the place, almost, who wouldn't have done the same thing if they'd known you were so nervous. You see, I came to notice it because I know how it is myself. A little before the time of Jimmy Aldine's death I had the horrors every night nearly, and I tell you I haven't forgotten it, either. Well, good-night. Remember, we'll try our hands on Cicero's letters to-morrow."

And making the sign of the cross, Tom closed his eyes and very, very soon gave evidence by the regular breathing that he was fast asleep.

His presence had a calming effect upon me, and I felt so happy for all his kind and considerate words. Yes, Tom *had* "ministered to a mind diseased." His kind words hovered brightly in my memory, and soon conducted me into the very brightest and pleasantest spot in dreamland—the spot consecrated to love, and purity, and innocence, and ever hallowed by their priceless presence.

CHAPTER IX.

IN WHICH I HAVE A BAD NIGHT AND PRODUCE A SENSATION IN THE DORMITORY.

ACCORDING to orders, we all arose at half-past seven the next morning, thoroughly refreshed. After a substantial breakfast we heard the late mass, and came from the chapel in time to get our books for class.

At noon-time Tom and I had a long *tête-à-tête*. I told him the dramatic incidents of my life, to which he listened with no little astonishment. When I had concluded my tale he fell into a brown-study.

"I'll tell you what I think," he at length said. "I think that there's not an end of this business yet, by any means. You loved your nurse pretty much the same as though she were your mother. Now, that's in her favor. From what I've seen and heard during my three years in boarding-college, I've come to believe that a small boy seldom misses it in the matter of likes and dislikes. Now, if your nurse killed your uncle, I'm willing to bet my head that she didn't do it merely for the sake of the money."

"You think not?" I exclaimed, with a great feeling of relief. The reader should remember that what had given me the greatest shock was the thought that one I had loved so much should prove so base.

"Honest," answered Tom. "Now, another thing: did your nurse ever act queerly—that is, did you ever notice anything in her conduct which might lead you to think that there was something wrong about her head?"

Before replying, I considered for a moment.

"No," I at length made answer. "She was reserved and distant with others, but with me she was ever kind and loving. I can't say that she at any time acted queerly."

"She might have killed him in a moment of insanity," observed Tom. "At all events, I'm quite sure that she didn't kill him in cold blood."

I was inexpressibly soothed by this opinion of Tom's.

"Another thing," he continued: "what about that house? Do you honestly think it's haunted?"

"I can't say for certain, Tom. No one goes near it, but everybody says it is."

"Well, we mustn't take a thing like that for granted. Now, I've got an idea which it won't do any harm to carry out. Who knows but it may throw some light on the subject? It's the same way in life, I reckon, as in books. We make lots of bad blunders simply because we take one little thing or another for granted. Now, I really don't see what that house being haunted or not haunted has to do with the case; but maybe it has. At any rate, it will do no harm to find out. Now, here's my plan. Next vacation you and I will spend a night in your uncle's house. You needn't look so scared. Of course, you're horribly afraid now. That's because you're sickly. But you'll be all right by next summer, and you'll enjoy the prospect of that night in a haunted house just as much as I do now."

"I won't make the promise, Tom."

"That's right," answered my romantic friend. "But next spring I'll ask you the same question, and I'm perfectly sure that you'll say yes."

"I doubt it."

"No matter; and, Harry, if you don't mind I'll tell Percy all about the matter. You can trust Percy a thousand miles further than you can see him."

"Certainly, Tom, tell Percy."

From after-knowledge I am now certain that Tom did not believe my uncle's house to be haunted. But my new friend liked anything that gave promise of adventure, and the prospect of passing a night in a lone house was something after his heart.

During the day my imagination, despite my endeavors to the contrary, kept running on the unlovely

memories of the night I spent at my uncle's. Horrible pictures flashed before me, over and over again, without order and without sequence. It was as though I myself were haunted. The swimming incident had unstrung my nerves; and my long talk with Tom had freshened into vividness the details of a night vivid enough as they ever were without my recalling them.

With evening these haunting memories grew stronger; to use a bold word, they became aggressive; and when I retired to rest I was in an extreme state of nervousness.

There they came, as I tossed restlessly upon my bed—the gloomy house, my gloomy uncle, the scowling Caggett, my angry nurse. At once the picture changed, and I was standing, terror-stricken, gazing into my uncle's room and contemplating that sad sight. This picture stared at me for a few moments, then *vanished*—it did not fade away—and at once another picture was gazing at me. I say gazing at me, for I know no other form of words to give the reader an adequate idea of the manner in which these pictures came and went. This picture was of a little boy leaping from a bed, a scream of terror upon his lips. He looks about him wildly—at the blood upon his night-shirt, at the blood upon the floor, at that pathetic glove bathed in purple, and as I gaze at this picture and it at me, it becomes more and more vivid, clearer, distincter—no vision, but a reality, and reaching the last degree of vividness, I become a part of the picture, I become the little boy; I, too, leap from my bed just as on that awful morning, and again scream in an ecstasy of terror:

"Help! murder!"

And with these words the spell is broken: and trembling in every limb, with a great sob bursting from my bosom, I find myself standing in the dormitory surrounded by boys with faces white as a sheet and gazing upon me in awe and horror; and before I can realize where I am, a soft hand is caressing my cheek, a soft voice is whispering soothing words into my ear—as a mother soothes her frightened babe. It is Percy, the only one of all the boys who has not been disconcerted by my scream. He is perfect master of himself, and the only emotion upon his expressive face is intelligent sympathy.

"Wake Mr. Middleton," chattered one of the boys nearest me.

Strange to say, Mr. Middleton did not awake, even on this occasion. He was the soundest of sleepers.

"No, you don't," whispered Keenan authoritatively. "Just let him have his sleep out. He deserves all he gets."

"You are always considerate, George," whispered Percy. "We can arrange this matter ourselves. I'll take Harry over to the infirmary and stay beside him for the rest of the night."

"No, you don't, Percy," said Tom. "You've had your innings already. I'll take him."

Hereupon there arose a whispered discussion. Donnel and Keenan and Quip put in claims, too. At length it was decided that Percy should have the office, whereupon Keenan turned round and said:

"Now, boys, hop into bed. I'm acting prefect."

The boys, who had recovered from their fright, gave a little series of giggles and obeyed.

I shall say little of that night in the infirmary. It is a fragrant memory. Percy was not an angel, for angels are not made of clay; but as he bent over me that night with his tender smile and his gracious words, as from out his blue eyes there shown that unselfish love which is not of the earth earthy, I thanked God from my heart for this object-lesson in the sublime nobility of human nature.

CHAPTER X.

IN WHICH WE DIVIDE OUR ATTENTION BETWEEN BASE-BALL AND LATIN, AND ARE PREPARED FOR A CONTEST IN THE ONE AND AN EXAMINATION IN THE OTHER.

THE nervous attack of which I spoke in the preceding chapter was, I might say, the first and last that I suffered at St. Maure's. With each day I seemed to gain strength and vigor. Little by little my nervous facial twitching disappeared, and before Christmas the attentive physician of the college pronounced me well.

How calmly and peacefully these golden months glided on. During October and the early part of November baseball held its own in the yard. Tom was unwearied in training his nine. Although he seldom called upon me to pitch, and even then but for a few innings, yet he gave me many words of encouragement.

"Just wait," he said, "'till the flowers that bloom in the spring, tra la, give promise of merry sunshine.' Then we'll turn you loose in the box, and

we'll show the second nine of the big yard a trick or two."

Tom was ambitious. It was his darling idea to play and defeat the Junior nine of the senior division. To most of our fellows the proposition seemed a trifle wild. But Tom had some foundation for the faith that was in him. To begin with, he counted on a strong infield. Joe Whyte was first baseman. As a batter Joe was weak, nor was he reliable in stopping grounders; but for holding a thrown ball he was perfect in his way. At second base he had John Donnel, a faultless fielder—he was called the king of second base—and the strongest batsman on the nine. Indeed, it was generally held that John was superior in safe hitting to any of the large-yard Junior nine.

George Keenan covered short field. This very little fellow contrived to be everywhere; always in the right place and at the right time. Fairly strong at the bat, he was at his best when running the bases. He could twist and turn with such agility that it was almost impossible to catch him off his guard, although he played off further from base than any one of our players. Third base was covered by Charles Richards. He was a strong batter, excellent for running catches, but not over-reliable at stopping ground balls. As for the outfield, Quip at centre and Ruthers at right were fair catchers and excellent throwers, although both were weak batsmen. Harry Quip, however, redeemed this defect by excellent base-running. Percy was the left fielder; he had one weak point, and that was in throwing. He could scarcely put a ball on a line from his ordinary position to second base. But, saving this, he was a

phenomenon. He had a knack, which few fielders possess, of being able to judge a fly almost as soon as it was knocked. And when he got hold of a ball he clasped it, as it were, "with hooks of steel," that is, with two small, delicate hands, large enough, however, to hold any ball that came within their grasp. As for running, his speed was something extraordinary. Tom, Keenan, and even Donnel had to give in to him in this; although he was not as quick in recovering himself as George. Thus far Percy, fair in his batting, had done little in the way of base-stealing. But it was just on this point that Tom founded something of his hopes. He counted on Percy's becoming a phenomenal base-stealer before spring; and he himself had Percy in private training during the winter.

Tom himself was our catcher; and he was as steady, cool, and reliable there as any captain could be. He never lost his head, never flagged in his attention, never missed a point in the game. In throwing to bases he was considered second only to Ryan, the best catcher of the senior students.

But now for our nine's weakest point. I was on the list to pitch. It was evident to every one that unless I gained more speed the big boys would knock out two and three baggers almost at will. On the other hand, it was admitted that my curves were very good and that my command of the ball was unusual. As to my general playing abilities, beyond doubt I was the worst of all the "Blue Clippers." My batting was wretched and my base-running of a piece with it. Worst of all, I was very unsure in catching those twisting flies that are so often popped up for the benefit of the pitcher.

But for all this, Tom protested that I'd be on hand in the spring with speed enough and endurance enough to face the heavy batters of the Juniors for nine innings.

As for the opposing nine, they were clearly our superiors in batting, and they were provided, moreover, with an excellent pitcher. So matters stood in the autumn, at which period it would have been downright folly even to attempt a game with the boys whom we purposed defeating in the spring.

I should add that the Juniors were in blissful ignorance of our lofty aspirations. During the winter season they forgot their baseball and devoted themselves between study-hours to sports suitable to the changing months. Not so with us. Tom kept us all at a regular course of gymnastics; besides which training, he contrived to pay special attention to Percy and myself.

In the mean time studies went on briskly. How our set did soak themselves in their Latin author! We spent the whole of the Latin class-hour in trying to catch one another. In this Percy was the quickest and Tom next. As for knowledge of Latin, I was considered the best. This, I could easily see, was not due to any mental superiority on my part, but to the fact that I had had a private tutor to help me and more time to give to the study. It was clear to me that for taking in new matter Tom and Percy were easily my superiors, and I had no doubt that by the end of the year both would at the very least be on a par with me in actual knowledge of the language.

Nor did we confine ourselves to the class-work; once or twice a week we held informal meetings.

Then, under my guidance, the ambitious young students read my selection from Cicero's letters. Before Christmas, indeed, they knew as much of these five hundred lines as I did myself; so that during the holidays we were all casting about for something new. I was at the end of my tether; the others had all read the same authors. We would have liked to have Mr. Middleton preside over our Ciceronian meetings, but we knew that what with his teaching and his prefecting he had all the work he could possibly attend to. Mr. Middleton solved our dilemma.

"Get Keenan," he said, "to go over a bit of '*Pro Archia Poeta*' with you. It's true you'll see it again in poetry class; but even so, you'll not lose by it."

Keenan gladly assented to our request; and during the months of January, February, and March we parsed, translated, analyzed, imitated, and memorized one hundred and fifty lines of "*Pro Archia Poeta.*"

Of course we didn't do all this because we looked upon it as fun, but we really did like Latin; and we really did love Mr. Middleton; and we really did hope to make, at very worst, a strong fight the following year for the intercollegiate gold medal.

I suppose all of us felt weary and disgusted at times—I know I did. But there was a spirit of energy in us, a spirit, you may be sure, breathed into us by our enthusiastic teacher, and daily kept alive and nourished by his heartening words.

During the second half of the year we began to talk Latin in class. As an encouragement to talk at all, Mr. Middleton offered a prize for the first week to the one who should make the most blunders.

Tom Playfair won it easily, with Harry Quip a distant second.

After a month the prize was for the one who should make the *least* blunders; and, if I may anticipate, in June he was to receive the prize who employed in his class-talk the greatest number of classical idioms. Percy and myself were a tie at the end, and received each of us a very pretty picture.

It was the morning of March 21st; the sun, which had risen a few hours before in a burst of splendor, was now shining with the bridal brightness of spring. The sweet twitter of the early birds fell welcome upon our ears; while the fresh green grass just peeping out of the earth and the swelling buds on the trees gave promise of beautiful blossoms and joyous ramblings over the grassy prairies, of wild flowers, and all the scents and sounds that are connected with the prettiest time of all the year.

The small boy loves life; and therefore he loves spring. To him there is a glory about the budding tree and divinely-painted flower which is dimmed or invisible to the eye of an adult. The wild freshness of spring touches a wild freshness of sympathy in the heart of the small boy.

Tom was as gay as the season.

"Harry," he exclaimed, as his eyes feasted upon the landscape, "it's spring."

"I've observed it," I answered.

"And how much did you weigh when you came here?"

"Eighty pounds."

"And what is it now?"

"One hundred and three."

"And do you think you could stand nine innings?" I laughed.

"If the batters can stand it I can."

"So, you see, I was right when I said you'd be well by spring. Now, remember, on or about the 15th of April we're going to play the large boys one game."

"Only one?" I inquired.

"Well, yes," answered Tom. "It will be too much of a strain on us to tackle them often; and besides, either we'll beat them the first time or we won't. If we do, we're satisfied; if we don't, we'll scarcely be able to do it this year; for we intend to put in our best licks in a lump."

"Well, you may rely upon it, Tom, that I'll do my best to help on. But isn't our class-specimen to come off about the same time?"

"That's what I've counted on," said Tom. "We're going to make that a success, you know; and then we'll be flushed with success, as they say. Six of the players are in our class, and if they can stand up before a board of reverend examiners successfully they won't be afraid to face a big boy with a ball in his hand."

Tom was of opinion that the same energy which could conquer difficulties in the classics could also conquer difficulties on the play-ground. To him the boy who was leader in the play-ground and dunce in the class-room was a freak, a *lusus naturæ*. As a matter of fact, all of his players were as quick with their wits as with their limbs; in choosing his nine he had selected those who were fair in sports and in studies, in preference to better athletes with muddier intellects.

Spring, then, passed on with even pace. She set the birds a-singing and painted the flowers in all their glory of color and scented the breeze with her perfumes. She brought the brightest of sunshine and the bluest of skies and the greenest of swards. But strong as was her charm she could not allure the Academic boys from their books. They studied right on in hours of study, and then when play-time came they breathed in the vernal glories all the more joyously that they had done their duty.

And so the time flew till April 12th arrived—the morning of the specimen.

CHAPTER XI.

IN WHICH PERCY WYNN MEETS WITH A FAILURE.

THE president, vice-president, and dean of the faculty honored our specimen with their presence and attention.

Charlie Richards delivered a neatly-worded opening address, concluding his remarks by inviting the distinguished visitors to examine the class in English, Latin, and Greek.

The Precepts in English Composition were first taken as subject-matter for examination. The boys, thoroughly drilled as they had been all along in memory work, answered with such ease that after the lapse of fifteen minutes the president called a halt.

"That is too easy for your boys, Mr. Middleton; we'll take them on something where we'll get a fairer chance of puzzling them."

Then came the tug of war.

Sallust, bristling with idiom, formed a splendid *pièce de resistance* for the acute examiners.

They put questions right and left, but the answers came from right and left with almost equal readiness. Presently translation was abandoned and the field of syntax was invaded. Here we held our ground; we had taken nothing for granted in getting up our position, and consequently had no unprotected points. The examiners were flushed and smiling; the more they asked, the more their smiling grew. But what pleased us most was the fact that Mr. Middleton was gratified. He himself had not counted upon such readiness.

Finally, the president turned to our professor: "Mr. Middleton, this won't do. We came here to see what these boys are lacking in, and here they've been parading their knowledge for over an hour. Can't you give us a hint as to where we can catch them?"

"I would suggest, Father, that you try them in off-hand theme-work, modelling your sentences on the passages they have seen in the text-book. I should state, in justice to the class, however, that they did not expect such an ordeal."

The president was pleased with the suggestion. "Well, I'll make compensation," he said. "Now, my dear boys, I promise to give a fine book to any one among you who holds out the longest in giving correct off-hand translations. Your own teacher shall be the referee; when any one makes a blunder Mr. Middleton will rule him out."

Playfair, Percy, Quip, Whyte, Ruthers, Richards, and myself were delighted with this plan. None of us had anticipated any such line of questions in

the specimen, but, as a matter of private work, we had repeatedly gone over our author, each one of us in turn building sentences in English, and the rest of us rendering them into Latin similar in form and idiom to the style of Sallust. Others of the class, however, were dismayed, not that they were unfit, but that they lacked confidence.

Very soon the examiners were hard at us, pelting us with simple sentences. One by one we were asked in turn, and at the end of three rounds not a boy had been remanded to his seat. But now the examiners, following the initiative of the president, fell to introducing "kinks" into their sentences, whereupon the slaughter commenced. Ten of our twenty-five classmates succumbed at the first fierce onset, leaving fifteen of us in the field. At the next charge seven bit the dust. There were now left Percy, Tom, Quip, Whyte, Ruthers, Richards, and myself.

To the surprise and dismay of all, Percy tripped on an irregular verb and, blushing violently, went to his seat. We all pitied him, for there wasn't a better scholar or a more popular boy in the class. Whyte, Ruthers, and Richards soon followed him, and there remained Tom, Harry Quip, and myself.

But, as the saying is, we had gained our second wind. Tom was cool, as usual, and steadied us.

"Stick up for the honor of the class, boys," he whispered. "Don't answer till you're sure."

We followed the advice, and held our positions for half an hour longer. The clock struck eleven.

"Two hours are up," said the president. "The contest is at an end. My dear students, permit me to congratulate you on the very extraordinary specimen you have given. If it were possible to be above the standard of the class—and that is an open question into which I shall not enter—I would say that in Latin you certainly are above the standard. Your contest in off-hand theme-work is one in which boys of higher classes seldom come off with honor. Certainly, if you can write Latin as you speak it, there's a chance, and a good chance too, for you to carry off the collegiate honors. For the rest of the day you are free."

That last sentence was the sort of peroration we wanted; on this occasion, indeed, it was a surprise.

Of course, we had a pleasant time of it. Percy made light of his failure. "I thought a little too much of my Latin," he said. "It humbled me very much to fail. But to my mind nothing succeeds like failure." And then Percy congratulated the three of us with a genuineness which showed us all how defeat may be turned into victory.

CHAPTER XII.

IN WHICH IS BEGUN A FULL AND TRUE ACCOUNT OF A GREAT BASEBALL GAME.

THE sun rose in an almost cloudless sky upon the long-looked-for day. I was wondering, as I proceeded to First Academic, how our boys would bend themselves to their work. Mr. Middleton received us with a smile more genial, if possible, than usual.

"Now, boys," he said, after concluding prayers, "will you be good enough to promise to pay close attention?"