to your account in the college town bank, and you may buy a car with it—if that's what you want more than anything else. But I should have been a pretty proud Dad if you'd wanted the money for something besides a plaything that you'll wear out in a year.'"

"Well?" said Larry, when McKnight refolded the letter and put it back in his pocket.

McKnight didn't answer the implied query. Instead, he put one of his own.

"How far would two thousand dollars go toward boosting little Purdy through his four years, Donnie?"

"How far?—Great cats! it would take him all the way through. It's as much as, or more than, I expect to spend in the four years!"

"All right," said McKnight coolly. "I'll write you a check for it when I get back to the house."

"But see here—good goodness, Ollie, you can't do anything like that!" Larry

broke out. "In the first place, Purdy won't take it—no fellow would; and in the next—"

"Let's knock the pins down in one alley before they're set up in another," cut in the offhand maker of scholarships. "Of course, one of the conditions would have to be that Purdy doesn't know where it comes from. We'll call it the Red-Wagon Scholarship, and let it go at that."

"But even then, he'd consider it a loan and want to pay it back."

"You can't pay a scholarship back. But that'll be all right; if he ever gets fixed so he can, let him pass it along—boost some other fellow who needs it. You may as well quit chucking hurdles in the way, Donnie. This is the first time I've ever given anything that's cost me something, and you can't choke me off. Besides, I'd like to shock Dad—just this one time, you know. I'd give a hen worth fifty dollars if I could be there to see, when he gets the news."

"Then you won't buy a car?"

"Not so you could notice it—not this year, anyway. When you come to think of it, it isn't good form for a Freshie to be daddlin' around in a little red wagon anyhow. Which reminds me that it isn't good form for me to stay daddlin' around here and keeping you out o' bed. So I'm gone."

"Hold on a second and I'll go with you," said Larry, reaching for his cap and overcoat.

"Whichward ho, at this time o' night?" questioned the son of much money, as they went out together.

"I'm going to see if I can find out what's become of Charlie Purdick," Larry returned. And at the parting moment: "Sure you won't change your mind, Ollie, after you've slept on it?"

"Don't you worry. I've got a lot of weaknesses, Donnie, but that isn't one of 'em. You go find Purdy."

"I'm gone," said Larry; and he turned down the cross street, while McKnight swung off in the opposite direction.

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## VI

### A NEW ROOM-MATE

Being well used to Colorado mountain winters, Larry had been finding the Middle-Western variety of the season rather a joke than a hardship thus far. But on the night when he parted from the founder of the Red-Wagon Scholarship at Mrs. Grant's front gate, old Boreas was outdoing himself.

Down Maple Avenue, cutting across angling behind the athletic field, the wind came howling straight out of the shivery northwest, bringing with it a storm that was half snow and half a fine sleet to sting like needles on a bare face, and to make the sidewalk as uncertain underfoot as the bottom of a soapy bath-tub.

It was only two squares down to the main street of the college suburb, and then one more to Hassler's restaurant, where Larry made his first inquiry about Purdick. Here he learned nothing except the fact that Purdick hadn't shown up for a week and more, and that another student waiter had been put on in his place. The big, puffy-lipped German didn't know where Purdick roomed, but he thought it was over Heffelfinger's grocery, two squares farther down.

Thither Larry posted, slipping and sliding over the treacherous sidewalks, and was lucky enough to find Heffelfinger just closing his grocery shop. Yes, Purdick had a room "oop-shtairs"—two flights up. Larry blundered into the box hall beside the grocery entrance and climbed—in darkness so thick that it was almost sticky. But there was a window in the second floor hall, and enough light from the street electrics filtered through its grimy panes to enable him to find the second stair.

Groping along on the third floor, which seemed to be a sort of junk room, Larry made his way toward a thin thread of light coming from the crack under a door. The barn-like third floor was cold with the deadly chill of a shut-up space that has never been heated, and Larry had all he could do to keep his teeth from chattering. At the door with the chink of light under it he rapped, and a hoarse voice that he hardly recognized said: "Come in."

Larry wasn't any more impressionable than he had to be, and wasn't at all troubled with the sort of imagination that adds frills and furbelows to make a thing you remember grow into a sort of cold horror the more it is dwelt upon.

Yet he thought he should never forget the desolate cheerlessness of the cubbyhole into which the opening door admitted him.

It was a bare little place, roughly board-partitioned off from the storehouse attic and lighted—in daytime—by a single window which was now rattling in its frame and letting a thin sifting of fine snow blow through the cracks. For furniture there was a pine packing box for a table, another which had been made into a sort of chair, and a third for a light stand on which stood a guttering candle. In a corner, with its head beside the light-stand box, was a cot, and propped up in the narrow bed, with a coat over his shoulders, the blanket pulled up to his chin, and his copy of “Hun and MacInnes” held so that the light of the candle would fall upon the page, was Purdick.

“Hello, Donovan!” he croaked in the same hoarse voice that had said “Come in.” “Dug me up, did you? Pull up the easy-chair and sit down”—this last with a grin that was more than half ghastly.

Larry dragged out the box chair and sat by the cot. But he didn’t take off his overcoat, or even unbutton it.

“Been meaning to dig you up for a week or more,” he said. “Why didn’t you let some of us know you were sick?”

“Didn’t want to be a nuisance. I’m getting over it all right, now.”

“What was it?”

“Touch of the grippe, I guess. I had it last winter. I don’t mind it so much, only I’m afraid it’s cost me my job at Hassler’s.”

Larry looked around at the cheerless, unheated cubbyhole.

“Gee!” he shuddered, “this is no place to be sick in. Why didn’t you report to the hospital?”

Little Purdick’s smile was another of those half-ghastly grins.

“I don’t mind telling you, Donovan. Your three-dollar-per-semester hospital fee, that you have to pay when you register, entitles you to two days sick-a-bed in a ward. If you stay over that time it’s a dollar a day extra. I didn’t have the dollar a

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day.

“Well, you’ve got to get out of this,” said Larry; and he said it gruffly because the pitifulness of Purdick’s case was getting next to him. “You’re going to room with me for the rest of the year. Dick’s gone over to the Omeg house and I’m needing a bunkie.”

Purdick wagged his head on the blanket pillow.

“I know you don’t mean to stick a knife into me and twist it round, Donnie, but you know very well that I can’t afford to go to Mother Grant’s. Let it slide and help me out a bit on this trig.—if you can stand the cold. I’ve lost a week on the stuff, and if I can’t make it up I’ll go bust on it.”

“You chuck that book and listen to me,” growled Larry. “I say you’re going to room with me in the Man-o’-War, and what’s more, you’re going to begin it to-night—if I can find a night-owl auto hack anywhere this side of Chicago.”

“But I tell you I can’t, Donnie. It’s as much out of my reach as—as—”

“That’s all fixed,” Larry put in brusquely. “Your room rent’s paid, and your board, too; or they will be.”

“But listen, you good old scout; I can’t take charity that way—you know I can’t. It—it would break me, world without end!”

“It isn’t charity; it’s a—scholarship,” Larry stammered.

“Sheddon hasn’t any first-year scholarships, Donnie. You know that as well as I do.”

“Maybe it hasn’t had; but it’s got one now—just—er—founded. One of the fellows—er—knew of it so he nailed it for you.”

“Donnie, you’re lying to me; you know good and well you are,” protested the sick one. “You’re meaning to put up for me yourself—out of money that you told me yourself was borrowed money. Isn’t that the truth?”

Larry managed to force a sort of donkey-bray laugh.

“Much obliged for the compliment, Purdy, but I’m not so generous as all that

amounts to. I told you it wasn't charity, and it isn't. It's a sure-enough scholarship, and it runs for four years. After that, if you make a go of your profession, you're to pass it on to some other fellow that needs it. That's fair enough, isn't it?"

Purdick turned his face to the wall and for a long minute there was silence in the freezing little room. When he spoke again there was something more than the grippy hoarseness in his voice.

"I—I can't take it in, Donnie," he stammered brokenly. "I'm a perfect fool about this engineering course. I've wanted it ever since I knew what engineering was—wanted it so bad that I could taste it. The—the home doctor said I could never stand it to work my way through, and I guess maybe he was right. And now—" again he turned his face to the wall, and because it is a shame for one fellow to see another one cry, Larry jumped up and went to shiver at the rattling window.

When he thought he had given Purdick time enough to sort of get a grip on himself, he went on to the business part of his errand.

"Think you're not too sick to stand the trip over to the house if I get a flivver and wrap you up good?"

By this time the little fellow was able to grin again.

"If it's any colder out doors than it is up here, it must be going some," he replied.

"It's a rough night, just like it listens," said Larry, "but we'll make it, all right." After which he groped his way out and down the two pairs of stairs and went to look for an auto cab.

That proved to be some hunt. There wasn't a vehicle of any kind in sight on the college-suburb side of the river, and he had to go creeping and slipping over the bridge and into the town proper before he could find one. He discovered one at last, and had a wrangle with the driver because the man said he didn't need tire chains and Larry insisted that he did; kept on insisting until the hackman grumblingly consented to put them on—with Larry to help.

When he got back to the cubbyhole under the Heffelfinger flat roof he found Purdick dressed and sitting on the edge of the cot. The sick one got up and wobbled around as if he were going to strike right out by himself, but Larry said: "Nothing doing; mamma's baby hasn't learned to walk yet," and without more

Nothing doing, mamma's baby hasn't learned to walk yet, and without more ado, wrapped the invalid in a blanket, stuck the candle in his hand so that he could light the way, and then gathered him up and carried him, catching his breath when he found what a feather-weight Purdick was, either from the sickness or from not getting enough to eat.

After Larry had bundled his arm-load into the hack, the short trip was made safely, though the machine skidded some, even with the chains on. Larry had taken time, while he was over in town looking for the auto, to telephone Mrs. Grant what he was meaning to do, so when he staggered up the steps with his burden, the good house-mother was at the door to meet him and help him get Purdick upstairs and into the bed that had been Dick's.

A few minutes later she came trotting up with a pitcher of hot milk and made the new room-mate drink two glasses of it. After she went away, Purdick wanted to talk; wanted to know more about the scholarship, and who the fellow was who had grabbed it off for him, and if it was really true that he didn't have to work for wages any more during the three-and-a-half years he hoped to stay in Old Sheddon. But Larry resolutely squelched him and told him to go to sleep, threatening to turn the lights off and run away to Welborn's room to study if he wasn't obeyed. So once more little Purdick turned his face to the wall; and a half-hour later, when Larry went to bed, the grippe patient was sleeping peacefully, and Larry, giving him the once over before he put the lights out, could fancy that a good half of the strained look had already gone out of the thin, colorless face.

This was the beginning of Larry's experience with a substitute for Dickie Maxwell in the big upper room at Mrs. Grant's. With the best of care, and plenty of good food, Purdick was soon up and around and at work in his section. Naturally, it took a good bit of boning to make up for the lost time, but since he didn't have anything else to do, didn't have to worry about rent and board and such things, he soon worked off the temporary handicap.

Matters went along quietly for three or four weeks before anything more was said about the "scholarship." On the day following Purdick's transfer to the Man-o'-War, Ollie McKnight had given Larry a check for the two thousand dollars, and with it Larry had opened an account in the college bank in the name of Charles Purdick, got a pass-book and a check-book and put both of them where Purdick could find them.

So far, so good. After Purdick got up and out, he paid his few debts and his delayed second semester dues, moved his scanty belongings over to Mrs. Grant's, and apparently settled down to the new order of things without trying to find out anything more about his miraculous windfall. But Larry knew that the day of reckoning was only postponed, and it came one evening after the room had been cleared of the latest stragglers and its two occupants were left alone together.

"Now, then, Donnie," Purdick began, "I want to know something more about this 'scholarship' thing. And first let me say that I know now that it *isn't* a scholarship."

"But it is, in a way," Larry insisted.

"Not officially," said Purdick. "There's no record of any such thing in the books. I've asked the Registrar."

"Good gracious!" Larry exclaimed, seeing trouble ahead; "why can't you let well enough alone?"

"Because, as I said that night when you came to hunt me up, I can't take anybody's charity."

"Poor but proud, eh?" said Larry, knowing well enough that he would have felt exactly the same way in Purdick's place.

"You can call it that if you want to; I guess it's the truth. But I want to know; I've *got* to know."

"I'll tell you all I can—which isn't so very much," Larry temporized. "The money was given to one of the fellows here to—er—do as he pleased with. He didn't need it for himself, so he took a notion to give it to you—lend it to you, if you'd rather have it that way. Only instead of paying it back to him, he wants you to boost some other fellow, by and by, when you're able to do it."

"That's all right, as far as it goes. But who is the fellow?"

"I can't tell you. I've promised."

Little Purdick twisted himself in his chair and seemed to be looking out of the window, though the panes presented nothing but a blank wall of darkness.

Finally he said:

“I guess I’m up against it pretty hard, Donnie.”

“How so?”

“Can’t you see? You know the way I’ve always talked; what I’ve been thinking and saying about rich people. Nobody but some one of the rich fellows could do what’s been done to me. Can I take a bone that’s been thrown to a dog?”

Larry grinned.

“That depends, doesn’t it? Of course, if you’re calling yourself a dog——”

“Say it all,” Purdick prompted.

“I don’t know how to say it so as to make anybody understand it. But this is the way it looks to me. If you do something for somebody that needs to have it done for ’em, you get a whole lot of satisfaction out of it, don’t you? Makes you feel sort of warm and comfortable all over, doesn’t it?”

“Of course; everybody knows that.”

“Well, if you’re going to be able to jolly yourself over the giving part of it, somebody else will have to do the taking, won’t he?”

Purdick took time to think about it. Trying to be perfectly honest with himself, he had to admit that he had never looked at it in just that way before. But poverty pride—especially when it is backed up by a lot of prejudice—is a pretty stubborn thing.

“If you won’t tell me anything, how am I going to know that this isn’t rotten money I’m spending?” he demanded.

“What do you mean by ‘rotten money’?”

“Money that’s been sweated out of a lot of poor people who couldn’t help themselves.”

Larry shook his head.

“I can’t go back that far, Purdy—and I don’t think you ought to. The money’s doing a good job now, whatever it did before it came to you.”

“But I think you might at least tell me who gave it. Supposing it happens to be somebody that I’d rather die than take it from? There’s a bunch of just such fellows here in Sheddon.”

“Don’t you lose any sleep about that. When the thing was put up to me, I asked myself just one question, and that was if I’d take it if that same fellow offered it to me and I needed it. That question sort of answered itself. I’ve got a lot of that same poverty pride myself, Purdy, but I’d have done it in a minute, if only for one reason; I could see that it was going to be the best thing that ever happened to that fellow to give it.”

“And you won’t tell me his name?”

“I can’t; that was the one thing he made me promise.”

“Am I never going to know it?”

“That’s up to him. And he’s right about that, too. What you don’t know needn’t worry you, and you don’t have to feel under any obligations. Now, let’s get to work on this descrip. It’s pretty stiff for to-morrow.”

It was perhaps a week beyond this talk, one evening when Larry was putting on his coat to go over to the *Micrometer* office with his athletic notes, that Purdick looked up from his book to say:

“Seeing much of Dickie Maxwell these days, Donnie?”

Larry shook his head. As a matter of fact, he had been seeing far too little of Dick since the Zeta Omegas had taken him in. For the first week or two Dick had dropped in at the Man-o’-War every evening or so. But the “drop-ins” had grown farther and farther apart as time went on, until now they had stopped altogether.

“No, I don’t see him very often, except on the campus,” Larry admitted. “What makes you ask?”

“It’s none of my business,” Purdick went on rather hesitantly, “but he’s running with a pretty rapid bunch. Did you ever hear of the ‘Mixers’?”

with a pretty rapid bunch. Did you ever hear of the MIXERS :

“No; what is it?”

“It’s a private club, and it meets over in town. That ought to tell you all you need to know about it.”

“It doesn’t.” Apart from athletics and his job on the *Micrometer*, Larry knew little of what went on outside of his classroom work.

Little Purdick was staring at the darkened window; a habit he had when he had to say something that he didn’t want to say. And what he said didn’t explain much—except by inference.

“We can give the frats credit for one thing, anyway,” he remarked. “They don’t allow card-playing for money in the houses.”

“Gee!” said Larry, with a gasp; “are you trying to tell me that this ‘Mixer’ thing is a gambling club?”

“That’s what you hear whispered about it.”

“And Dick Maxwell belongs to it?”

“I’m afraid he does. Anyway, he runs with that sort of a crowd.”

“I don’t believe it—I can’t believe it, Purdy!” said Larry; but when he left the house a few minutes later to breast his way through a softly falling snow to the newspaper office on the other side of the river, he knew that his last word to Purdick had been more of a hope than a conviction.

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## VII

### IN WHICH DICK MIXES IT

March at Old Sheddon, which had come in like a lion, was promising to go out like a lamb. By the middle of the month the snow was all gone and the athletic field was beginning to dry out enough to let the teams get a little outdoor work.

Keeping up his job as athletic reporter for the student daily, Larry was always on hand when there was anything doing on the field, and as soon as Coach Brock began to organize the teams and squads, he was given a chance to train for the next year's 'Varsity foot-ball.

Ordinarily, you'd say, any fellow would jump at a chance like that, coming while he was still in his Freshman year, and Larry, who had all along been hoping he might make the team, was ready enough to jump.

"If you think I'm good enough," was the way he took the bid; and after Brock, who never coddled any of his men, had said he would probably grow to be good enough if he worked hard, Larry left the field feeling about three inches taller than any self-respecting measuring machine would have recorded his stature. One of the ambitions he had begun to cherish, as soon as he had acquired a little of the "college spirit" that Dick Maxwell had tried so hard to hammer into him at the beginning of the year, was to make the 'Varsity foot-ball, and all through the year he had been hoping that Coach Brock wouldn't forget the November game with Rockford Poly and the part in it that one Larry Donovan had taken.

Little Purdick, who had an almost uncanny knack of face-reading, knew instantly what had happened as soon as Larry entered their joint room in the Man-o'-War.

"So Brock has picked you, has he?" he said, as Larry flung his cap and dropped into a chair. "Where's he playing you?"

"I don't know," said Larry; "I guess it will be right half. That's the job I know best."

"Tickled purple, I suppose?" put in Purdick with his queer little grin.

“You’ve said it, Purdy; hits me right where I live. It’s going to take a lot of time, but I’d rather sit up nights than miss it.”

“I’ll help you all I can in the ‘boning,’” Purdick offered, out of the depths of a loyalty to his big room-mate which had been steadily growing ever since the night when Larry had bundled him in blankets and carried him down two flights of stairs to chuck him into the hired auto. “You must turn all your copying and problem drawing over to me. I can do ’em just as well as not.”

“You’re a pretty good little old rat, Purdy, and I’ll lick the fellow that says you’re not. Has Dick been over?”

“Not since last night, after you’d gone to the ‘Mike’ office.”

“Did he say he wanted to see me for anything particular?”

“No, he didn’t say much of anything; just asked for you, and then mooned around a bit with his hands in his pockets and went away.”

Knowing well Purdick’s peculiar gift for reading faces, Larry pushed the inquiry farther.

“You’re pretty good at guessing what’s in the back part of a fellow’s head, Purdy. Was there anything the matter with Dick?”

“If you ask me, I’ll say there was. He looked mighty sober—for him.”

Larry hung upon his heel, so to speak. Though he had had a number of invitations, he had never yet set foot inside of the Zeta Omega house. Should he go and look Dick up? At this time in the evening he would probably be in the frat house. Larry thought he’d better go over. For old times’ sake, if for nothing else, he might take that much trouble.

It was just coming on to dusk when he left Mrs. Grant’s, and as he was unlatching the gate a slender figure with its head down and its hands in its pockets came along the sidewalk.

“Dick!” exclaimed Larry; “I was just going over to the Omegs’ to hunt you up.” Then, as he got his first good look at Dick’s face: “Great cats!—what under the sun have you been doing to yourself?”

Dick turned his face away.

“Would you—would you mind taking a little hike with me, Larry?” he asked.

“Sure I won’t; it’ll seem like old times. Which way?”

Dick set the direction and the pace without saying anything. The course led out Maple Avenue to the country road leading to the bridge whose portal arch bore in figures two feet high the numerals of their class. For the entire mile they tramped along side by side in silence. Dick did not speak, and Larry, borrowing something from that manhood which he was just touching on its hither side, respected his companion’s silence.

It was quite dark when they came to the bridge, though there was a slender sickle of a new moon hanging a few degrees above the western horizon. The bridge approach was guarded by a low concrete wall, and when they reached the wall Dick sat down on it.

“You haven’t had your supper yet, I know, and I won’t keep you very long,” he said in a sort of strained voice. Then he went on: “I—I’ve brought you out here to tell you good-bye, Larry. I’m canned—sent home.”

“What!” Larry almost shouted the word.

“It’s so. One of the profs.—Morton, he was kind of sorry for me, I guess—gave me a hint yesterday. That’s why I went around to Mother Grant’s last night to try to find you. I got the faculty letter to-day.”

“But, Dick—what on top of earth have you been doing?”

“The letter says it’s something I haven’t been doing—keeping up with my classroom work. But that’s only a part of it, and not the worst part, either. You see, Dad’s a Sheddon old-grad., and they’re trying to let him down easy.”

“What is the worst part of it, Dick?”

“Don’t you know?” the canned one asked, in the same dull monotone.

“No more than the man in the moon.”

“Didn’t you ever hear of ‘The Mixers’?”

“Just the name; that’s all.”

“Well, you might as well know; it’s all out now. There was a bunch of us, with more money than was good for us, I guess. We’ve been going over the river to a room in the Brandon House to play cards. Night before last the town police raided us. The others all skipped through a window and down the fire-escape, but I was bonehead enough to stand my ground and try to bully it out. For the sake of the college it was kept out of the newspapers, and the police contented themselves with handing me over to the faculty.”

“And you’re the only one to be expelled?”

Dick nodded.

“They gave me a chance that I couldn’t take; said they’d make it suspension to the end of the semester if I’d tell who the others are. It’ll just about break Dad’s heart, Larry.”

“Don’t you know it,” said Larry, with a franker emphasis than he meant to put upon it. Then: “Have you told it all?”

“No; not quite all. I’ve lost money—lots of it. I owe pretty nearly everybody in sight. Worse than that, I’ve used up all my year’s allowance and I’m overdrawn at the bank. I’ll have to wire Dad for money to get home on.”

For a few minutes Larry was just about as badly crushed as Dick seemed to be. That Dick, the chum he loved almost as a brother of his own blood, should make such a frightful smash of himself and his prospects in just a few weeks or months seemed utterly unbelievable. Then there was Dick’s father.... Just here Dick broke in again.

“You mustn’t charge it up to the Omegas, Larry; that’s one of the things I got you out here to say to you. I know some of the fellows in my frat are pretty swift, but I was the only one that was in the ‘Mixers.’ It’s only fair to say that Carey Lansing and some of the others have done all they could to hold me down and keep me from getting tangled up with fellows of the Underhill sort. But it didn’t do any good. I was just an easy mark, all around the block.”

“I could have held you down,” Larry maintained, with his jaw set.

“Yes, I guess you could have. But I never gave you a chance to try.”

Larry sat quietly for a few minutes, kicking his heels against the concrete wall. This was the time of day when, ordinarily, nothing would have kept him from thinking of his supper. But now he was not remembering that there were any such things as suppers.

“What will you do after you get home, Dick?” he asked, more to be saying something than for any cogent purpose behind the words.

“I don’t know; get Dad to give me a clerkship or something on the railroad, so that I can earn money enough to pay my debts. I’ve had my fling and I’m out of it for the rest of my life.”

If you are a little older than Dick you may smile at this, if you like, but it was the end of the world for him, or he thought it was—which amounts to the same thing.

“Does that mean that the fight’s all out of you?” Larry asked.

“Golly, I’d fight if I didn’t have just sense enough left to know that I’m down and out. I’ve taken the count, all right.”

“Let’s see if you have. What would you do if you had a chance to stay here and live it down, Dick?”

“What would I do? I’d black the shoes of the fellow who could tell me how it could be done. But it can’t be done. I’m fired, I tell you.”

“Wait a minute,” Larry put in. “Supposing the faculty could be persuaded to reconsider. Whereabouts would that leave you?”

Dick gave a wry little laugh.

“It would leave me wondering where I was going to get the next meal. Didn’t you hear me say that I’m broke, and head over ears in debt besides?”

“How much are you in debt?”

Dick named a figure which wasn’t so crushingly big, though it doubtless seemed as big as the National debt to a fellow with only a few silver coins left in his

pocket.

Larry made a swift mental calculation. Without intending to be especially economical, he had lived well within the amount set apart for his first-year expenses, and he still had a comfortable balance in the college bank; in fact, there was something more than enough to pay Dick's legitimate debts. But there were three months of the semester left, with board and lodging for two to be provided for.

"Supposing you didn't have to quit and run for it, Dick," he suggested, "would you stay on in the Omegas?"

"No; I've disgraced the fellows good and plenty, and the least I can do now is to get out."

"I've just been thinking," Larry went on, unconsciously using a phrase that he'd copyrighted the summer before on the railroad job in the Timanyoni Mountains. "I've money enough in the bank to pull you out of the hole, but there'll be nothing left to live on."

"Oh, good gorry, Larry—do you think I'd let you do a thing like that?" Dick burst out. "Besides, can't you get it into your head that I'm fired, canned, sent home in disgrace?"

"Oh, yes; I'm remembering all that. But I'm still thinking. You said this thing would break your father's heart, and we mustn't lose sight of that. Here's what comes next. Gorman, in Prac. Mechanics, has lost his assistant, and two weeks ago I was offered the job. So far as I know, the chance is still open. With that, I could earn enough money to—"

There was the best reason in the world why the sentence broke itself short off in the middle of things. Up to that moment Larry had clean forgotten the great event of the afternoon, when Coach Brock had backed him into a corner of the locker-room in the gymnasium to tell him that if he'd promise to work hard on the practice field there would be a place for him on the next-year 'Varsity. If he should become Gorman's shop assistant for the remainder of the semester, that would settle foot-ball practice, and every other outside activity, for good and all. There would be time only for work, study, eating and sleeping. If he didn't hesitate, it was chiefly because he was afraid to hesitate.

—“Could earn money enough to keep us both,” he finished, with a little gulp to come between. “We’ll call that part of it settled.”

“Like a fish we will!” Dick rapped out, jumping down from his place on the wall. “What do you take me for, anyway, you soft-hearted old geezer? Do you suppose I’d let you mortgage yourself that way when you’re booked for next year’s ’Varsity? Oh, yes; I knew all about it before it happened. Not in a month of Sundays, Larry Donovan, and don’t you forget it! Now then, climb down off that wall and let me walk you back to your supper. I’ve made my little bleat, and that’s all there is to it.”

In a silence that was even thicker than the outward-bound one, they retraced the mile of county road, and at Mrs. Grant’s gate Dick went straight on down the street with only a brief “Good-night” for his hike companion. But a little later that same evening a muscular, square-shouldered fellow with curly red hair might have been seen pressing the bell-push rather timidly at the door of the President’s house on the opposite side of the campus; pressing the button gently and looking a bit shocked or awed or something when the door swung suddenly open to admit him.

Some half-hour later the red-headed one was thinking most pointedly of this door again, only this time he was eager to pass through its portal the other way. A middle-aged, sober-faced gentleman in scholarly black had risen from behind a huge table littered with books, in a room that was walled and plastered with more books, to shake hands with him at parting.

“You’ve made out a strong case, Donovan,” the president was saying. “It was principally your friend’s stubbornness that made the faculty take drastic action, but you are quite right in suggesting that we should recognize a sense of honor, even when we find it in bad company. If Maxwell is really in earnest—and after what you have told me I can hardly doubt it—I think I can promise you that we shall be willing to review his case—with a recommendation to mercy. Come and see me again, when you have time and opportunity. You will always be welcome.”

So, when Larry left the big house in Chestnut Street, he was walking upon thin air, and the crisp, starlit, late-in-March night seemed to sing for him as he strode along. And at the western portal of the campus he did not go aside to take the short cut across to Mrs. Grant’s. Instead, he broke another precedent and turned his steps toward Main Street and the house of the Zeta Omegas.

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## VIII

### HOW LARRY CHANGED HIS MIND

When an “outer barbarian” goes to a college fraternity house the first time, he is quite likely to be rehashing a lot of weird ideas about the secrecies, grips, passwords, gauntlets to be run at the door, and things of that sort. So Larry Donovan, ringing the bell at the door of the Zeta Omegas, had made up his mind that he wouldn’t try to break in; he’d just ask whoever might open the door to send Dick out to him.

But things didn’t break that way at all. It was Wally Dixon who did the door-opening, and when he saw who it was standing on the step he stuck out a ham-like hand.

“Donnie, you old knock-’em-out, put ’er there!” he bellowed. “Had to sneak around and get into a little good company, after all, didn’t you? Tumble in and be at home: fellows’ll all be glad to see you.”

“I want to see Dick Maxwell,” Larry began, when he was once safely within the sacred precincts.

“Private and personal?” Dixon queried; adding: “I suppose you know poor old Dickie’s in mourning just now?”

“I know all about it,” said Larry. “That’s why I’m butting in. I’ve grabbed off a bit of good news for him.”

“What’s it like?” Dixon asked. “The house is all broke up about Dick.”

“I’ve just been to see Prexy. Dick’s going to have another chance.”

“Why, you bully old stick-in-the-mud!” roared Dixon. “We sent a delegation to Prexy this morning, but it didn’t get anywhere, just because we’re Dick’s frat brothers, and it was expected that we’d leg for him as a matter of course. What did Prexy say?”

“Said the faculty would review Dick’s case—with a recommendation to mercy.”

“Clarry bel that means that he won’t have to go home. Come on and I’ll chase

Glory be: that means that he won't have to go home. Come on and I'll chase you up to his room. He's packing up, right now."

Dixon was right. When Larry was pushed into an upstairs room of the fine old country-town mansion that had been remodeled into a fraternity house he found Dick on his knees before an open trunk. Dixon merely shoved Larry into the room and then backed out and disappeared. Dick squatted back on his heels and said, "So you broke in, did you? I thought maybe you'd come around to see me disappear over the horizon."

"Hold up a minute," gasped Larry breathlessly. "Have you wired your father?"

Dick shook his head.

"Not yet; I've been putting it off—like a coward. Wally Dixon has staked me to enough to get home on. I thought I'd rather tell Dad face to face, but I can't do that, either. The faculty letter'll get there before I do."

"Dick," said Larry, and he tried to say it casually, and couldn't, "the faculty letter isn't going to your father. You're to have another chance."

For a time Dick didn't speak or move; just squatted there on the floor with his hands locked over his knees and with queer little twitches coming and going at the corners of his mouth. After a bit he managed to say: "How do you mean?—another chance."

Rapidly, because he couldn't trust himself to go at it deliberately, Larry told of his interview with the president, and of the president's promise to "review" Dick's case.

"You'll be conditioned, and you'll have to make up your classroom work," he went on, "but we can pull you over that hill all right. And he told me that the letter hadn't been sent to your father. I guess he was just as sorry about having to send it as you were about having it sent. They think a lot of your father here in Old Sheddon, Dick."

Slowly Dick got upon his feet, crossed the room, and sat upon the edge of his bed.

"For a minute or so you got me all 'hope up,' Larry," he said soberly. "Goodness knows, I want to stay bad enough, but I can't. I won't ask Dad for any more

money, and it's a cinch that I'm not going to let you go to work in Prac. Mechan. and lose out on foot-ball, just to put up for me."

"Now see here," Larry was beginning; but just then there was a rap at the door and half a dozen of Dick's house brothers, Carey Lansing among them, came stringing into the room to drape themselves around on the different pieces of furniture.

"We know all about it, Dick," said Lansing without preface. "Wally Dixon has spilled the beans all over the place. Here's how—with the Sheddon series for this red-headed pal of yours."

Dick rose to the occasion manfully.

"You fellows are all right; you always have been, to me. But I've got to go home, just the same." And then, with his jaw set, he made a clean breast of everything, telling about his debts and winding up with Larry's offer,—which he wasn't going to accept—and with his own intention of kicking himself out of the Zeta Omegas.

"Like Zeke you will!" said Lansing. "Also like Zeke you'd let Donnie side-step his chance on the 'Varsity and take on as an instructor to split with you. What do you think you're one of us for, anyhow? The house will organize a corporation and stake you—you ought to know that much, little as you know about other things. And next year you can bone down and save your nickels and pay it back. What's the matter with that?"

Dick's mouth was twitching again.

"There's nothing the matter with it, except that you're a lot of dad-beaned, inforgotten, turkey-trodden easy marks," he said, hiding his real feelings under a mask of brotherly abuse. "I'm not worth saving."

"Of course you're not," said Lansing, retorting in kind. "We all know that. We're not doing it for you; we're doing it for the sake of getting at least one good man on the 'Varsity next year. See?"

Larry Donovan's emotions, as he sat by listening to this give-and-take, and Lansing's offer, were considerably mixed. At first, you see, he had been charging Dick's downfall chiefly to his association with the Zeta Omegas, and

when Dick had wiped that charge off the slate, he had still managed to hang on to some of his old prejudice against the fraternities. He had even gone so far as to wonder if the bunch wouldn't willingly turn its back upon a member discredited and kicked out of college in disgrace. But here was a spirit altogether human and beautiful; good, man-sized loyalty that didn't seem to care a rap whether Dick's father had a million or a mere pittance.

The occasion—and Dick's evident balance on the raw edge of a breakdown—seemed to call for a diversion, and Larry made it.

"See here, Lansing—and the rest of you," he broke in, making himself the target, instead of Dick, "I've been holding a pretty savage grudge against you Greek-Letter fellows all the way along, and I want to take it back. You're just white folks, like the rest of us, after all."

"Much obliged," returned Lansing gravely; and then, to Larry's utter astonishment: "You can't put one over on me like that, Donnie, and get away with it. You know, and I know, why you're not a member of the Omegas, right now. The name of the reason is Old Problem Seven-fifty-four. It was a low-down trick for me to swipe your demonstration sheet that night back yonder in January, and I've been ashamed of it ever since."

For a minute Larry was too astounded to answer. That the head of a fraternity chapter and a Senior should make such open and frank amends to an outsider and a Freshman was almost incredible. But he contrived to find his tongue after a bit.

"I guess maybe I stood up so straight that I leaned over backwards," he said. "Besides, I *was* prejudiced, and I never was much of a 'joiner.' Let's call it an even break and let it go at that. I've got to hand it to you fellows for the way you're standing by Dick, and you can bet I'll do my part. Now I must get out; I've got a whole descrip. assignment to work off before I turn in." And he went while the going was good.

Partly because he thought Purdick needed it, Larry told the story of the evening's happenings, after he got back to the upper room in the Man-o'-War. But little Purdick's prejudices in the matter of the classes and masses were too deeply ingrained to be removed by a single instance on the other side of the ledger.

"Of course they'd back him to stay," he offered. "It would give them a bad black

eye if he had to get out in disgrace. What they're going to do is only a matter of self-preservation."

"Purdy," said Larry, as he got out his drawing-board and settled down to his descriptive geometry, "there are times when you make my back ache, and this is one of them. Got your trig.? All right; you go to bed and get out of my way. I'm due to crowd about two days' work into the next hour and a half."

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## IX

### IN TIME OF FLOOD

The spring which was approaching at the time when Dixie Maxwell so nearly fell over the edge of things was one which will be long remembered in the river valleys of the Middle West. During the winter there had been heavy snows, well distributed over vast areas, and after the winter was over, the storms continued, only they turned into soaking rains to patter incessantly upon all roofs and to flood the ditches on all roads, making each little ravine and hollow in the land contribute its small torrent to the rising rivers.

It was at the close of the third day of steady rain that Larry came back from his reportorial trip to the *Micrometer* office dripping like a wet umbrella.

“Woosh! some little old spell of wet weather, I’ll say!” he exclaimed, stripping off his rain coat, and disappearing for a moment while he hung it over the tub in the bath-room.

“River still rising?” asked Purdick, when Larry came back.

“About a mile a minute, you’d say. It’s up within a few feet of the bridge deck right now. They’re saying, over town, that the railroad bridge won’t stand it.”

“The Main Street bridge will go first,” Purdick predicted. “Last year, one time when the water was low, you could see the bottom of the piers sticking out like toes out of a broken boot. Looked to me as if they weren’t founded upon anything but the sand and gravel.”

“If the Main Street bridge goes out it will take the railroad bridge with it,” said Larry. “In the *Chronicle* office they told me the wires are down in every direction and the whole country’s in trouble.”

“We’ll get it here, too,” asserted Purdick, who seemed to be full of gloomy forebodings. “This town was flooded once before, away back in the early days. I’ve been listening for the bell ever since you went away.”

“To call the fellows out? Most of them are out now. Fellows who own boats are hard at it, dragging them up to higher ground. The boat-houses are all afloat and

some of them have been washed away. I'm going out again as soon as I get my descrip."

"I'd go with you if I had a raincoat," said Purdick.

"I've got an old one that's too small for me. Pile in and get your work up and we'll take a whirl at it together."

Following this there was a silent interval of strenuous study, while the rain, coming in sheets, hissed upon the windowpanes. At the end of it, when Purdick was pushing his chair back and Larry was filling in the last few lines of his demonstration drawings, the big clock bell in the college tower was booming out its call in the "general alarm."

"That means us," said Larry, jumping up and leaving his drawing unfinished. "Something's happening."

A few minutes later they were "afoot and afloat," as Purdick put it. The streets were rivers, and in places the sidewalks were under water. The college buildings and suburb, situated upon a reasonably elevated level above the river, were out of danger, and so was the greater part of the town proper on the opposite side of the river. But there were bottom lands on both banks of the stream—protected in some measure, to be sure, by old levees—which were pretty sure to go under if the flood should rise high enough.

As they pushed on toward the river there seemed to be every indication that the flood had already reached the danger line. In the darkness—and there were some localities which the street electrics, which were still going, did not reach—people were abandoning the lowland houses, many of them hurrying to higher ground with only such of their belongings as they could carry in their arms. Autos were coming and going in the downpour, and in the threatened area a little army of Sheddon men was at work, helping the inhabitants to save what they could.

In the lowest part of the district some of the houses were already surrounded by water which had seeped in through the old levee; had seeped in and was now coming in faster than ever as the river rose on the other side of the embankment. Some of the college men, owning canoes and row-boats, had dragged them over the levee to launch them in the flooded bottom, and when Larry and Purdick got on the ground these makeshift ferries were doing good work.

“Great Jehu!” Purdick gasped; “if that old levee should break through it would drown everybody!”

“Work’s the word!” Larry shouted, whereupon they jumped in with the first group of college men they came to and went at it.

That was the beginning of a pretty strenuous night for all concerned. Fortunately, there was a generous supply of willing workers, and after getting the people out to a place of safety, the salvagers turned in to save such of their belongings as could be gotten out of the houses and carried up to the higher ground. It was along about midnight that the rising flood put the electric lights out of commission, but after that, bonfires were built, and by the light of them the salvaging went on as best it could.

In the confusion Larry soon lost little Purdick, and about the time the bonfires were getting themselves built, he found himself working with a gang of the Zeta Omegas captained by Wally Dixon, whose bull-bellow of a voice could make itself heard in anything short of a boiler-shop. Dickie Maxwell was also in this gang, and Larry collared him at once for a team-mate.

“That house down yonder by the lumber pile,” Larry said, pointing; “the woman that lives in it told me just now that she hadn’t saved anything but her children and the clothes they stood in. Let’s get one of the boats and see if we can find something that’s worth carrying out.”

“There wouldn’t be much that we could put into one of these cockleshell canoes,” Dick returned. “But we can go around on the levee and get to the house easy by wading a little.”

That seemed perfectly feasible, so long as the levee was still holding, so they ran stumbling along in the uncertain light of the fires to the main street, which was on a fill, and thus reached the wide embankment bordering on the river. Here they had as good a view as the rain and darkness permitted of the situation, a view which had been hitherto cut off by the levee. On the “seaward” side of the levee, so to speak, the river was running bank-full, a muddy, tumultuous flood carrying wreckage of every description, uprooted trees, rafts of fence posts still linked together by their barbed wire, the gatherings from stream-side sawmills and lumber yards, and now and then a chicken coop or some other out-building bobbing up and down or rolling over as the strong current laid hold of it.

Near at hand was the main bridge connecting the college suburb with the town, substantial steel trusses resting upon stone piers. It was still standing, and was apparently intact, though the water was up to the level of the floor, and the flood was constantly hurling floating drift wreckage against it.

“How about it?” said Dick, with awe in his voice. “Think it’ll hold?”

“Don’t seem as if it could,” Larry doubted. Then: “We’ll have to hurry. If the bridge should go, we’d be cut off. It would take the levee with it, sure.”

It was a rather foolhardy thing to do; to risk their lives for the sake of a trifling property salvage, but in such times of excitement even a pretty level-headed person is likely to do things that wouldn’t stand the test of a little cool reasoning and good judgment. Hurrying along on the inner edge of the wide embankment, they soon came opposite the house they had marked from the other side, but it was only to find that the seepage lake was already lapping half-way up the window openings, and that there was no possible chance of saving anything.

“Hard luck for the poor woman,” said Dick, and then, at a great splash and a shudder that set the solid embankment trembling under their feet: “Look at that, will you?”

“That” was a huge landslide on the river side of the levee; a gigantic bite taken out of the solid earth a short distance from where they were standing. What it meant became instantly apparent. With the flood gnawing hungrily in the gap it would be but a short time until the levee must be breached and the river would pour through.

It was a trying moment for the two who stood alone on the threatened barrier. True enough, their way of escape was still open. All they had to do was to run back to the Main Street bridge and so gain the street and sprint to safety up the hill to higher ground. But, on the other hand, there were people on the lower ground, drenched groups lingering in the hope of still being able to save something from their dwellings. And on the rising lake, paddling to and fro among the slowly submerging houses, were a number of the Sheddon rescuers, all unconscious of the fate that was reaching for them.

“Hi, there, you fellows!” shouted Dick, being the first to find his tongue, “paddle for it and drive those people up the hill!—the levee’s breaking!”

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The shouted-out warning didn't do a bit of good. What with the crackling roar of the bonfires, the shouts of the rescuers, and the growling thunder of the flood, nothing short of a steam siren could have made itself heard from the top of the embankment.

"It's no use!" Larry bawled in Dick's ear. "They can't hear, and we've got to get 'em out of there quick. Come on!"

Running quickly down the inner slope of the levee, they yelled the warning to the nearest boat-load. "Levee's going! Get out—get out and warn the others!" they shouted, running along close to the water's edge, and as they ran they saw the warned ones turning tail and paddling like mad for the landward shore, spreading the warning as they went. But even so, the pair who had started the thing could not have covered the entire area if they hadn't had the good luck to find a stranded canoe that had gotten away from its owner and drifted over to the levee shore of the flooded district.

"Here's what we need!" gasped Larry, fairly falling into the treasure-trove canoe. "Grab that paddle and dig for it! There are more of the fellows up there among those shacks just ahead!"

As he spoke, a row-boat, loaded to the gunwales with refugees and their dunnage and pulled by Welborn and another of the Aggies, came through an opening between two of the houses. Welborn and his partner had already got the warning and were hurrying for all they were worth, but they backed water long enough to shout to the two in the canoe.

"All out but a couple o' the fellows over in that farther house. Their canoe's stove. We hadn't room for 'em: go get 'em!"

At the word, Larry and Dick dipped the paddles and sent their light craft spinning toward the outlying house, a story-and-a-half frame with the water already lapping over the window sills on the main floor. Approaching it from the rear, they saw no signs of the marooned ones. As they backed water at the kitchen door another rumbling slump and a splash told them that more of the levee had been carried away by the river. Their time was frightfully short, and they knew it.

"I don't hear 'em—they must be around in front," Dick jerked out; but when they essayed to paddle around the house they found the way blocked by a

chicken-wire fence. And the precious seconds of time were racing.

Balked by the fence, they quickly handed the canoe back to the rear entrance, and tying it to a porch post, jumped out to wade through the open door into the kitchen. There was no light save that which came from the distant bonfires, and this was partly cut off by the half-drawn window shades. The water was over knee-deep on the house floor, and Dick stumbled over a floating chair.

“Queer we don’t see or hear anything of ’em,” he said. Then: “Maybe they’re up-stairs—sure, that’s where they’d be, trying to flag somebody from the windows on the street. I believe that’s them you can hear yelling right now.”

The answer to that suggestion, of course, was to try to find the way to the upper story, and to do it swiftly. Larry laid hold of the knob of the first door that he came to, hauled it open against the impending drag of the flood, and plunged blindly ahead, with Dick at his heels. At the first step both of them lost their footing and found themselves floundering in utter darkness and in water over their heads. In his haste and excitement Larry had opened the door leading to the cellar.

Since both were good swimmers there was nothing much to the plunge but a sudden ducking, and as they were both soaked to the skin anyway, this didn’t matter. But when they groped around and got the cellar stair under their feet, old Brother Calamity reached out and grabbed them. By some twist of the rising flood the cellar door had been swung to, and there must have been a spring catch on it. For when they braced themselves as best they could on the steps and tried to open it, it wouldn’t move.

“Gee!” said Dick, with his teeth chattering, “we’re trapped right, this time. When the water fills this stairwell we’ll drown!”

Almost as he spoke they heard thumping footsteps on the house stair over their heads, followed by a great splashing in the room beyond the trapping door. Then, quite distinctly, a voice which they both recognized as that of the sham “lame dog” who had once taken a thrashing at Larry’s hands in Farmer Holdsworth’s stubble field, shouted: “Come on, Bry!—here’s a canoe tied to the back porch. Bring that sack of swag and hop in.” And the splashing stopped abruptly with a double tumble into the boat and a quick dipping of paddles.

“Huh!” Dick shivered; “Bry Underhill and Snitty Crawford. And neither one of

them stopped to think that there might be somebody else needing that canoe. Besides that, they were *looting!*”

“Never mind them,” Larry put in. “We’ve got to get out of this trap somehow. Brace your feet against the wall and hold me while I shove.”

Dick braced and Larry shoved. There was a tearing of screws from their holdings and the door swung open. Wading into the kitchen they made their way to the front of the house and got to the porch in time to see their canoe, with two swaying figures in it paddling for dear life, disappear among the half-submerged houses.

Larry slipped out of his rain coat and began to get rid of everything down to shirt and trousers, and Dick quickly followed his example. The flooded area behind the levee was now completely deserted, and there was little hope that they would be missed and sought for in time to do any good.

“What’d we better do?” Dick asked. “Shall we swim for it? Or would it be safer to take a chance with the house when it floats off its foundations?”

They were saved the trouble of making the decision. While they were still stripping to be prepared for the worst there was an earthquake upheaval somewhere in the background, followed instantly by the onrush of a wall of water that toppled the house sidewise from its underpinning and heaved it over into a street which had suddenly become a seething millrace of mud, water and wreckage, and the catastrophe had climaxed.

Going over it afterward, neither one of them could give any connected account of the battle for life into which the breaking of the levee had flung them. With a thousand chances to one of being overwhelmed in the watery avalanche, they clung to one of the porch pillars of the overturned house; choked, climbed and clung again when the house was dashed against an embankment which they took to be the Main Street fill at the bridge end; had a passing glimpse of the bridge itself shuddering to its fall; were buried and half-drowned once more when the approach fill gave way before the onrushing flood; and finally emerged, gasping, in a tangle of trees, broken buildings and floating débris of all sorts caught against a barrier which they presently realized was the lower railroad bridge.

Cautiously, and in darkness that was almost thick enough to be felt, and also in momentary fear that this second bridge would go out and leave them struggling

again, they clambered over the floating islands of wreckage, pulled themselves up to the almost submerged railroad structure, and groped their way on hands and knees over the cross-ties until they found that they were crawling in the mud of the mainland.

Here Dick dropped like a stone, and Larry had to work over him for quite a little while before he was able to get up and stumble on. Luckily, they found themselves on their own side of the river, and by making a long circuit over the railroad track, they got back to the college suburb.

Soaked, bedraggled and thinly clothed as they were, they were still unwilling to quit before they had learned what the broken levee had done to things. Upon reaching the streets of the devastated area; streets now crowded with anxious and curious spectators; they found that while the levee was gone, the big bridge wrecked, and the property damage was immense, there were no lives lost, so far as anybody could tell, though there was a spreading rumor that two of the college men had been last seen going to a house which had been swept away when the levee broke.

“That will b-be us,” shivered Dick, who was too cold and tired to be careful of his English. “They’ll find out by to-morrow or next week that we didn’t get drowned after all. Let’s go hunt us a place where there is a fire and something hot to drink. I’m frozen just about solid.”

That was the wind-up of the night of catastrophes for the “Timanyoni Twins.” But there were consequences which were to bear fruit a little farther along. A grateful citizenry, appreciative of the good work done in the night of peril by the student body of Old Sheddon, held a town meeting and voted to erect a much-needed addition to the college gymnasium as a sort of memorial. On a bronze plate set in the wall were to be inscribed the names of the students who had rendered the most signal service, and Larry, looking over the blue-prints some week or so later with a bunch of the men of his own section in the Mechanical, flamed out wrathfully when he saw the names of Underhill and Crawford included in the list.

Neither he nor Dick had said anything about the discovery they had made in the last of the deserted houses, but this inclusion of the two who had taken the canoe without a thought for what had become of the man or men who had tied it to the porch was the back-breaking straw.

“Fellows,” he broke out hotly, “it’s up to us to see to it that two names are taken off of this thing. Underhill and Crawford were not helping; they were simply looting!”

If things were always done right end to in this world, a charge thus openly made would have been investigated, and the guilty ones, if proved guilty, would have been punished. But, undergraduate human nature being what it is, the charge never got itself formally before the faculty or the student council. What did happen was only a sort of half-measure. A couple of the fellows who had heard Larry’s angry accusation were curious enough to look for evidences of looting in Crawford’s and Underhill’s rooms.

The evidences were not lacking. Since the dwellings in the flooded area were those of the poor, there was little in them to tempt a thief who would steal for the intrinsic value of the things stolen. But both Underhill and Crawford had that distorted sense of humor which is sometimes found in fellows who decorate their rooms with sign-boards and other property stolen from their rightful owners, and among the ornaments in Underhill’s room were several framed mottoes in cheap frames, “God Bless Our Home,” “What Is Home Without a Mother,” things like that, the very nature of which in such surroundings sufficiently betrayed their origin.

So Larry’s indignant charge got itself corroborated in the gossip of the campus, and Merkle and two or three other sober-minded upperclassmen took it up, with the result that the names of the two looters disappeared from the drawings of the proposed memorial bronze.

But there was also another result. Since the truth can sometimes bite through the thickest hide, Larry Donovan was soon to find that he had made an implacable enemy in Old Sheddon. But of that, however, he remained happily ignorant for the time being.

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# X

## AT THE SIGN OF THE SAMOVAR

As the season advanced, Larry found that he had his hands full, and then some. Havercamp was unwilling to let him off from his *Micrometer* assignment, and what with that and his studies, and boosting Dick to make up the lost standing, and going out with the team every time Coach Brock gave it a work-out, there was little chance for him to get rusty for the want of something to do.

It was along in these early spring days that Dick had to pay for his foolishness—not to call it by any harder name. True, Uncle Billy Starbuck, his father's partner in the "Little Alice" mine, and his uncle only because his father and Uncle Billy had married sisters, sent him a birthday check along in April that enabled him to square things with his frat brothers who were carrying him along financially, but no check, however generous, could buy him off on the score of the neglected studies.

So, at a time when every fellow in Old Sheddon who had a drop of good red blood in him was turning out for some kind of outdoor activity, and soft skies and budding trees and greening meadows were calling so that you could almost hear them in your sleep, Dick was boning away for dear life, scared stiff more than half of the time for fear he wouldn't be able to make his final passing grades, and learning, incidentally, we may suppose, the hard lesson that we all have to learn sooner or later, that he who plays must pay.

"Gosh!" he lamented, one night after Larry had been putting him through a regular course of sprouts on some of the back work in Math., "I'd been meaning to try out for one of the track teams this spring, and now look at me—handcuffed to a pencil and a pad, and with my nose glued into a book! Makes me think of old Johnnie Mawker oiling the train trucks in the Brewster station. Recollect how he used to grin and show his bad teeth when he'd jerk open a housing and prod in it with his hook, and say: 'Shore enough, b'ys, the way of the train's greaser is hard'? How's the practice coming along? I haven't so much as looked over the fence of the field this year."

"We're doing fairly well. If there's anything in hard work, Brock means to put a good team into the fight next fall. Wally Dixon's coming out fine. I'm mighty glad Brock nicked him. He's got all-star stuff in him if he can take on a little

grad Green picked him. He's got an star start in him if he can take on a race more swiftness."

"Wally's all sorts of a good fellow," said Dick, half musingly. "We call him 'The Butcher' in the house—I suppose because his Dad's in the packing business, but that, or his Dad's money, doesn't hurt him any."

"No," Larry agreed. "'Dad's money' doesn't always spoil a fellow. There's Ollie McKnight, for example."

Dick smiled.

"Getting rid of a few of the old grouches, aren't you?"

"Trying to," Larry confessed. "But when I run up against a fellow like Bryant Underhill it comes pretty hard."

"Yes, Underhill," said Dick, and his eyes darkened. "He and his bunch of Snitty-Crawford boot-lickers! You give that gang a wide berth, Larry. They're all bad medicine, as you and I both have reason to know."

Larry sat back in his chair, and the wide-set eyes were half-closed.

"Do you remember, one time last summer when we were on the railroad job, I told you I had a bad temper, Dick? Well, I've got it yet, and a sore of the Underhill sort comes as near to getting my goat as anything can. You know how he tried to make me 'bust' last winter?"

"Sure I do."

"Well, he's at it again, in another way. He's trying now to get me shoved off the team."

Dick straightened up hot-eyed.

"That's because you told the fellows what he and Crawford were doing the night of the flood," he snapped. "But he'd better keep his mouth shut! I could tell things about him that would get him fired out of college so quick it'd make his head swim!"

"Easy, you old firebrand," said Larry; "you've got your own quarrel with Underhill on that 'Mixer' business, but this one is mine, and I'm big enough to

Underhill on that mixer business, but this one is mine, and I'm big enough to fight my own battles."

"What's he doing now?" Dick demanded.

"Telling lies about me, chiefly. Purdy gets onto everything of that sort"—little Purdick was out somewhere, and the two had the big room in the Man-o'-War to themselves.

"What sort of lies?"

"Dirty ones. You remember when the Underhill Contracting Company had a job on the Short Line a couple of years ago? Underhill was out there a while that summer, stopping at the hotel in Brewster most of the time, I guess, and he claims that he found out a lot about me and my people. Shubrick had his mother and sister down here last week on a visit, and Underhill told Shuby he'd better not introduce me; that I wasn't the kind of fellow he'd want his folks to meet."

Dick got up, and his eyes were blazing out of a face that was as white as a sheet of paper.

"There's a limit to all things, Larry!" he broke out furiously. "Do you suppose I could break into Prexy's house at this time of night?"

"Of course you couldn't," said Larry calmly. "Why should you want to?"

"You know good and well why I want to. Underhill's smashed every rule and every tradition of Old Sheddon ever since he first hit the campus last fall. He's not only a boozier and a gambler—he's a cheat. I stood in for him and his crowd that time when the police caught us, and mighty nearly got canned for it. But now I'm going to tell everything I know!"

"You're not going to do anything you say you will," Larry put in, decisively. "As I told you a minute or so ago, I can fight my own battles."

"Not with that kind of carrion, you can't," Dick denied; "you're too open and aboveboard. He'll do you up if you don't let me kill him off."

Any further talk about the Underhill come-back had to stop just here, because Welborn came in, wishful to know at what place in the book the English assignment for the next day paused; and shortly afterward Dick took his leave.

Like a regular fellow, Larry tried to forget the Underhill-Shubrick incident; tried, also, to keep from watching his team-mates to see if the lies had spread to the extent of making any difference, so far as he could determine, but he was wise enough to understand that a practice field would be exactly the place in which a bunch of fellows wouldn't draw any hard-and-fast social lines.

But the dirt-throwing bobbed up again early in May on a Saturday when the newly organized 'Varsity was to put on a practice game with the Sophomores, and this was the way of it.

As everybody knows, visitors are not usually invited to witness the spring training games, but on this particular day there were two outsiders, a middle-aged gentleman and a girl, in the grand stand, guests of a Senior named MacClay, and at sight of the girl Larry was carried swiftly back to a day in the year-before summer; to a mountain canyon scarred and shattered in spots by the ripping of dynamite blasts, and to the foot-board of a big locomotive gingerly towing two Pullmans up the heavy grade.

"Remember 'em?" asked Dick, who was by this time far enough along in his make-up work to take an occasional Saturday afternoon off on the field.

"Sure," Larry nodded. "Vice-president Holcombe of our line and his daughter—the girl who wanted to know if my last name wasn't German."

Dick grinned.

"You've got a long memory—for little pin-pricks," he laughed. "Mr. Holcombe is MacClay's uncle. He and Bess were passing through in the V-P's private car, and Mac got 'em to stop over. You haven't met 'em yet, I take it?"

Larry shook his head. "No; and I'm not likely to. I'm out here to play foot-ball." And, as Coach Brock put him in just here, he did play foot-ball; played it so well that the scattering of more or less enthusiastic student spectators in the stands gave him ear-splitting credit by name every time he scored.

It was after the practice game that MacClay invited some of his friends and the members of the 'Varsity to come around to the little college inn, "At the Sign of the Samovar," to meet his uncle and cousin; and Dick, who was watching things like a hawk hovering over a chicken yard, noticed that the team invitation was given to the various members individually, and that MacClay dodged Larry.

Dick's suspicions were aroused at once, but all he did at the time was to ask Larry to come over to the Samovar later in the afternoon; did this without saying anything about the impromptu reception for MacClay's guests—and without saying anything to MacClay.

At the appointed time there was a gathering of the invited ones in the club room of the little inn, with Dick—who had naturally been included in the bidding, since his father was the general manager of the railroad of which Mr. Holcombe was the vice-president—among them. Apart from this, however, Dick knew the Holcombes well from having spent part of a summer with them at a mountain resort in Colorado.

It was rather early in the reception affair that Bess Holcombe got Dick aside to ask him a question.

“Tell me, Dickie,” she said; “who was the ‘Donovan’ who was playing at right half and scored so many times. Surely he isn't our Donovan, is he?”

Dick knew quite well what she meant by the personal pronoun possessive. On that never-to-be-forgotten day in the mountain canyon less than a year before, the Pullman car, holding only Miss Holcombe, four women and the porter, had slipped its brakes for a runaway down the grade, and it was Larry's quick wit and cool courage in chasing it with one of the construction engines that had saved the lives of the imperilled ones.

“He is our Larry, all right,” Dick replied. “Didn't you know that he came here to Old Sheddon with me?”

“There are lots of things I don't know about him,” was the quick rejoinder. “For one thing, I never could find out why he ran away that day last summer and wouldn't let us even so much as thank him for saving our lives.”

“Bashful,” Dick laughed, though he knew very well that it was grouchiness and workingman prejudice rather more than bashfulness that had made Larry take to the woods on that memorable afternoon.

“Where is he?” the girl asked. “I think I've met all the other members of the team, haven't I?”

“He'll be over, after a little,” said Dick; and just then MacClay butted in and took his cousin away to meet another group of his classmates.

took his cousin away to meet another group of his classmates.

It was shortly after this that MacClay took his turn at drawing Dick Maxwell aside.

“You were talking to Bess a few minutes ago: it was about Donovan, wasn’t it?” he asked.

“Yes.”

“Didn’t I hear you say that he was coming here?”

Dick was beginning to be a trifle nettled.

“You might have, if you ‘listened in’ hard enough.”

“Who invited him?”

“I did.”

“Now see here, Maxie; you’re not a dead one, and you must have heard the stories that are going around about Donovan. For that matter, you come from the same town, and you must know what sort of a fellow he is.”

Dick straightened himself belligerently.

“You’re just the man I’ve been looking for, MacClay; somebody who can tell me precisely the sort of fellow Larry Donovan is. It’s just possible that I don’t know; I haven’t been acquainted with him more than ten or a dozen years.”

MacClay looked embarrassed. He was a very decent fellow in the main, though somewhat inclined to take himself and his own little world a trifle too seriously.

“I’ll just ask you one question, Maxie: have you any sisters?”

“Yes; two of ’em.”

“Would you be willing to have Donovan meet them?”

“Rats! They’re only kids, but, barring the difference in ages, he’s known them as long and as well as he has me.”

“And he’s accepted by your people—in your home?”

“Of course he is. Why shouldn’t he be?”

MacClay looked still more embarrassed.

“There’s a mistake out, somewhere,” he said. “Shubrick was telling me—”

“Who told Shubrick?” Dick cut in.

“Underhill, I believe. The story goes that Underhill lived for some time in your home town and knew all about the Donovans.”

“Exactly,” snapped Dick. “Just after the Rockford Poly game last fall, Bry Underhill took occasion to black-list Larry to a bunch of the fellows for no better reason than that his father was a workingman. Larry happened to overhear what he said and was going to lick him, but the other fellows got in and stopped it. Bry bragged then that he’d run Larry out of Old Sheddon, and he tried to do it, using Snitty Crawford for a cat’s-paw. Now he is trying, in another way, to get him shoved off the team. There isn’t a single word of truth in the stories he’s telling around about Larry and his people, and I’d be willing to bet my next year’s allowance that he never so much as heard of Larry until he came here to Sheddon.”

MacClay spread his hands.

“Of course, I’m taking your word for it, Maxie, straight from the shoulder,” he said, heartily enough. “I didn’t want to believe this mess of gossip about Donovan; but at the same time, Bess is my only girl cousin, and—well, you know how a fellow feels about such things.”

“Sure I do,” Dick acceded cheerfully. “All I’ll say is that you owe Larry something for singling him out as the only man on the team that you didn’t invite here this afternoon; also, you owe him something for saving Bess’s life last summer. You can make a payment on both debts by giving Underhill’s lies a bash in the face every time you get a chance.”

“I’ll do it,” MacClay promised, and then Dick went to the door to watch for Larry’s coming, knowing pretty well the Donovan disposition to break and run at the most remote first view of anything like a social function.

For the purpose Dick had in mind, it was lucky that he was waiting at the door when Larry turned in from the street. Having been so carefully ignored in the invitation-giving, Larry knew nothing about the small “informal” at the Samovar. But like the war horse in the Bible, he scented the battle from afar just about as soon as he left the sidewalk, and Dick’s unworded prophecy that he would duck and run would have had its fulfilment if the watcher at the door hadn’t chased out and grabbed him.

“No, you don’t,” Dick laughed; “I was laying for you, you old dodger.”

“But what is it?” Larry wanted to know. “And where do I come in?”

“By the front door, if you’re asking me. I was afraid you’d forget and not come at all.”

“If it’s some social doings, I wish I had forgotten. You know well enough that I’m no earthly good at that sort of thing.”

“I know you’re going to be good at this one. Come on in and take your medicine like mamma’s little man.” And Larry had to go, because Dick had such a firm grip on him that a frantic wrestling match was about the only thing that offered any chance of escape.

Now, with Richard Maxwell, junior, a purpose usually held much more than was suffered to appear on the surface. From the moment at the close of the foot-ball practice when he had discovered that Larry was left out of the invitation list, he had been plotting like the villain in a play, and thus far there had been no hitch. What was particularly needed was an audience of sufficient size, and this he had secured by taking it upon himself to add handsomely to MacClay’s biddings, telling as many of the men as he could reach in the time afforded that they owed it to MacClay to come around and do honor to his guests.

Therefore and wherefore it was a pretty well crowded club-room that Larry was presently dragged into, and Dick didn’t give him a moment in which to cool his heels—or his courage. Almost before he knew what was happening, Larry found himself shaking hands with a tall, well-preserved gentleman with a mop of graying hair which looked as if it might once have belonged to a foot-ball captain, and the gentleman was saying, evidently following up something that Dick had said:

“So you’re *that* Donovan, are you? Well, now—this is a pleasure that I’ve been promising myself ever since last summer. Why did you run away without giving us a chance to thank you for the splendid thing you and Dick did when our Pullman broke loose?”

Larry said, “I don’t know, Mr. Holcombe,” which was about as near the fact as he could come without going into an explanation a mile long, and that probably wouldn’t be understood after it was made.

“I believe you are right,” smiled the tall man; and then he was wise enough, or kindly enough, to steer away from that subject and start another upon which Larry was much more at home. “I was watching your play this afternoon with a great deal of interest. We used to play a sort of game that we called foot-ball in my college days, and there was a time when I thought I was something of a dabster at it myself. Do you play on the ’Varsity next year?”

“If I can make good in the practice.”

“I guess there is no fear but what you’ll do that,” and while the visitor went on talking about foot-ball and the tremendous improvements—“differences,” he called them—which the game had taken on since his own time, the second layer in Dick’s purpose uncovered itself. With a deft cleverness all his own, he was contriving to get just as many of those present as possible to observe the cordial footing upon which the vice-president of the Nevada Short Line (no inconsiderable railroad, if you please!) was meeting Larry Donovan. And the cap-sheaf to that was placed when the great man finally called his daughter and turned Larry over to her.

“I think it is high time you were letting me say ‘Thank you,’ Mr. Donovan,” was the way Miss Bessie began on him; and there was a dog-like plea in his eyes when he blurted out:

“Oh, say—please don’t ‘Mister’ me; I—I’m just ‘Larry’ to my friends, and—and \_\_\_\_\_”

“And we are your friends; you can certainly count upon that. But tell me, how did you *ever* have the nerve to chase that runaway car?”

“Why-ee, I don’t know. I guess it didn’t take so very much nerve. You see, it had to be done. The car was running away.”

“Oh! So things that have to be done don’t require extra courage. Is that what you’re trying to tell me? It’ll take more than the bare saying so to convince me. Let’s go somewhere and sit down.”

Again Dick uncovered that purposeful second layer. “You see,” he said to one of the fellows who he knew had been carelessly spreading Underhill’s calumnies; “you see how people who really know Donnie appreciate him. Bess Holcombe met him last summer out in Colorado, you know, and, incidentally, he saved her life on a runaway car—no, not an auto—a Pullman on the railroad. You couldn’t tell the Holcombes anything against him, and get away with it.”

Oddly enough, after the first few minutes, Larry found himself getting along very well indeed with the daughter of, perhaps, the richest man he had ever shaken hands with. Which was something to Miss Holcombe’s credit, too, for she was rather fond of taking “rises” out of bashful young fellows. Most naturally, their talk went back to that day in the Tourmaline Canyon at first, but it got around to more modern things after a bit.

“You are taking the Mechanical course in Sheddon?” the girl asked, when things present had been given a chance.

“Taking at it,” said Larry modestly.

“And Dickie Maxwell’s in Civil?”

“He is. His father is a C. E., you know.”

“Mr. Maxwell is a Sheddon old-grad., isn’t he?”

“Yes; that is how Dick and I come to be here. It’s a good old dump.”

The girl laughed.

“If you go on playing foot-ball the way you did this afternoon, you’ll put Sheddon on the map,” she said. “Where did you learn?”

“Brewster High. We had a corking team for a bunch of kids. I’ll say that much for it if it did have to count me in as right half.”

“That is where you’ll play on the ’Varsity, isn’t it?”

“Surest thing you know—if Coach Brock doesn’t find a better man.”

If any one had told Larry one short hour earlier that at half-past five that same afternoon he would be talking thus chummily with a girl—any girl, let alone Miss Elizabeth Holcombe—he would have taken a chance and called that person a hopeless pipe-dreamer. More than that, he went on talking with her, and still more, when the time came for the guests to go to the eastbound train to which their private car was to be attached, he made one of a group of Dick’s and MacClay’s intimates who went to the station to see them off.

It was while they were walking together back to the college side of the river over the reconstructed Main Street bridge that Larry said to Dick: “Did you hear what Miss Bess said to me as I was putting her on her car?”

“Asked you to come to see her if you ever came to New York, didn’t she?”

“That was it. I wonder if you could tell me if she really meant it.”

“Meant it? Of course she did. Why shouldn’t she?”

Larry’s answer was no answer at all, but what he said marked a distinct milestone in his changing—and broadening—attitude toward the moneyed minority.

“The Holcombes seem to be just ‘folks’ like the rest of us,” was his summing up of the plunge into the social amenities; and Dick was wise enough to let the remark stand just as it was made.

That evening Larry went over to the Omeg house to help Dick “bone” a little more against some tests that were coming. After the work session was over, Dick sat back with a quizzical smile and said: “I don’t think you’ll have any more trouble with the Underhill lies now, Larry—after what happened this afternoon.”

“Ump,” said Larry. “I’ve been thinking: I guess it wasn’t so much of a ‘happening’ as it might have been. Didn’t you know that I was the only member of the team that wasn’t invited to the Samovar?”

“Maybe I did.”

“And you ‘framed’ it so I’d have to meet the Holcombes anyway, even if

And you planned it so I'd have to meet the HOBBOLES anyway, even if MacClay didn't want me to?"

Dick's smile broadened into a mischievous grin.

"What you don't know won't ever hurt you one little bit," he replied banteringly; adding, as Larry got up to go: "I owe you more than I can ever pay, anyhow. Let's let it go at that. But there's one other little thing I'd like to say. I happen to know that Bry Underhill is perfectly savage about the thing you let out on him—stealing those mottoes from the flooded house. The next time he takes a lick at you he's going to make it count, if he can. Just thought I'd mention it so you could watch out. Night-night."

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# XI

## IN WHICH LARRY HAS A HEADACHE

Schools of journalism are doubtless excellent things in their way, but many a bright young newspaperman has had his start in helping to keep a college daily “functioning,” so to speak. Beginning with the athletic reporter’s job on the *Micrometer* by writing copious columns which the editor usually cut to paragraphs, Larry was learning, and Havercamp, who was slated for editor-in-chief for the next college year, kept a weighing-and-measuring eye on the big, curly-headed Freshman who was slowly but surely learning the lesson of what ought, and what ought not, to be printed in a college newspaper.

“Ever been in Yellowstone Park, Larry?” Havercamp asked, one night in May when Larry had stayed over in town to help put the paper to bed.

“Not yet,” said Larry. “Why?”

“You remind me of one of the geysers—Old Faithful. Goes off at regular intervals and never misses a lick. That’s what counts in the long run—even more than the brilliant intellect you read about—and don’t often see. You can’t write much yet, but you have the knack of being able to tell when the other fellow writes right. Do you get me?”

“I guess so,” Larry laughed. “You’re trying to feed me up a bit, aren’t you?”

“Something of the sort, yes. In a few weeks we’ll be electing the editorial staff of the ‘*Mike*’ for next year. Some of the fellows think you ought to run for athletic editor. The ‘*Mike*’s’ going to need a ‘steady’ or so next year, and you’d fill the bill.”

“Not good enough,” Larry objected decisively.

“That’s for the other fellows to say. I think you are.”

“You ought to have a frat man,” was Larry’s next objection. “The fraternities have taken a good deal of interest in athletics this year and they ought to be encouraged.”

THE END OF THE FIRST PART OF THE STORY OF LARRY HAVERCAMP

Havercamp grinned. He was one of the most enthusiastic fraternity men in Sheddon, and it amused him hugely to have a barbarian pointing out that the fraternities ought to be “encouraged.”

“Think we need ‘hoping up’ some, do you?” he laughed. “I like your cheek. Is that the best you can offer?”

“The best, but not all,” Larry went on. “I’m willing to do what comes my way to keep any of the Sheddon activities going. Just the same, though I don’t know where I’m going to land at the end of my four years, I’m reasonably sure it won’t be on a newspaper job. Another thing is, if I don’t fall down, I expect to be on the team next year.”

“That wouldn’t make any difference,” said Havercamp. “Anything else?”

Larry looked down.

“Yes. You know it as well as I do, Havvy, that I’m not ‘popular’ in any big sense. Fellows on the *Micrometer* staff ought to be popular.”

The managing editor sat back in his chair with his eyes half closed.

“That little thing has puzzled me more than a few, Donnie,” he admitted.

“But you know it’s so,” Larry persisted.

“I know that some of the fellows seem to be always trying to put you in bad, yes; and I’ve never seen any reason for it.”

Larry thought he knew the reason, but he was close-mouthed enough about his own affairs not to wish to talk about this particular one. He knew he had earned the enmity of Bryant Underhill and his following, and that meant the enmity of whatever proportion of the student body Underhill and his cronies could influence.

“I guess maybe there’s reason enough—for the fellows who do it,” was all he said in reply to Havercamp’s implied question; and just then the first copies of the paper came up, and they both fell to work scanning these preliminary “pulls” for last-minute correction of errors.

“Bry Underhill is one of the fellows who has it in for you,” Havercamp resumed,

after the “go ahead” order had been ’phoned down to the press room.

“I know it,” said Larry. “At first he was sore at me because my father happens to be a railroad man working for day-pay instead of a salary. And now he’s got a bigger grudge—since Dick and I caught him and Crawford looting a house for ‘souvenirs’ on the night of the flood, and I was brash enough to talk about it.”

Havercamp shook his head.

“Underhill’s a bad actor. But because he flings his dad’s money around with an open hand and drives a sporty auto and poses as a ‘free and easy,’ he has a following—such fellows always do have. What I can’t understand is how he gets by with the Registrar in his classroom record. Nobody ever hears of his doing any real work.”

“There are others, as well,” said Larry; and as he was leaving the little editorial den on the top floor of the *Chronicle* Building to go home: “There are times when a fellow is tempted to believe that money—enough of it—will buy most anything in this world, Havvy. So long. Got to mog over to the shack and get down to brass tacks; couple of tests coming to-morrow.”

Now, as every one who is familiar with the town of which Old Sheddon is an over-the-river part knows, the *Chronicle* Building is well up the hill on the left-hand side of the main street, not quite out of the business district, but well over in the edge of it farthest from the river. Turning west at the newspaper corner, Larry glanced up at the clock in the dome of the court-house. Its hands were pointing to eleven.

At the moment the streets were nearly deserted, though in the “booze block,” as a certain square well down toward the river was called, the saloons (now happily a thing of the past) were all open and doing, or so it seemed to Larry, an unusual amount of late-hour business.

Since he passed that way nearly every evening on his way to and from the *Micrometer* office, he went on toward the bridge without paying any attention either to the lighted dives on one hand, or to the groups of late-hour loafers cluttering the sidewalk on the other. But just as he was passing the last of the saloons a man stepped out of a group of three, followed him and touched him on the shoulder. Larry wheeled quickly, with his muscles hardening themselves; but the man, a rather burglarish-looking fellow with a week-old beard blackening the

lower half of his face and a workman's cap pulled well down over a pair of beady eyes, spoke him fair, as they used to say in our grandfathers' time.

"Name's Donovan, ain't it?" said the man, shifting the stub of his cigar from one corner of his hard mouth to the other, and talking out of the corner thus vacated.

"It is," said Larry briefly. Then, quite as briefly, "What do you want?"

The man ignored the question.

"Young fellow named Maxwell's a pal o' yours, ain't he?"

"He's my friend, yes. What about him?"

"Li'l' too much bug-juice, I reckon," was the half-leering reply. "Somebody ought to knock 'im down an' run 'im off home. Thought mebbe youse'd like to know."

Most naturally, Larry was just plain horrified. That Dick, after his one bad slip and narrow escape, should make another that was infinitely worse, seemed utterly unbelievable. Then he remembered that for the past few days Dick had been blue and discouraged for fear that, after all, he mightn't be able to make passing grades in the year-end examinations. Could it be possible that he had let his discouragement, which, as everybody had told him, was nothing worse than the nervous scare of a fellow who has been working his brain a bit too hard, drive him into another kind of dissipation?

All this, as we may figure, flashed through one half of Larry's mind in the few seconds during which he stood staring at the slouching bearer of bad news and trying, with the other half of the thinking machinery, to determine what possible object the man could have in lying to him—if he were lying.

"You must be mistaken," he said at last. "The Maxwell you're talking about isn't the Maxwell I know."

"I guess yes. Anyways, the last I seen o' him he was singin' an' hollerin' f'r youse to come an' steer 'im home."

Larry's resolution was taken impulsively. There were a thousand chances to one that the thing was a hideous mistake, but where Dick was concerned he was not willing to take the one chance

WILLING TO TAKE THE ONE CHANCE.

“Pitch out and show me,” he said brusquely; and when the man turned back toward the noisiest of the saloons, Larry followed him.

It was at the very door of the noisy place, and just as he was about to enter it at the heels of his guide, that he ran squarely into a boisterous crowd of Sheddonians heading collegeward. Then he remembered suddenly that this was the night when Sock and Buskin, the college dramatic society, was giving a performance in the town opera house. Since, for Dick’s sake, he couldn’t stop to explain anything, Larry tried to dodge into the noisy place quickly, hoping that he hadn’t been recognized. But the hope was a vain one. Welborn, the big-hearted—but loud-mouthed and not too tactful—Aggie Freshman who roomed at Mrs. Grant’s, was a member of the bunch of homing theater-goers, and he saw Larry and bawled out a half-joking warning.

“Hey, you, Donnie! Come out o’ there! You’re on the team, and that’s breaking training!”

Being pretty badly flustered anyway, Larry did the worst thing he could have done—dodged again and made no answer. And it was not until he was following the unshaven loafer into the purlieus of the place that he realized fully what his action must have meant to Welborn and the others.

Welborn’s bawled-out hail had called the attention of every Sheddonian in the bunch to the fact that he, Larry Donovan, was entering a saloon at eleven o’clock at night in company with a fellow who looked as if he might be a bank burglar at the very least. And he had ducked as if he were ashamed to be seen. As certainly as the autumn would ripen little red apples the story would go from mouth to mouth, and while a break of that kind might pass unremarked in the case of a known member of the fast set, it wouldn’t go that way when the one who made it happened to be a potential member of next year’s ’Varsity and was supposed to be in training—at least to the extent of taking respectable care of himself.

“Show me where Maxwell is, quick,” he snapped at his guide. “I haven’t any time to waste fooling ’round such a place as this.”

“I c’n show you where he was a few minutes ago,” said the hard-faced man, leading the way to a row of box-like card-rooms in the rear, and at the word he opened the door of one of the boxes.

Larry looked in and saw that the place was empty. A single unshaded electric light hung over a round table which, with a few chairs, completed the furnishings of the bare cell. The man seemed nonplussed.

“’S queer,” he muttered. “He was in here a li’l’ spell ago. Wait a minute and I’ll dig ’im up f’r youse.”

Larry’s first impulse was to make a bolt for the street and the open air. Every clean-living fiber of him was protesting against the ribald clamor of the place, the smoke-soaked atmosphere, the sickening, stifling smell of liquor and stale beer. But the thought of Dick, and that one chance in a thousand that the whole thing wasn’t some wretched mistake, held him. Besides, at the command to “wait,” the man had shoved him into the little room and shut the door; but for that he was rather thankful, since it cut him off from the bar-room and its noisy occupants.

Pulling up one of the chairs, Larry sat down to make the best of what began to seem like a mighty disagreeable job. Naturally, all he could think of, at first, was the awful thing that had happened to Dick, and as he dwelt upon it, it seemed more and more unbelievable. Surely Lansing and Dick’s other friends in the Zeta Omegas wouldn’t let things come to such a pass after they had seen what a brave fight Dick was making to “come back” after his nearly fatal run-in with the Underhill bunch and the “Mixers.” Larry asked himself what a frat was for, anyway, if it couldn’t lay hold of a fellow who was in the dumps and jolly him over the rough places.

Thinking so hard about these things, it was perhaps five minutes or so before he began to realize the breathless, half-suffocating closeness of the little card-room, and the stifling alcoholic smell that seemed to be growing stronger the longer he had to breathe it. When he did realize it, he found that his head was swimming and his eyes were smarting strangely. Starting up to go and open the door, the dizziness half overcame him, and in trying to sit down again he missed the chair awkwardly and almost slid under the table.

While he was pulling himself up and wondering vaguely what had come over him, the door opened a little way, and the stubble-bearded man stuck his head in to say: “I’ve found out where yer pally went to. Come on, an’ we’ll go get him.”

Larry tried again to get up, and again the nauseating vertigo made him see black. “If I—could have a drink of—water,” he gasped, and he was dimly conscious of

the disappearance of the hard-visaged man, and of his reappearance a little later with a glass of water. Little as he cared for the opinion of this hard-bitted person, he was ashamed of the way his hands shook when he took the glass and drained it to the last drop.

For a minute or so the cold drink seemed to revive him, but the effect was only temporary. When he tried once more to get upon his feet his legs refused to hold him up, and an immense desire to sleep came over him like a smothering pall. Struggling vainly against the overmastering lethargy, he dropped back into the chair and, bending over the table, hid his face in the crook of an arm just to rest for a second or so. And that was the last he remembered.

When he next opened his eyes, the low-slanting sun was shining in his face, and he was lying on a forkful of straw in what appeared to be a deserted cow stable. [Dazed and bewildered, he sat up and tried to make out where he was](#) and how he came to be there. Dimly and like the figures of a dream his latest waking recollections came straggling back; the noisy and noisome saloon; the stubble-bearded man who talked out of the corner of his mouth; the stifling atmosphere of the close little room in which he had been waiting for the man to return, bringing Dick Maxwell.



[Dazed and bewildered, he sat up and tried to make out where he was](#)

When was all this?—how long ago? And was it the rising sun, or the setting, that was shining in on him through the open stable door? He pulled out his watch, the good old reliable timepiece by which his father had once run trains on the home railroad, and which had been given to him as a parting gift when he left for college. Not once since it had been his had he let it run down; but now it had run down, stopping with its hands pointing to half-past nine. His jaw dropped. That must have been half-past nine in the morning!

Larry propped his head in his hands and tried once more to piece the vaguenesses up into some sort of an understandable whole. Was it possible that he had slept through half a night and almost all of a day? Suddenly it came over him with a shock like a bucketing of cold water that this was, or had been, the day for the tests in Math. and Physics—and he had cut not only these, but all his other classes as well!

That shock brought him to his feet with a bound, and he was dismayed to find that he was still wobbly and uncertain when he stood up, and that he had a headache that was worse than any he had ever experienced in his healthy, clear-headed life. This started him off on another line of speculative wondering. What had happened to him in the close little room where he had waited for the return of the hard-faced loafer? Was it possible that the mere reek of the place had made him so drunk that he could sleep eighteen hours on end, and then wake up with his head feeling as big as a bushel basket?

Stumbling out of the cow stable he found himself in a part of the town that he had never visited; the poorer quarter behind the row of saloons in Main Street. The stable, which evidently hadn't been used for a long time, stood in a neglected back lot fronting upon a dirty alley, and through the alley he made his way to the street and so across the bridge to the college suburb.

Dodging aside as soon as he had crossed the river, he hoped he might be able to reach Mrs. Grant's and his room without meeting anybody he knew. But at the very last, as he was turning the final corner, he ran into Dick Maxwell and two other members of the Omegas. It was Dick who blocked the way and said: "Just been up to your room to see if you'd been heard from yet. Coach Brock wanted to know where you'd dropped out to. Where've you been, and what makes you look as if you'd been pulled backwards through a knot-hole?"

Larry steadied himself with a grip on the corner fence post, and in place of answering the double question, asked one of his own.

"Where were you at eleven o'clock last night, Dick?"

Dick's reply was prompt.

"Up to about that time I was in the house lounge with Cranny and Stillwell here, chewing Physics with them for the test to-day. After that I was hitting the hay for a home run in my little downy. Why?"

"Nothing," said Larry, and he went on to the Man-o'-War gate with a great light beginning to filter through the headache clouds. One thing, at least, was clear: the stubble-faced loafer had told a lie cut out of whole cloth. There had been no Dick Maxwell to be knocked down and dragged out and carried home.

In his room Larry found Purdick working over a demonstration drawing, and the

small one nearly jumped up and flung his arms around the home-comer when he saw who it was that had opened the door.

“Suffering Jehu! I never was so glad to see anybody in my life!” he exclaimed, shoving the drawing-board back on the study table. Then: “They’ve had me fighting mad all day.”

“Who had?” said Larry, dropping into a chair to get back to the old trick of holding his head in his hands.

“Markley and Dugger, and that bunch. They’ve been telling it all over the campus that they saw you last night in a back room at ‘Pat’s Place’ *dead drunk*! I tried to lick Dugger for saying it, but he carried too big a wallop for me.”

“Huh!” said Larry, looking out between his fingers; “that’s where you got that black eye, was it? You’re a mighty loyal little rat, Purdy, and I only wish you’d been fighting for something worth while. I was in ‘Pat’s Place’ last night, and if I wasn’t drunk, there was something else mighty funny the matter with me. I just waked up a little while ago, and my head feels bigger than a barrel, right now. But what were Markley and Dugger doing in Pat’s?”

“The way they’re telling it, they had been to the Sock and Buskin show, and after it was out they stopped in the Rookery to get an ice-cream soda. As they were passing Pat’s on their way over, some fellow out in front told them that there was one of their college bunkies drunk in a back room. They say they went in and found you lying spread out on a table and so far gone that they thought it would be too much of a job to get you home. So, with the help of the barkeeper and the fellow who had told them, they lugged you out to an old barn in a vacant lot and left you to sleep it off. I didn’t believe ’em, of course. If I had, I’d’ve gone to hunt you up. It’s all a pack of lies, isn’t it? You didn’t drink anything in that miserable dog-hole, did you?”

“Nothing but a glass of cold water.”

“Tell me,” Purdick commanded; and Larry told the whole story, or so much of it as was clear enough to be recalled. Purdick heard him through without interrupting, and then, out of an experience that was wider—and sadder—than any his big-bodied room-mate had ever gone through, he grappled with the mysteries.

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“You say the card-room smelled of alcohol and the smell grew stronger: I guess it was meant to. Don’t you know that a person can get drunk just breathing the fumes of the stuff?”

“I didn’t know it,” Larry admitted.

“Well, it’s so. The sawdust on the floor was probably soaked for you before you went in. Then, with the door shut, you’d soon go off your head.”

“But, listen—Markley and Dugger say they carried me out, and that couldn’t have been very long after I went off the handle. Just smelling the stuff wouldn’t make a fellow sleep eighteen hours, would it?”

“No; but the glass of water, or what was in it, probably did the rest. You were doped.”

For some little time Larry didn’t speak. When he broke the silence, it was to say: “That brings on a lot more talk, doesn’t it, Purdy? Why should those plug-uglies at ‘Pat’s Place’ want to fill me up with lies and then drug me?”

“Easy,” said little Purdick. “They were paid to do it.”

“What! You mean the Underhill push?”

“It’s beating its way into your head at last, is it? Bry Underhill’s been telling it around again, as he did a month or so ago, that you’d never play anything but practice games on the ’Varsity—never come back to Sheddon after this year. He’s cooked up the proper scheme, this time, to knock you out. The story will get around to Brock—Undy will see to it that it does get around to him—and you know how strict he is about the booze.”

Again there was a little silence in the big room, and at the end of it Larry started to his feet with his fists clenched.

“It was a ‘frame-up,’ just as you say, Purdy,” he said, speaking slowly as he always did when his temper was threatening to get out of control. “I’ve tried, all along, not to be vindictive toward Underhill and his crowd, but this thing hits the limit. I’m going after that fellow now, and he’ll be the one who won’t come back to Sheddon next year instead of me!

“Now, I want you to do me a little favor. I’m as hungry as a wolf, but I don’t

want to face the bunch at the supper-table to-night. Slip down and see Mother Grant and ask her if you can't bring my supper up to me. You can tell her I've got a bad headache, and you won't miss the truth by a sixty-fourth of an inch. Skip for it while I go to the bath-room and hold my head under the cold-water faucet. I want to be able to think straight after I get a few calories inside of me."

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## **XII**

### **FRIENDS IN NEED**

After little Purdick had seen Larry put away a trayful of supper, which had to do duty for itself and two other missed meals, with an appetite that seemed to make no account of the left-over headache, he hoped Larry would tell him what plan he had in mind for getting square with Bryant Underhill and his unprincipled accomplices.

But there proved to be nothing doing in that line. With the supper despatched, Larry hurled himself upon his books after the manner of a fellow who has lost a whole day out of his calendar and is determined to make it up in the shortest possible interval of time. And when Purdick went to bed at half-past ten, his room-mate was still digging away, and nothing more had been said about the Underhill square-up.

The next day it was just the same. How Larry explained things to his professors, made up the lost day's class-cuts, and contrived to get credit for the tests he had missed, were matters upon which Purdick was left uninformed. But Ollie McKnight, between whom and little Purdick there had grown up an intimacy which was as odd as it was comradely, brought in a bit of news that was calculated to key any friend of Larry's up to the fighting pitch. It was to the effect that Brock, the head coach, had taken Larry off the foot-ball team; had either suspended or fired him, McKnight didn't know which.

"That's simply an outrage!" Purdick burst out, adding: "I suppose you know what it comes from?"

"Sure," said the son of Consolidated Steel; "Brock's heard the story that's going around about Larry's being off on a bat. How much do you know about it, Purdy? Is any part of it true?"

Purdick told what he knew, and McKnight gave a low whistle.

"Larry can't deny it, eh?—or, at least, can't deny anything but the intention? And his explanation, which you and I take at its face value, of course, won't look very good to people who don't know Larry; in fact, I shouldn't wonder if a good many of the fellows wouldn't call it a rather clumsy lie. What does Dickie

Maxwell say about it?”

“Dick was up to the room last evening just before Larry came in. He hadn’t heard the story then. You couldn’t make *him* believe that Larry is telling anything but just the plain straight truth.”

“Of course he’s telling the truth. Trouble is, it’s going to sound too improbable to be believed. What Larry ought to do is to go right after this Underhill bunch and show it up—prove that it was a frame-up.”

“That’s what he said he was going to do, last night,” said Purdick.

“All right,” McKnight nodded. “You tell him when he’s ready to start in he can count upon me and all the fellows in our house. We’re for him, even if it takes a round robin to the faculty.”

Purdick nursed that little offer of help and held himself in readiness to spring it when Larry should again broach the subject of a just vengeance upon the Underhill plotters. But when another evening had all but passed, and Larry hadn’t once mentioned the “frame-up,” its perpetrators, or the humiliating blow that Coach Brock had dealt him, Purdick could no longer contain himself.

“Ollie McKnight says you’re put off the team,” he said, stooping to untie his shoes. “Is that so?”

Larry nodded.

“Did you tell Brock what you told me?”

Larry nodded again, adding:

“He didn’t believe what I told him, of course; nobody would.”

“Well?” Purdick broke out raspily. “Are you going to take it lying down from this bunch of money-rotten highbinders? You said last night that you were going after them for blood.”

Larry sat back in his chair at the study table, and the good gray eyes were a bit gloomy.

“I know I did. Purdv. and I meant it—then.”

“But you don’t mean it now?”

“No.”

“Why?”

Larry was silent for a moment.

“I don’t know as I could make you understand, though I guess maybe Dick Maxwell would. I’ve got a horrible temper, Purdy.”

“Yes you have!”—with what was meant to be scathing irony. “You’re just too easy for any common kind of use—chicken-hearted where other people are concerned, *I’d* call it!”

“Don’t you make any such mistake as that,” Larry said quickly, with the gloom in his eyes changing swiftly to the fighting glow that came into them when he was struggling for that extra yard on the foot-ball field. “I could smash every man in that gang and never turn a hair!”

“Then why don’t you do it?”

“Well, partly because I don’t dare to.”

“Afraid?”—incredulously.

“Yes; afraid of myself.”

“Ump!” said little Purdick; “I wear a six-and-three-quarters hat. I guess you’ll have to make it plainer than that for a head the size of mine.”

“I’m just afraid to let go, that’s all. You’ve read in war stories how men, soldiers, who have been decent, sober fellows all their lives get to be brutes and devils when they let the brute-and-devil part of ’em come to the top. I’ve been holding my brute-and-devil down ever since I was a little kid, and I don’t dare to let it get up now. That’s all there is to it, Purdy.”

“So you’ll let this lying story go on spilling itself all over the place, and lose your chance for the ’Varsity, and maybe get a call-down from the faculty, all because you’re afraid you might let go all holds if you went after the fellows

because you're afraid you might not go all night if you were under the same fire who are trying to do you up?"

"It's as true as if you were reading it out of a book," said Larry, and with that he turned back to his drawing-board, and Purdick went to bed.

To a man up a tree, that might have seemed to be the end of it, so far as Larry's reinstatement on the team or his vindication on the campus was concerned. But little Purdick was of the tribe of those who stick and hang. He was pleased to believe that he owed Larry the biggest debt that one fellow could possibly owe another, and he didn't propose to see his benefactor's record smashed by any such vengeful plot as—he made no doubt—the Underhill conspirators had concocted and carried out. If Larry wouldn't fight for himself, then he, Charles Purdick, would fight for him—and to the last ditch.

But just how to go about it, with Larry unwilling to say or do anything in his own defense, was a problem. Purdick waited for a day or two, hoping that Dick Maxwell would turn up; and on the third day after Larry had been dropped from the team, Dick did turn up.

"Where's Larry?" he ripped out, bursting into the big room just as Purdick was settling down for the evening grind on his Math.

"He's gone out somewhere," said Purdick.

Dick flung himself into a chair.

"That miserable, low-down lie that's going 'round about him!" he boiled over. "Did you know he'd been dropped from the team?"

Purdick nodded. "That was three days ago. I've been hoping you'd come over."

"Conspiracy of silence!" Dick fumed. "No one of the fellows in the house wanted to be the first to tell me, and I haven't been on the field since last Saturday. What's Larry doing about it?"

"Nothing."

"But, Great Moses, something's got to be done!"

Purdick shook his head.

“Larry won’t do anything, and it’s just about breaking his heart. I’ve tried to buck him up and get him to make a fight and show the Underhill bunch up for what it is, but he won’t do it; says he’s got such a bad temper that there won’t be any end to it if he lets himself go.”

“Yes; he and his temper!” Dick snorted. Then: “It was a put-up job, of course?”

“Not the slightest doubt of it, in my mind. You know what they told him over there at ‘Pat’s Place’—that you’d gone off the hooks and were needing somebody to take you home. Larry fell for it, and then they managed to get him into one of the little card-rooms that had probably been ‘fixed’ for him—alcohol spilled around on the floor. That got him half sick to begin with, and then, when he asked for a drink of water, they doped him.”

“Huh!” said Dick. “So that’s the straight of it, is it? Naturally, I hadn’t heard that part of it. It was after that that Markley and Dugger found him, I suppose?”

“Yes. That part of it is probably true. They found him asleep and helped carry him out to the old cow barn. But it sticks in my craw that they didn’t need to have anybody tell them *where* to find him.”

“Of course they didn’t. That was part of the plot. And you say Larry won’t try to do anything to clear himself?”

“No.”

“Then it’s up to us,” said Dick promptly. “You owe him something, Purdy, and so do I. We’ll get together on this thing and show that money-rotten bunch up for what it really is.”

Purdick’s eyes narrowed.

“Your father is a rich man, too, isn’t he?” he thrust in quietly.

“What of that?”

“N-nothing; only I thought maybe you might want to stay on your own side of the fence.”

“Now, see here, Purdy; let’s fight this thing out once for all. You’ve got the same idea that Larry brought here with him at first—about the classes and the

same idea that Larry brought here with him at first—about the classes and the masses, and all that. I don't know where you've been living all your life, but it certainly couldn't have been in the America that I know the most about. You come out West with us next summer and we'll show you the real America; a place where people—or most of 'em, anyway—will take you for what you are, and not for what you've got in the bank. It's only in the crowded places that you soak up that 'class' stuff."

Purdick looked away.

"I'd like to believe you, Maxwell; honestly, I would," he said. "And you're right about one thing. I've lived in cities—factory cities—all my life. But to get back to Larry: this thing is fairly killing him by inches. He doesn't say anything to me, but I know. When he's here in the room he just grinds and grinds; crawls back into his shell and pulls the hole in after him. And the minute he's got his work up, he pulls his cap over his face and digs out. Sometimes he doesn't come back until one or two o'clock in the morning."

"I know," said Dick; "takes to the woods. That's what he used to do in the old days when anything went crossways with him. I know what he's doing; he's fighting that temper he told you about. He isn't afraid of anybody but himself. I brayed about that temper thing when you spoke of it a minute ago, but he's got it, all right. If he ever turned loose on Undy, he'd kill him. I know, because I've seen him fighting mad one or two times when he was just a kid in knee breeches."

Purdick shoved his books aside.

"There's no time like the present, Maxie. If we're going to try to straighten this mess up for Larry, let's go to it."

"I'm with you," said Dick, getting upon his feet quickly. "Only I haven't any more idea than the man in the moon where to begin."

"Perhaps I can help out a little on that end of it," said Purdick, with a sort of crooked smile, adding: "I'm about ten years older than you are, Maxie, in some things." And then he got his coat and cap and they went out together.

Most naturally, when they were in the street, Dick thought Purdick would head for one of the houses across the campus where the various members of the faculty lived. The only possible thing to do, as he saw it, was to get some one of

the professors interested and so start a faculty investigation. But Purdick seemed to have a plan of his own, for when they reached the cross-street corner, he turned short and led the way toward the bridge and the town.

There was no pause made until they reached “Pat’s Place,” and none there, save that Purdick glanced up at the windows in the second story as if to see whether they were lighted or dark. Following the upward glance, Dick saw that there was a light in an upper room, and the next thing he knew he was climbing a narrow stair at Purdick’s heels. At a door near the stair-head, Purdick rapped, and a mumbling voice said thickly: “Come in, then!”

What Dick saw when the door opened under Purdick’s hand was a rather gaudily furnished room with a thick-piled carpet on the floor which looked as if it were rarely swept. There was a desk in the middle of the room, and in the pivot-chair belonging to it sat a man with a round, fat face, little pig-like black eyes, black mustaches curled at the ends, and shiny black hair plastered in a barber’s curl on his forehead. To keep up the color scheme the man had a black cigar clamped between his teeth, and on his feet, which were cocked up on the desk, were shoes which looked as if they had just escaped from the polishing attack of a bootblack.

Dick didn’t know the man from Adam, but he read the papers often enough to be able to guess at once that the upper room was the private—and unofficial—office of the most notorious of the little city’s board of aldermen, Mr. Patrick Clanahan.

“Little college lads, eh?” grunted the man in the chair, as they filed in and stood before him. “What’d ye be wantin’ o’ me at this time o’ night?”

Dick couldn’t have told to save his life, but little Purdick seemed to labor under no handicap whatever.

“It’s about your saloon down-stairs, Mr. Clanahan,” he said, looking the fat-faced man squarely in the eyes. “Last Monday night one of our fellows was taken in there and drugged. We want to know who hired your people to do it.”

“Lord love us!” chuckled the black-haired boss. “Would ye listen to the nerve av the little cockerel? ‘We want to know who hired your people to do it,’ says he!”

“That’s it,” said Purdick coolly. “We know they were hired, and we want to

know who paid them for it.”

The fat alderman took his feet down from the desk and the little pig-like eyes snapped viciously.

“Ye little fool!” he bit out, “d’ye think f’r wan minute ye can run a bluff the like o’ that on Pat Clanahan? Get out o’ here, the both av yez, before I’d be t’rowin’ yez out!”

But little Purdick stood his ground.

“You’ll find that it isn’t a bluff. We don’t care anything about your people down-stairs, though it might make trouble if it was known that your place is one where a fellow could have knockout drops given to him in a glass of water. What we want to know—what we’re going to find out—is who bribed them to do it, Mr. Clanahan.”

It was just here that the real explosion came. Bounding to his feet and making a move as if he would come around the desk to throw them out, the fat-faced ward boss blew up.

“There’s the dure!” he shouted, pointing to it with a pudgy finger. “Shut it whin ye go out! ’Tis babes in ar-rms yez are to be comin’ here and talkin’ knockout drops to Patsy Clanahan! I’d have yez to know——”

Little Purdick led the way out as he had led it in, carefully closing the door upon the remainder of the explosion. On the sidewalk Dick drew a long breath.

“You sure had your nerve along with you, Purdy, just as he said,” he gasped. “Did you think you could do anything with a man like that?”

“I gave him his chance,” was the cool-voiced rejoinder. “You remember the story in the old spelling-book, about the farmer who caught the apple thieves up in his trees and threw clods at them first before he began to throw stones. I was just throwing a little clod or two; but now we’ll go and see if we can’t rustle up a few stones.”

The next place Purdick headed for was the *Micrometer* office, on the top floor of the *Chronicle* Building. Luckily, they found Havercamp there, and he was alone in the little editorial den of the college daily.

“Hello, you near-Soffies!” he grinned as they entered. “What are you doing out at this time o’ night?”

“Time o’ night’s time o’ the early evening,” said Purdick. Then: “It’s about Larry Donovan. Of course, you’ve heard the story?”

Havercamp’s grin faded.

“I never was so knocked out in my life. He was here with me up to eleven o’clock that night, and I remember when he left he said he had to go home and work on some test stuff that was still waiting.”

“And you haven’t seen him since?”

“Not a sign of him. He’s chucked the reporting job, along with everything else. Hacked about being dropped from the team, I suppose.”

“Listen, Havercamp,” said Purdick; and he briefed the real facts in the scandal case for the managing editor in true newsman fashion.

“Oho!” said Havercamp; “so that’s it, is it?—tolled in with a smooth lie and then drugged. What have you done about it?”

Again, and in the same crisp speech, Purdick told of their late call upon Mr. Patrick Clanahan.

“Of course, you knew *that* wouldn’t get you anywhere,” said Havercamp. “You have to pull a gun on Pat when you want to hold him up. Wait a minute.”

He was gone possibly ten minutes instead of one, but when he came back his eyes were snapping.

“Just been having a little heart-to-heart talk with Mr. Bolinger, of the *Chronicle*,” he explained. “The *Chronicle* will back us if we want to make it a fight to a finish. Let’s go.”

Again Dick followed blindly, though this time it was Havercamp who was leading the way. Still, he wasn’t very greatly surprised to find that the way led back to the garishly furnished room over “Pat’s Place.” At the stair-head landing Havercamp didn’t knock; he opened the door and walked in. As when Dick and Purdick had presented themselves the ward boss had his feet on the desk and he

Clanahan had presented themselves, the ward boss had his feet on the desk, and he was just lighting another of the midnight-black cigars.

Havercamp was even more brittle than Purdick had been.

“You know who I am, Mr. Clanahan,” he began, “and what we’ve come for. I’m only going to add one thing to what my friend Purdick here has already said to you. I have Mr. Bolinger’s authority for saying that the *Chronicle* will print all the facts in Donovan’s case if you don’t come across and help us get the man or men higher up.”

Dickie Maxwell, having had less than no experience in such matters, expected another explosion. But it did not come. Instead, the ward boss merely chuckled good-naturedly and tendered Havercamp one of the black cigars—which Havercamp didn’t take.

“I’m expectin’ ’twas on’y a rough bit av a joke on the young felly, Misther Havercamp,” he said. “You little college b’ys are always puttin’ thim up on wan another.”

“Call it whatever you like,” cut in Havercamp brusquely. “We want the man who did the job, with an order to him to tell us who put him up to it. We’ll do the rest.”

The boss pressed the ball of a fat thumb on a bell-push, and in a minute or two the stubble-bearded fellow who had led Larry to his undoing came in.

“’Tis the little joke ye played on wan o’ the college lads last Monday night, Jerky,” Clanahan explained to his henchman. “’Tis a peck av throuble ye stirred up—widout m’anin’ to. Ye’ll be going wid Misther Havercamp and these lads and doin’ what they want ye to do to take th’ kinks out av it.”

The man nodded as if the order were all in the day’s work, and with Havercamp for their leader the four tramped out and down the narrow stair. In the street Havercamp quickly called an auto hack, and in grim silence a swift run was made to the college suburb. It ended in front of the house assigned to Dr. Shotliffe, Dean of the Mechanical School, and the four passengers got out and ascended the steps. As he rang the door-bell, Havercamp gave the Clanahan henchman a final word.

“You’ve got your orders; all we ask of you is that you tell the straight truth, no

matter whom it hits. If you do that, there won't be any afterclap—for you.”

What took place in the Dean's study after the four had been admitted does not form any part of the Old Sheddon records. But two days later a faculty meeting was called and four members of the Freshman class, Bryant Underhill, Alexander Crawford, John Dugger and Albert Markley were summarily dropped from the Registrar's list of undergraduates, and Old Sheddon knew them no more.

And on the same day Larry Donovan—a Larry once more light-hearted and able to look the world and all the people in it squarely in the eye—took his old place at right half on the 'Varsity practice field.

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## **XIII**

### **THE GREEN CAP BONFIRE**

“What are you fellows going to do in the summer vacation?”

It was Ollie McKnight who wanted to know, and he had just come in from the gymnasium showers where he had been cooling off after a lively practice with the Freshman team; scrimmages which, in the warm afternoon, were a little like sessions in a Turkish bath.

There were various answers from the half-dozen Freshmen lounging in the big room at Mother Grant's which had been occupied for nearly half of the college year by Larry and Purdick. Welborn, the big Aggie, said he was going home to Missouri to work on the farm. Wally Dixon said his father was building an addition to his packing plant in Kansas City, and that he'd probably have a job wheelbarrowing concrete, or something of that sort. Cal Rogers made a similar response. His father was a contractor, and he, Cal, supposed there was a wheelbarrow or a shovel or a pick waiting for him at his home town in Iowa.

“How about you two Timanyoni Twins?” McKnight asked, tossing the question to Dick Maxwell and Larry.

“Work for me, too, if I can find anything to do,” Larry said; and Dick wrinkled his nose at McKnight.

“You'll have to stay and see Commencement through for the rest of us, Knighty,” he said. “We're all too industrious to hang around here for doings where Freshmen have to stick on the side lines and don't get a look-in.”

“That's the way of it,” little Purdick put in. “Commencement's no Freshman game. Do you stay, Knighty?”

“Not on your life. I've got a job, too, strange as it may seem. It's northern Minnesota and the iron country for mine. While you fellows are doing your little summer chores all over the lot you can get a long-distance snap-shot of me down in some open cut in the Mesaba, chucking coal into the tummy of a steam shovel, or something of that sort.”

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“Yes, I think I see you with overalls on!” said Rogers sarcastically. “You’ll be doing a cross-country run in a million-dollar buzz-wagon, or sailing a brass-mounted yacht up the Maine coast, or something like that. I know you, Knighty.”

“Maybe you did know me last summer, or the summer before,” McKnight got back. “But that isn’t saying that you know me now. I’ve already asked Dad if I can’t go to the Mesaba and begin to learn the steel business from the bottom, and he didn’t write to say ‘yes.’ Not on your moving-picture. He wired it.”

Wally Dixon shook his head in mock solemnity.

“You shouldn’t ought to do things like that, Ollie; not unless you’re sure there’s no heart disease in your family. Think of the terrible shock it must have been when they got your letter.”

“That’s all right,” laughed the son of the steel magnate good-naturedly. “I’ll admit I was one of the Willie-boys when I came here last fall, but it’s only fair to Old Sheddon to say that I hope she’s done a little something for me in nine months.”

After a bit more of this good-natured joshing the fellows began to drop out, one by one, drifting away to their respective rooming places. The year-end examinations were on, the outdoor activities were stringing out to a close, and even the bright stars who had made “A’s” and “B’s” in the semester tests were cramming a bit for the final trials.

“You’re going to make the turn all right, this time, aren’t you, Purdy?” asked Larry, after the others had gone, referring, for the first time since Purdick had come to room with him, to the small one’s discouraging flunk-out of the previous year.

“Easy,” said Purdick; “thanks to you and to that other fellow whose name you won’t tell me. Can’t you take the bridle off of that promise now, Larry?”

“Permission not yet given,” Larry grinned.

“Will it ever be given?”

“Maybe—some day.”

Silence for a little while, and then Purdick began again. "I've been leaning hard upon what you said to me—that freezing cold night in my old room over Heffelfinger's: that you'd have taken the money yourself if you'd been in my place. Can you say it again, Larry?"

"Easier now than I could then. The fellow who built your scholarship is a man, all the way up and down, Purdy. I'd bank on him for anything."

"It wasn't Dick Maxwell?"

Larry laughed. "No, it wasn't Dickie. But you mustn't begin to worm things out of me by the process of elimination. Let's be fair to your 'good angel.' All he asks is to stay unknown. Besides, I shouldn't wonder if he'd forgotten all about the scholarship by this time. It'd be just like him."

Purdick looked up quickly.

"Do you mean by that he's got so much money that two thousand dollars, more or less, don't mean anything to him?" he asked.

Larry had a swift jab from that inner sense which is sometimes called after-wit, realizing that he had said too much.

"You shut up, Purdy; I'm not going to say another word about it. You've got the boost, and the other fellow's got what does him a lot more good than the money is doing you. That's all there is to it, and you couldn't get any more out of me if you were to give me the third degree."

That settled it for the time being, and during the few remaining days which led up to Commencement Week everybody was too busy to think or talk about anything but the year-end job in hand.

It was after the examinations were over, and there was not much left for a Freshman to do but to burn his green cap and go home, that Larry and little Purdick took a farewell evening hike out to the bridge which bore their class numerals. It had been a perfect June day, and the evening matched it harmoniously. A light shower the night before had laid the dust, spring green was waving from the trees and nodding to them from the fields, and the song of the cardinal was abroad in the land.

“You didn’t turn out for the bridge scrap, did you, Purdy?” said Larry, as they hoisted themselves to seats on the approach parapet where he and Dick Maxwell had sat through a pretty painful session one evening some few weeks earlier.

“You know I didn’t. About that time o’ night I was washing dishes in Hassler’s kitchen.”

“But you’ll be in the next one. We’ll be the defenders next fall, and we want to keep those old figures up there for another year.”

“Lot of good I’d be!” scoffed the small one. “If we should happen to get a few grasshoppers in the next Freshman class, perhaps I might be able to pull a leg off of one or two of ’em. But that’s about all.”

“Size isn’t everything,” Larry offered. Having plenty of it himself, he could easily disregard the lack of it in others. Then: “Have you always been off weight, Purdy?”

“Ever since I can remember. My mother was small.”

In all their close association as room-mates Purdick had rarely talked of himself or his past, and never of his people. But now, perhaps because the parting for the summer was so near at hand, he let out a little.

“We were poor folks,” he went on; “poor in the way you don’t know anything about, because your father had a trade and a good one. Mine was a day laborer, and there were seven mouths to fill.”

“Five children?” said Larry. “That’s our number at home.”

“That was our number, but it isn’t any more; there are only two of us now—my sister Alice and I.”

“And your father and mother?”

“Both dead. Mother was never very strong, and the fight was too hard for her. After the other children died, she sort of lost her—her courage, I guess. That left only father and two children; and Alice wasn’t big enough to do much. That’s how I learned to cook and wash dishes.”

“Then your father died?”

Then your father died.

“He was killed—in the steel works. It was an open-hearth furnace, and he was on the puddler’s gang. There was a loose board in the run-way, and the hand-rail was broken. The men had complained, time and again, but nothing was done. One day father slipped.” He stopped abruptly, and when he spoke again it was to say, “Do you wonder that things have made sort of an anarchist of me, Larry?”

“Huh!” said Larry, “you’re not much of an anarchist.”

“Not the long-haired kind, maybe. But I’ve got to stay on my own side of the fence. There’s a horrible lot of injustice in this old world, Larry.”

“Sure there is,” Larry agreed. Then, to keep Purdick from running off on one of his bitter streaks: “Where is your sister now, Purdy?”

“She’s in Elsmere. You know they have a sort of an apprentice course there; a girl can work in the kitchen and have certain hours in the Domestic Economy classes. And that’s another thing: Allie’s been having just about as hard a time as I had before you took me in. You never said there were any strings tied to that scholarship money. There weren’t any, were there?”

“Not a single string.”

“Well, of course, I split it with Allie right away. That was one of the things that made me take it without making you tell me more about it.”

“Um,” said Larry. “Then you’ll have to go to work this summer to earn some more.”

“That’s all right; I expected to do that, anyway.”

“What kind of a job?”

Purdick shrugged his shoulders. “Beggars mustn’t be choosers; and little beggars have to take what’s handed out to them. I haven’t the muscle to tackle any real man-sized job. I suppose it will be office drudgery of some kind—if I’m lucky enough to land anything.”

Larry had a swift and rather discomfoting picture of the small one hived in some city office building and running an adding machine, or something of that

sort, through the not months.

“You ought to have a real vacation, Purdy; some job that would keep you outdoors every minute in the day,” he said.

“Fat chance!” Purdick returned, with a hard little laugh. “None of the outdoor jobs wants a sawed-off like me.” Then, after a pause: “Don’t you sweat about me, Larry. You’ve done enough for me, as it is. Let’s go to supper.” And he slid down from his place on the wall.

They had tramped along in comradely silence for possibly half of the long mile lying between the county bridge and the university grounds when they crossed a ramshackly little wooden span over a creek emptying into the river a few hundred yards to their left. The flimsy structure shook under them as they walked across it, and Purdick made gibing comment.

“Isn’t that just like the loose ends that are let go in all public works!” he criticised. “Here is a fine, hard-surfaced highway, the main county outlet to the north, with a concrete bridge over the river that probably cost the taxpayers thousands of dollars, and right here they’ve left that old wooden trap that a man wouldn’t dare drive a ‘Henry’ over faster than a cow could walk!”

Larry turned and looked the “trap” over with a mechanical eye. It was all that Purdick had said it was. “I’d hate to put a loaded truck on it,” he remarked; and then they walked on.

They had gone perhaps a couple of hundred yards beyond the creek and its ramshackle bridge when they heard the distant honk of an automobile horn. The machine was coming along the pike behind them, and they could see that it was being driven at a good clip. Moreover, it was approaching the wooden span without showing any signs of slackening the speed.

“Gee!” Larry exclaimed, “if he hits that scrap heap going like that—”

He got no farther, for at that precise instant the oncoming machine did hit the scrap heap. As the two trampers sprang aside to give a clear road, there was a ripping crash, a shrill scream from somebody in the auto, and car and wooden bridge disappeared in a cloud of dust.

“Great Moses!” gasped little Purdick, “I’ll bet the last one of them’s killed!”

“Come on!” Larry shouted, and they broke all track records in a flying sprint to the scene of the disaster.

It was a pretty bad smash. The car was a heavy touring machine. It had turned part way over on its side in the fall and was tangled hopelessly in the bridge timbers and planking.

Its occupants—there were three of them, a woman, a girl and a man—were caught under the crushed top, and when Larry and Purdick ran up, the girl was crying and trying to lift the woman, who seemed to be either dead or in a dead faint. The man, bronzed, middle-aged, and looking as if he might be a retired cattle king, was pinned between the bent steering-wheel and the back of the driving seat, but he did not seem to be badly injured.

“If you two can take a plank and pry me loose,” he said quite calmly, as Larry and Purdick jumped down into the chaos and fell frantically at work. In a jiffy the thing was done, and then the three of them tore the broken top away and got the woman and the girl out. With every chance for a fatal accident, or at least a sad array of broken bones, it proved that no one of the three was seriously hurt. The woman, a stoutly built lady with the prettiest silvering hair Larry had ever seen—so he was saying to himself—came to as they lifted her to the level of the roadway, and a torn dress seemed to be the worst of her injuries. The girl had a cut in one round arm made by a piece of flying glass when the wind-shield broke, but she tied her handkerchief around it and after that was done, paid no more attention to it than a boy would.

When they all reached a point at which they could draw a long breath and begin to straighten things out, Larry looked hard at the sunburned gentleman and said: “Aren’t you Dick Maxwell’s Uncle Billy Starbuck, from Brewster, Colorado?”

“You’ve guessed it the first time,” said the cattle-kingish gentleman with a grim little smile. “And you’re young Donovan, aren’t you?—the fellow who was with Dick last summer up in the Tourmaline?”

“Yes; I’m Larry, and this is Charles Purdick, my room-mate,” said Larry, introducing his fellow rescuer. “We’d been out for a little hike and were going back when we saw you coming.”

“How far are we from town?” asked “Uncle Billy.”

“Only about half a mile; it’s just over the top of that hill,” Larry answered. “If you’ll stay here with the ladies, we’ll run back and find an auto for you. You were going to stop at Sheddon anyway, weren’t you?”

“Again you’ve guessed it,” said the bronzed man, who seemed to be taking the smash-up as calmly as if high-priced cars grew on bushes for anybody to pick. “We were driving through from Chicago to New York, and we came around this way to spend a few hours with Dick before he starts for home.”

Purdick had stood aside while this bit of talk was going on, and he was wondering who the pretty—though somewhat pudgy—little girl was. She had apparently forgotten her cut arm and was standing on the creek bank looking down at the smashed auto. Purdick moved a little nearer because he was afraid the bank would cave in and let her down.

“That bank is pretty soft,” he cautioned. “I wouldn’t go too near the edge if I were you.”

She turned and looked him over appraisingly.

“What a funny little green cap,” she commented. “That’s Freshman, isn’t it? Are you a Sheddon Freshman?”

Purdick nodded. “For a few days longer—until the grade markings are handed out.”

“I’ve got a brother in the Freshman class. I wonder if you know him. I’m Ruth McKnight.”

“Know Ollie McKnight? I should say I do! He’s one of the best friends I’ve had this year.”

“That’s nice,” said the girl. “I guess you’re the ‘Purdy’ he’s been writing about in his letters. You’re the Red-Wagon boy.”

Purdick hadn’t the slightest idea what she meant, but he was handsomely forgetting the McKnight millions when he said: “I’m anything Ollie wants to call me.”

That was all there was time for at the moment. Larry had been down in the wreck getting one of the seat cushions for the lady to sit on while she waited.

...getting one of the best customers for the day to sit on him and make, and as he was climbing out, another auto came along headed townward. The farmer driving it stopped on the farther edge of things and called across to the “survivors” of the wreck.

“Hello, neighbors! Trouble to burn, h’ain’t ye? Anybody hurt?”

“Nothing serious,” said Dick’s uncle-by-marriage. “Luck was with us.”

“But ye can’t git nowhere without your wagon. Wait till I drive round by t’other bridge and I’ll give ye a lift to town,” and he turned his car and started back to make the detour.

While they waited, Larry and Purdick pulled broken timbers out of the wrecked bridge and built warning road barriers on each side of the creek. In a short time the kindly farmer drove up and the shipwrecked ones were given places in his car. He told Larry and Dick they were welcome to standing-room on the running boards, but they thanked him and said they’d walk—that they were walking, anyway.

“Did you hear what that girl was telling me?” Purdick asked, after Dick’s uncle had told them both to be sure and look him up at the hotel in town, and the auto had sped away up the hill.

Larry shook his head. “No; I was talking to Mr. Starbuck.”

“She’s Ollie McKnight’s sister. She didn’t say how she came to be with Mr. and Mrs. Starbuck, but I suppose the Starbucks and McKnights are friends. Is Mr. Starbuck a rich man? But of course he is, or he wouldn’t ride off and leave a six-thousand-dollar car lying in the ditch without giving it a second look.”

Larry laughed.

“He can afford to, I guess. He and Dick’s father own a gold mine together, and he is a director in one of the Brewster banks.”

“Huh!” said Purdick, and the tone in which he said it meant that Uncle Billy Starbuck wasn’t, or didn’t appear to be, at all the kind of rich man that he had been taught from his infancy to hate and despise.

“Mr. Starbuck is everybody’s ‘Uncle Billy’ in Brewster,” Larry went on. “He

used to be a cowboy, they say, and after that he was a prospector and had all sorts of hard times.”

“Huh!” said little Purdick again, and this time he added: “He doesn’t look or act like a man that any amount of money would spoil.” Beyond this he was silent until after they had topped the hill and the university buildings were in sight. Then he said: “What d’you suppose Ollie’s sister meant by calling me ‘the Red-Wagon boy’?”

Larry choked for a minute. Here was all sorts of a chance that, right at the very last moment, the fat of the Red-Wagon scholarship was going to be spilled in the fire.

“Did—did she call you that?” he stammered, clawing desperately to gain time.

“Yes. She said Ollie had been calling me that in his letters home.”

“Just some of Knighty’s foolishment, I guess,” said Larry. “He’s taken that way sometimes.”

The reply seemed to satisfy Purdick. Anyway, he didn’t ask any more ticklish questions, then, or later when they were together in their room after supper, hustling into their oldest clothes to take part in the Freshman cap-burning, which was scheduled for eight o’clock on the campus.

Purdick had said at first that he wouldn’t go to the cap-burning; meaning thereby that he was still clinging to some of the old prejudices and was disposed to hold aloof from mingling with the class as a body. Though Larry had had prejudices enough of his own at the beginning of the year, it was he who had finally persuaded Purdick not to spoil the whole year by being “stuffy,” as he phrased it, at the very end of things.

“Reckon the Soffies’ll make any bad breaks?” Purdick asked, struggling into a shop jumper to take the place of his cast-off coat.

“They’d better not,” said Larry grimly. “We walloped them last fall and we can do it again, if we have to. But the fellows tell me that the Soffie interference at the cap-burnings has been dying out. I guess they won’t monkey with us to-night.”

Larry’s prediction proved to be a true one. When they reached the rendezvous on

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the campus, the big bonfire was already blazing, and the men of their class were gathering in full force for the final ceremony of their year as Freshmen. Though the cap-burning is strictly a Freshman rite, the other classes were out to look on, but there was no attempt made to interfere with the programme.

College songs were sung, the Sheddon series given, and Wally Dixon, who, besides being a promising full-back, was pretty generally known as the class joker, made a speech in which he paid what you might call left-handed compliments to every fellow in the class whose name he could remember. After Dixon had worked off every joke, old or new, that he could think of, the men formed in line, single file, and marched solemnly around the big fire. At the third circling the green caps were flung into the blaze one by one as the procession passed a given point, and the final event of the Freshman year was over.

It was at the moment of dispersal, after the last cap had gone up in smoke, that Dick halted Purdick and Larry.

“Cal Rogers has lent me his car, and I want you two fellows to go over to the Brandon House with me to meet Uncle Billy and Aunt Stella. They seem to think, some way, that you saved their lives, or something, in that auto accident they had.”

It was quite like both of the two invited ones that they should try to squirm out, but Dick was insistent, though he did yield far enough to give them time to go over to their room and change their clothes.

“All right; chase along and put on the glad rags,” he said. “I’ll be at the Man-o’-War with the car as soon as you’re ready.” And so they parted.

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## XIV

### “WESTWARD HO!”

Dick picked Larry and Purdick up at Mrs. Grant's a few minutes after the cap burning, and the three drove over to town. Leaving the borrowed Rogers car parked in front of the hotel, they found Mr. and Mrs. Starbuck and Ruth McKnight in the mezzanine lounge. Ollie McKnight, who had promised to bring a bunch of his frat brothers over after the cap burning, had not yet shown up, so Dick, Larry and Purdick had the field all to themselves for the time being.

Much to Larry's comfort, as well as to little Purdick's, the Starbucks passed over the auto accident and the “rescue” lightly, and when the group of six began to fall apart into pairs, with Dick's aunt asking him a lot of things about his first year's experience in college, and “Uncle Billy” cross-questioning Larry about how far he had gone in geology and the natural sciences in his High School course, Purdick found himself sort of abandoned to the tender mercies of the pudgy little girl who had named herself as one of the prospective heirs to the McKnight millions.

It was right out of a clear sky, so to speak, and with perfectly infantile frankness that she said: “I'm awfully glad you got hold of Ollie and made him give up something for once in his life. He used to be so tremendously piggish, you know. How did you do it?”

Purdick swallowed hard once or twice and looked as if he were going to choke. Finally he contrived to say: “You must be taking me for somebody else, I guess. I never made your brother give up anything.”

“But didn't Larry Donovan call you ‘Purdick’ out there by the wreck when he was talking to Uncle Billy?”

“That's my name,” said Purdick, still more or less in the condition of a person who had stumbled over a wheelbarrow that he didn't know was in the way.

“Well, then; maybe you didn't just make Ollie give up—of course you didn't, if it comes to that. But he *did* give up, just the same, and that is what really counts. He says now that he's going to give up his summer vacation so as to have money

enough to do it again.”

Purdick’s stare had by this time become perfectly vacant.

“If you’ll excuse me,” he said; “I don’t know any more than a crazy person what you’re talking about.”

“How funny!” she returned. “I mean the Red-Wagon scholarship, of course. It was the best thing that has ever happened to Ollie. He is such a terrible spendthrift—for just foolish things, you know. And when he wrote Daddy that he had taken the two thousand dollars that Daddy sent him to buy a new car with to make a scholarship for you—he called it the Red-Wagon scholarship because he was going to buy a red automobile—and was meaning to go to work this summer so that he could have his vacation money to make another scholarship for somebody else, we were all just simply petrified, and—Why, what’s the matter?”

We may suppose that Purdick’s usually pale face was trying to turn all the colors of the rainbow. So Ollie McKnight was the one who had given him the two thousand dollars which was to help him through the Sheddon course! If Larry had only told him in the beginning!

The rainbow flush was gone and his face was even paler than usual when he forced himself to say: “Did you ever live in Steelville, Pennsylvania?”

“Why, yes,” said the girl. “I was born there.”

“So was I,” said little Purdick, and his eyes were narrowing curiously. Then came the next question: “Was your father the general manager of the steel works there?”

“Not at first. But he was before we left to go and live in Chicago.”

It was all out now. Ollie’s father—and this girl’s—was the man whom *his* father’s fellow laborers had said was responsible for the loose platform and the broken railing in the open-hearth furnace house, and so, indirectly, at least, responsible for the death which had left two orphans to fight their way as best they could with the bread-winner gone. And it was McKnight money he had been living on!

Purdick never knew afterward how he managed to keep on talking to the girl after this horrible revelation had battered its way into his brain. The thing he remembered most clearly was the tremendous feeling of relief he had when Ollie came up with half a dozen of the fellows from his fraternity house, and he—Purdick—was able to slip aside and, as you might say, efface himself. One thing, and only one, was clear in his mind; he must never spend another penny of the money, and what he had already spent must be paid back. From the way he looked at it, it was blood-money—nothing more or less.

Fifteen minutes later Larry found his room-mate at the stairhead, quietly making his escape.

“Making a sneak, are you?” said Larry, clapping him on the shoulder. “Well, so am I, if anybody should ask you. Got to go home and pack in a hurry. It’s ‘Westward Ho!’ for us on the early morning train.”

“You and Dick, you mean?”

“M-m, yes; for Dick and me.”

“I’ll help you pack,” Purdick offered, and not another word was said until Larry was turning on the lights in the room they had been sharing for something like half a year. Then it was that Purdick, dropping wearily into a chair, said his say.

“I’m not blaming you any, Larry; I guess you’ve been doing only what you had to do. But if you had told me at first that it was Ollie McKnight who was putting up the money for me, I’d have died before I would have taken it.”

“Why, Purdy!” exclaimed Larry. And then: “Did Ruth McKnight tell you?”

Purdick nodded.

“She didn’t know that I didn’t know. Neither did she know that my father was killed in the Steelville Furnace at the time when her father and Ollie’s was the general manager.”

“Well?” said Larry, failing to see the connection.

“Don’t you see?” said Purdick harshly. “Wasn’t he my father’s murderer? Wasn’t that loose plank and broken railing reported time and again, and nothing

was done about them?”

Now there had been a time, and not so many months back, at that, when Larry Donovan, taking a leaf out of the book of his experience as an apprentice and helper in the railroad shop at home where he had heard some of the men constantly talking about the greed of the capitalists and their disregard for the comfort and safety of their workmen, would have given at least a qualified assent to little Purdick’s bitter charge. But he was no longer the one-sided fellow he had been when his college mates had called him “The Offish Worm.”

“Let’s see a minute,” he temporized. “Was it positively known that Mr. McKnight had been told about the loose board?”

“Put yourself in his place,” was Purdick’s retort. “If you were in charge of a mill or a furnace where men’s lives were at stake, wouldn’t you consider it a part of your job to see such reports and act upon them?”

“I know,” Larry countered quickly, “but I’ve worked in a shop long enough to know that a lot of things that ought to go to the man higher up never get there. We had a foreman who was always jumping on the men for kicking about bad safety appliances. I don’t believe he ever reported half of ’em to anybody who had the authority to order them fixed.”

It was just here that the real miracle began to show itself, like the face of the sun crawling out of the shadow of a total eclipse. Though he hardly realized it, and would, perhaps, have refused to admit it, the college year, so different from the year in which he had worked and failed, had planted a lot of new things in Charles Purdick. The timely help that had come at a moment when he was so sick and discouraged that it seemed as if he must give up the fight for an education; the way in which Larry had stood by him; the frank and helpful friendship of such “rotten rich” fellows as Dick Maxwell, Wally Dixon, Cal Rogers and Ollie McKnight; recollections of all these “mollifications,” if you could call them so, came crowding in when the old class-and-mass hatred tried to get in its word. And in the end it was the “mollifications” that won out—at least, in the matter of Ollie McKnight’s generous gift.

“I—I guess I can’t go back on Ollie, after all,” he admitted, finally. “I was savage at first—when his sister told me. I kept telling myself that I’d work my fingers to the bone to pay that money back, and that I’d starve before I’d use another penny of it. I—I guess that was just plain, low-down meanness in me,

Larry.”

“Now you’re talking like a sure-enough man!” said Larry, chuckling as delightedly over the victory as he would if he had stood in Ollie McKnight’s shoes. “Let’s call it a locked door, and if I were you, I’d never let Ollie know that his little scheme for keeping the thing dark has gone blooey. Seems to me that’s the whitest thing to do.”

“You’re right; you’re mighty nearly always right, Larry,” said Purdick, jumping up to help Larry get his trunk out of the closet. “Now if I were only sure of getting a job this summer—”

“What did you have in mind?” queried Larry, as craftily as if he were trying to trap somebody into betraying a secret.

“It’s the big city and a hot office for mine,” said Purdick, as Larry began to throw his clothes pell mell into the open trunk.

“Bet you a dollar you never see the inside of an office this whole summer,” was the joshing reply.

“I wish I didn’t have to. But that’s where I’ll land. I’m not husky enough for anything else, unless it’s slinging dishes in a restaurant, or something like that.”

“Well,” Larry went on in the same sort of triumphant joshing tone, “I’ll bet you another dollar that you *do* sling dishes this summer, a part of the time—only they’ll be tin ones. Take me up?”

“I don’t know what you’re driving at,” said little Purdick; and he didn’t.

“Of course you don’t, and I shan’t keep you on tenterhooks another minute. You’re going to Colorado with Dick and me.”

“Who—who said I was?”

“Mr. William Starbuck said so—and he meant it. Dick and I are going to put in the whole summer prospecting in the Hophra Mountains for tungsten, bauxite, and the chrome-bearing ores. Uncle Billy is financing the job, and he came down here to-day especially to ask Dick if he didn’t want to pick out a couple of his classmates for bunkies and go to it. It will be simply one long picnic; big woods, big mountains, big game if we want it, and camping out all summer long.”

big mountains, big game if we want it, and camping out all summer long.

“Y-yes,” stammered little Purdick, “but—but where do I come in?”

Larry laughed uproariously, in a fashion that Old Sheddon had taught him.

“By the door of the cooking fire, if anybody should ask you. The minute Uncle Billy said ‘a couple of your classmates’ Dick grabbed for you. So, any time you get sore at us, you can square things by starving us to death. Neither Dick nor I could cook a decent meal, not if our lives depended on it. And, oh, boy! when you come back after a summer in our good old mountains, your best friend won’t know you. If we don’t put some meat on those little old rat’s bones of yours it’ll be the queerest thing that ever happened, in the Hophras or out of ’em. Come on and let’s get your trunk out. We catch the five-o’clock Limited in the morning. For, of course, you *are* going with us?”

“Going?” said little Purdick, and his pale blue eyes were shining; “I’d crawl on my hands and knees all the way to Colorado to get the chance to go!” Then: “Oh, gosh, Larry! a whole summer out of doors: you don’t know what that means to me. If—if you’ll just haul off and give me a swift kick, so that I’ll know I’m not asleep and dreaming——”

“I know,” Larry laughed. “That was just the way I felt when Uncle Billy fired it at Dick and me over yonder in the hotel. But it’s all wool and a yard wide. We go and you go. Now get to work on that trunk or it’ll be midnight before we can begin to cork it orf in our ’ammicks. For it’s Westward Ho! with a rumbelow, and—and—oh, shucks! I never can remember the rest of it. Get busy and pack!”

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#### Transcriber’s Notes:

Except for the frontispiece, illustrations have been moved to follow the text that they illustrate, so the page number of the illustration may not match the page number in the Illustrations.

Reduced the page numbers in the Table of Contents, for Chapters VII to XIV, by 1 to match the corresponding chapter beginning page number in the content.

Punctuation and spelling inaccuracies were silently corrected.

Archaic and variable spelling has been preserved.

Variations in hyphenation and compound words have been preserved.

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