

strike upon a plan right on the spur of the moment."

"Well," answered Tom, "we can't do much harm and we may do some good. Come on."

CHAPTER XXI.

IN WHICH TOM PLAYFAIR AND PERCY WYNN COME TO TIPP'S RESCUE.

TIPP received us with enthusiasm and made a place for Tom and Percy beside himself.

"What are you fellows up to now?" asked Tom.

"We were just talking about the way we worked Auber this morning," volunteered Broadhead.

"It was a pretty good joke, Anarchist—all except the locking-out business," commented Tom, "and of course you did that. It's like you to think that standing out in the cold is funny."

"I am told," said Harry Quip, "that when the Anarchist was at home his father, in order to make him laugh, used to read him all the explosions, murders, and railroad collisions out of the papers; and it seems that the more killed there were the more Anarchist laughed."

"That's a fact," said Tipp. "And when other boys were taken to a pantomime, Anarchist's papa used to take him off to see the pigs killed. One day, after seeing a thousand pigs done up, Anarchist got to laughing so hard that he nearly died of it."

"Oh, look here now; if you fellows get to poking fun at me like that I'll go away."

"Heavens!" ejaculated Quip. "He calls this fun."

"Yes; and I'll end the joke by throwing you over the fence," snarled Broadhead.

"Wouldn't it be nicer if you were to make his nose bleed, Anarchist?" said the suave Percy. "The blood might remind you of old times."

Broadhead made a dash at Percy and aimed a blow which would have considerably marred my friend's beauty had not Percy, by a quick movement, escaped it. The fence-paling awaited Broadhead's fist; and the next thing we knew Percy was bandaging Broadhead's hand as though they were inseparable friends, at the same time apologizing profusely for the words he had just uttered.

"You needn't be so mad, anyhow, Anarchist," added Tipp. "You ought to know how to take a roasting just the same as the rest of us."

"That's so," said the chorus.

By a happy accident Quip had taken a good step in making fun of Broadhead. Tom saw there was a point to be gained and followed it up. And even Percy, who studied to offend no one, had deliberately continued the teasing for the one purpose of lessening Broadhead's influence with the crowd.

Broadhead, by losing his temper, had helped them in their purpose; in a few moments he had lost the prestige gained by three or four weeks' hard endeavor.

"So," continued Tom, "you were talking about the surprise-party you gave Mr. Auber this morning. Is that all?"

"No; we're getting up another surprise-party for to-morrow. He'll run his hands through his hair till there won't be any hair left to run 'em through."

"What's the scheme, Dodger?" asked our spokesman.

"It's not completely hatched out yet, but it's going to begin this way. To-morrow afternoon's a half-holiday, and there's the privilege for all to go out walking if they get permission. Of course most of us can't go, because the prefects won't allow fellows out who are not on the conduct list. Well, we're going to get permission anyhow."

"How'll you do that, Artful?" queried Quip.

"Why, this way: we'll wait till Mr. Middleton goes to dinner at a quarter to one. Then the whole crowd of us will get together by the pump and begin whispering and monkeying, as though we were up to some mischief. Of course Mr. Auber will get rattled right off, and he'll come over to see what's going on. Now, just as soon as he's very near us, two of our fellows, who are on the good conduct list, will go up to him and say, 'Mr. Auber, will you please let us go out?' Of course he'll say 'yes,' or something of the sort. Then those two will give a whoop and say to all of us, 'Hurrah! fellows, Mr. Auber says we can go out.' Then the whole crowd of us will give a lot of whoops and scoot out of that yard as hard as we can put; and before Mr. Auber can tell a single one of us that he didn't mean the permission for any except the two who asked, we'll be clear out of sight."

"That's about as cheeky a thing as I've heard in a long time," observed Quip.

"Is it?" exclaimed Tipp in delight.

"And it's clever, too," added Tom.

"Do you think it will work, Tom?"

"Yes—on one condition."

"What's that?"

"On condition that you fellows all back each other up by the tallest kind of lying."

Tipp's jaw dropped.

"I don't like that. We Dodgers have kept out of straight lying so far."

"And, of course, you're not going to begin now," added Percy. "Then there's another thing, too. Aren't you boys imposing on Mr. Auber too much? He lets you off so easily. I've heard it said that he can't bear to punish a boy."

"That's a fact," put in Tipp promptly. "He gave me fifty lines for talking in ranks, and we were at it for a week and then he let me off. But as sure as you're born, when I got to thinking about it, it looked as if *he* had been punished and I had all the fun."

"There's another thing," put in Tom. "Mr. Auber doesn't believe in punishing if he can avoid it. But if you fellows keep on he might start in wholesale. He's a timid man and very kind; but if he gets on the war-path the Anarchist will have a chance to snuff blood."

"You just leave me out of this Sunday-school meeting," growled Broadhead, rising from his seat and walking off. Whereupon the boys, following time to his footsteps, whistled, with zeal and propriety, the "Rogue's March."

"The fact is, fellows," said a boy whose face was noticeable for its good-nature and decided squint, "we've been a heap too hard on Mr. Auber."

"That's so," assented several.

"In fact," said another, "we've been mean; he's always been very kind to us."

"The boys of Rhetoric class," put in Percy, "say that he's the most wonderful man they ever met. They say that when he gets started in class he talks like a book, and when he warms up to a subject he becomes really eloquent. His timidity all goes, his eyes flash, and he talks like an orator. He's a poet, too; and the leader of the class said that Mr. Auber was the nearest thing to a genius that he ever met."

"All the same," pursued Harry Quip, "we treat him as if he were nobody."

The conversation soon became very general, and quite a number who had feared to express their sentiments in the presence of Broadhead now came out strongly in favor of Mr. Auber. There were several close observers among the Dodgers, and it was astonishing to hear all the little traits of kindness and consideration they had noticed in their prefect during the preceding three months.

"And yet," said Percy, "Mr. Auber thinks you're all down on him; and one of his class told me today that he felt he'd have to give up prefecting as a bad job."

"Talking about giving him a surprise-party," said Tom with great animation, "it just now occurs to me that we can kill two birds with one stone—we can give him a surprise and at the same time show him that we like him."

"What's your scheme?" asked Tipp.

"Why, suppose we club together and get him a present, and you in the name of the Dodgers make the speech."

For a moment there was silence. Tom's move was certainly bold.

"Here's two dollars, Tipp; it's every cent I've got," continued Tom; "and if I had more I'd give it."

"Immense!" cried Tipp; "I've only got fifty cents and I owe fifty-five, but in it goes." And Tipp put his money with Tom's into his cap, and when he had made the rounds there wasn't a boy there who had a cent left.

"By the way," said Quip, "there's a rule in the college forbidding the boys to give presents to any of the professors."

"The Dodgers don't mind a rule more or less," observed Tipp with a grin.

"Yes, but Mr. Auber does; he won't take your present."

"Suppose we get permission from the president," suggested Percy.

"Yes, Percy," said Tom, who was helping Quip count the money, "you and Tipp and Harry Dee go up and ask him while I count these nickels."

We were off at once.

The president was seated at his table poring over a bit of paper; he started on seeing who we were and with an effort smiled. I could see at once that he was disturbed about something.

"Father," began Percy, "we'd like to make a present to one of the teachers."

"It's not allowed, Percy. I thank you, in his name, for your good-will."

"But, Father, it is not exactly to a professor but to a prefect we want to make it."

"Oh, indeed. Mr. Middleton is already assured of your good-will, and I——"

"Excuse me, Father; we're talking about Mr. Auber."

The president sat bolt upright.

"What's that?"

"The Artful Dodgers, Father, want to give Mr. Auber a present."

The smile upon the president's face was no longer forced. He took the paper over which he had been poring and tore it into small bits.

"The Artful Dodgers?" he repeated.

"Yes, sir," put in Tipp. "It'll do us good, sir, if you give us permission."

"The Artful Dodgers," answered the president, "may give anything they like to Mr. Auber."

"I wonder what that paper was?" exclaimed Tipp as we started for the yard.

"So do I," said Percy.

I never forgot that paper; and seven years later I learned from the president himself that it contained reasons pro and con for expelling Tipp. Just as we knocked at his door he had determined to expel Tipp on the morrow as being a promoter of disorder.

"Well," said Tom, when we had announced the result of our petition, "we've got just nineteen dollars and seventy-five cents."

"Pity we can't make it twenty," sighed Tipp.

"Of course we can," said Quip; "what's the matter with Anarchist?"

"That's a fact," cried Tipp. "Boys, we'll make the Anarchist fork over or we'll kick him out of the gang—eh?"

There was a unanimous chorus of assenting voices.

Five minutes later Broadhead had resigned, and twenty-five cents were still wanting.

Then Tipp went to the wash-room and brought out his baseball bat, which was the envy of every boy in the small yard. Tom had offered him a dollar for it, Percy a dollar and a quarter; but Tipp loved that bat and had said that money could not buy it.

And now he got permission to go to the large yard. He returned presently without the bat and handed Tom a quarter.

"There's the twenty dollars, Tom."

And when the boys heard of Tipp's most epic sacrifice they were dumb with admiration.

Tipp was the hero of the hour, and he retired to bed that night the most popular boy, for the time being, in St. Maure's, and, I verily believe, the happiest that ever laid head upon a pillow.

Tipp had a good heart.

CHAPTER XXII.

IN WHICH PERCY WYNN GOES BAREFOOT FOR THE FIRST AND ONLY TIME IN HIS LIFE.

"HARRY," said Percy to me just before night-prayers, "I want you to keep your eyes on Broadhead."

"Why, what's Anarchist up to?"

"That's just what I'd like to find out. During first recess, while Tom and Tipp and myself were walking up and down talking about the silver watch we're going to buy Mr. Auber, Broadhead came up and called Tom an awful name."

"And what did Tom do?"

"He asked the Anarchist whether he wouldn't take some candy. Then the Anarchist became furious and offered to fight. Tom only laughed. Broadhead rushed on him, but Tipp and I got hold of his arms and held him. The Anarchist really seemed to foam at the mouth and said: 'Never mind; I'll get even with you fellows, pretty quick, too.' And he walked off swearing in an awful way."

"The Anarchist is a pretty hard nut," I said. "But is Tom nervous?"

"Nervous? I should say not; and there's just the trouble. It's my opinion that Broadhead means mischief. He's a bad boy, and from all I've seen of him this year of a very revengeful disposition. We'd better look out for him."

I now follow Percy's account.

That night he tossed restlessly upon his bed, unable to sleep for thinking of Broadhead's words and conduct. It was hard upon midnight when he fell into a troubled sleep. His visions centred about Tom. Tom was standing upon the edge of a precipice; stealthily creeping upon him was Broadhead. Percy essayed to shout out a warning, but his tongue seemed to be tied; again and again he tried to shout, but to no purpose. Nearer and nearer crept Broadhead; nearer and nearer, and still Tom was unconscious of his imminent danger. Percy tried to pray, but words of prayer came not. Suddenly the Anarchist made a spring upon Tom, and Percy's best friend, with a loud cry, disappeared over the edge.

The cry seemed to awaken Percy; he found himself sitting up in bed with drops of perspiration rolling down his face. How eagerly he thanked God that it was but a dream! He jumped from his

bed and ran over to Tom. His friend was sleeping soundly, his face, tranquil and composed, pillowed upon his arm.

Percy then looked toward Broadhead's bed and gave a start. Broadhead was not there.

Not stopping to think, but acting by a sort of intuition, Percy pulled on his knee-breeches and, bareheaded and barefooted, hastened to the dormitory door. It was locked.

Broadhead, therefore, must have made his way out through one of the two windows giving upon the shed at the eastern end of the dormitory. To get out of either of these windows it was necessary to pass over a sleeping form: Mr. Middleton was in one bed, Harry Quip in the other.

On first thought Percy determined to go out through Mr. Middleton's window; he knew that his teacher, like many hard, energetic workers, was an extremely sound sleeper, and he felt certain that he could thus escape unobserved. But even then Percy's strong sense of reverence and respect asserted itself, and he chose the other window.

Harry Quip, as Percy's foot pressed upon his bed, gave a light start; but before he had opened his eyes our midnight adventurer was upon the sloping roof of the shed. The ground, twelve feet below him, was rough and stony; ordinarily Percy would not have thought of jumping down even in his shoes. But on this occasion he gave himself no time, but dropped at once. A sharp pain ran through his foot as he touched ground—a pain to which he gave no attention. Off he dashed, this barefooted boy, for dear life toward the study-hall. And it was well he had done so; for as he came near he

saw plainly, by the light of the moon in its third quarter, Broadhead jumping out of the window.

Broadhead, on the instant, saw him too, and at once took to his heels, making toward the college gate with a start of at least four hundred feet.

"Now for a long run," thought Percy, and he fell into a slower but steady, long-distance pace.

To understand what follows it should be stated that Broadhead was supposed to be, with the exception of Tom, the strongest boy in the small yard. He was thick-set, with very strong legs and arms, and if his own account could be believed, the hero of many a fight. He had begun his career in St. Maure's by thrashing some five or six of the Dodgers; consequently he was highly esteemed by a large number. He was an athlete, too. On the turning-pole he was second to none, and in baseball he succeeded Donnel as the heavy hitter. Such was the boy that Percy the gentle, who had never yet engaged in a fight, was now pursuing. Percy was slightly taller, but he was lighter by at least fifteen pounds.

Broadhead, on passing through the gate, turned eastward toward Pawnee Creek. Whether he knew who was his pursuer or not it is impossible to say. Probably he suspected that a man, perhaps even a college official, was after him. Whatever was the case he ran at full speed, and for the first five minutes he continued to increase the distance between himself and his pursuer. Percy, meanwhile, held an even pace, breathing quite easily. Very soon Broadhead lost his wind: he was forced to go slower, and saw himself that unless something be done his capture would be a question of time. Percy saw it,

too, and wondered what he should do upon their coming together.

His deliberations were cut short, for Broadhead, who had reached a part on the track just opposite a spot on the highway where repairs were being made, suddenly dashed aside to a pile of stones, and before Percy was aware of his purpose, sent one of these missiles at Percy's head.

Percy paused, while another and another and another stone flew past him. To go nearer would inevitably lead to his being knocked senseless. Broadhead was throwing with all his force. Suddenly a light flashed upon him. Just three days before Frank Burdock had received from his father a toy pistol. Now, Frank happened to have at that time no room for it among the curiosities that swelled his pockets; so partly as a matter of convenience, partly to show favor to the boy whom he delighted to honor, he had intrusted it to Percy's care. Drawing this from his pocket, Percy covered Broadhead.

"If you don't drop those stones, Broadhead, I'll shoot."

There was prompt obedience.

"Is that you, Percy Wynn?"

Percy never answered, but moved on steadily, still covering his antagonist.

"Say, put down that pistol."

Percy paused.

"I won't hurt you if you don't move. Promise to stand perfectly quiet and I'll put it down."

"I promise."

Still holding the pistol in his hand, but pointed toward the ground, Percy walked forward till he stood face to face with Broadhead.

"Hallo!" cried Broadhead. "You've fooled me; that's a toy pistol."

"Just so," answered Percy, "but it has served its purpose."

"What do you want, anyhow? Is it any of your business if I choose to run away from school?"

Percy paused to nerve himself.

"Bob Broadhead, I want to examine you."

"To examine me?"

"Yes. I want to go through your pockets and see what you're carrying away. There were twenty dollars in Tipp's box in the study-hall last night——"

"Do you mean to say I stole 'em?"

"No; but I mean to find out."

"I'll tell you what, Wynn, I'm going to give you the worst thrashing you ever heard about."

"Maybe; but you're not going to get away till I know what you're taking with you."

Percy had restored the pistol to its place and was watching every move of his adversary.

"Oh, you want to fight, do you?"

"No, indeed; I'd prefer not to, but I've got to find out at any cost what you're taking away."

Broadhead laughed; he knew that there wasn't a milder boy in Kansas than Percy.

"If you don't clear off," he said contemptuously, "I'll smash in your face."

"Once more," said Percy, "will you show me what you've got?"

Broadhead folded his arms and laughed again.

"Tom Playfair isn't around to back you up, Wynn."

"Well, I'm going to go through your pockets anyhow, Broadhead."

He took one step forward; Broadhead met him half-way and would have closed with him, but Percy, who had come to the conclusion that he had a right to search Broadhead now that he was certain that he had to do with a thief, and who was resolved to use every lawful means to attain his end, at once drew back. He feared that in a wrestling-bout he would be no match for his heavy, muscular opponent. Several quick blows were parried on both sides, when Percy succeeded in striking Broadhead a blow under the chin that sent him staggering. Before Broadhead could recover himself Percy delivered two very telling blows which sent the thief to the earth.

On the instant Percy was astride him, pinioning his legs by the position he took, and holding him down in such a manner that Broadhead could scarcely move hand or foot.

"Now, Broadhead, you see how I've got you," Percy began when he felt sure of his position. "Unless you want to get thrashed, hand over that money."

"I won't."

"Very well; I'll give you a half-hour or so to think about it."

And there Percy sat for several minutes.

It was a cold night. The stars, calm and soft, gazed down upon the bareheaded, barefooted, delicate, gentle-faced small boy, who, though he shivered at times, did not seem to realize that a light undershirt and a pair of knee-breeches were very inadequate garments for such a vigil. The stars, too, must have seen a trail of blood upon this strange boy's right leg. Ah! but the soles of his

feet! Percy had never gone barefooted in the course of all his summerings, and the many lines and gashes that marked his soles could not be seen for the blood that was flowing from them. There was a time when Percy would have fainted at the sight of blood; now he gave it but a passing thought as he stared straight into the eyes of his prostrate foe.

But though he seemed to be intent on staring Broadhead out of countenance, he was feeling his way for the money. By moving his legs, now one way, now another, he satisfied himself that there was nothing in Broadhead's trousers pockets but a pocket-knife and one or two small articles. As Percy knew that the money had been tied up in a handkerchief, he could infer that there was no necessity of taking Broadhead's vest into account. It followed, then, that the money must be in the boy's coat pocket. But which pocket? In order to carry out his plan Percy must make no mistake. He must know the right pocket or his whole plan would fail and the struggle would have to begin again.

Broadhead had neglected to take his overcoat with him. The coat he wore had two outside pockets, one on the right and one on the left.

With these data before him Percy reasoned thus:

"Broadhead hurries out of the dormitory and makes straight for the study-hall; when he gets to the study-hall he is in a great hurry, for he doesn't even take time to get his coat, which I saw him hang up just before he went to bed. He is nervous and afraid of being caught, otherwise he'd have taken that coat, as it wouldn't have taken him two seconds of time. Now, when he opens the box he

turned the key with his right hand, because he's right-handed; he opens the lid with his left, takes out the handkerchief of money with his left, and drops it into his left-hand pocket and hurries away. If he didn't do that he ought to have done it, anyhow. Therefore it's probable that the money is still there."

Here Percy, before acting upon this hypothesis, breathes a short prayer. He is beginning to suffer from the cold night air and sharp pains are shooting through his bare feet.

Then suddenly he gives Broadhead a jerk that throws him on his right side, dives into his left-hand pocket, and with a cry of joy brings out the handkerchief just as he saw it last night in Tom Playfair's hands. He makes no pause to examine it, but springing to his feet dashes at full speed back toward the college. He has cleared twenty yards before Broadhead arises; as he patters on a few stones pass by him, for Broadhead, satisfied that he is no match for Percy in speed, is contented to throw stones. The robber has been robbed.

When Percy got to a safe distance he fell into a walk and then noticed that his feet were covered with blood.

Before he reached the college he was hardly able to walk at all. With pain and exceeding difficulty he made his way to the infirmary, and there he was kept for a week.

He had Tom by his side next morning, and there, under strict secrecy, related his adventure and restored his astonished friend the money. None of the Dodgers, save Tipp, knew till long afterward what a strange midnight adventure had been brought