Poor little Percy, dreadfully alarmed at the sound of his own voice breaking upon the silence, shut his eyes tight. Of course, he could scarcely *hear* the smiles, and so, as everything was quiet, he had no reason to think that his proceedings had been in any wise irregular. And thus very soon the singular child fell asleep, with those sacred names upon his lips which a fond mother, bending nightly over the bedside of her child, had taught him to utter in all confidence, innocence, and love.

CHAPTER III.

IN WHICH PERCY HAS A STRANGE MIDNIGHT ADVENTURE.

AT half-past five next morning, the wash-room of the junior students literally swarmed with boys, while their number was constantly swelled by fresh additions from the dormitory. There was no talking in the room, but the clatter of basins, the splash and ripple and gurgle of water, the sibilant noise of many brushes, and, like a refrain, the hurried movement to and fro of little lads in all the varying stages of incomplete toilet, gave the apartment an air of animation and crowded life which to an uninitiated onlooker was really refreshing.

As Percy descended the stairs of the dormitory, the sight certainly struck him with a sense of novelty. Boys pulling on coats, boys taking them off, boys baring their arms, boys blacking their shoes, boys brushing their clothes, boys combing their hair, boys lathering their heads till their figures looked like so many overgrown snowballs mounted on live, moving legs—boys, boys, boys, in every conceivable attitude, made up a scene charged with life, vigorous with bustling variety.

In matters of toilet Percy was perfectly at home. So without hesitation or inquiry he filled his basin and acquitted himself of his ablutions with the neatness and precision of an expert. But when it

came to arranging his tie he glanced around the wash-room till finally he espied Tom.

"Good-morning, Tom," he said, addressing that young gentleman, who was making energetic endeavors to get some injudiciously applied soap out of his eye. "Why, you are a perfect fright? You don't know how to comb your hair at all. Let me fix it."

There was a titter among the boys in the immediate vicinity, and Tom, haviug rid himself of the soap, laughingly handed over his comb and brush to Percy.

"Your hair doesn't look nice when you comb it flat, Tom. I'll make it a little puffy; I am sure it will improve your appearance wonderfully. Hold your head still, you naughty boy. There, now, it's done, and you look ever so much improved. But look here, Tom! You've got on that same tie I noticed yesterday. The idea of wearing a blue tie on a blue shirt! Why, they don't set each other off at all. Let me see."

He stood off a few feet from Tom, and examined him critically.

"Oh yes. Yellow goes well with blue, and I've a beautiful golden tie, which I'm going to give you."

"Percy," said Mr. Middleton.

Percy turned, and found the prefect beside him, with his finger to his lips.

"Oh, excuse me, Mr. Middleton, I really beg your pardon. I just wished to fix Tom a little. I forgot all about silence. I won't speak loud any more."

Tripping over to the wash-box, he quickly returned with the "beautiful golden tie," which, with

a few dexterous folds, he tied into what is popularly called, I believe, a "butterfly." This bewitching decoration added a new and unusual grace to Tom's naturally pleasing appearance.

"There!" whispered Percy, with the enthusiasm of an artist, "you look ever so much improved. Now fix my tie."

"I'm afraid it's not in my line," Tom answered modestly.

"Don't you know how to fix a tie? I thought everybody knew that."

"I never had any sisters to teach me," suggested Tom.

"Oh, so you didn't. Well, it doesn't matter. I'll get Mr. Middleton to do it,—he's so nice."

Before Tom could remonstrate or otherwise express his astonishment, Percy calmly walked over to Mr. Middleton, who was standing at the end of the room, beside the dormitory steps.

"Mr. Middleton, will you kindly fix on my tie? I'm not used to doing it myself. Sister Mary always did it. I asked Tom to help me, but he doesn't know how."

The prefect smiled at this unusual request, and, accepting the tie, arranged it to the best of his ability, while Percy, in his polite way, took it entirely as a matter of course.

"Many thanks, Mr. Middleton: I don't think I'll have to trouble you again, for I intend to teach Tom how to do it to-day." And with his peculiar bow Percy left the wash-room.

Mass and studies before breakfast passed away without incident worthy of notice. During the Holy Sacrifice, Percy impressed those near him

with his modesty and reverence. He had a richly bound, clasped prayer-book, which he evidently knew how to use.

After breakfast he called Tom, Harry, Willie, and Joe to accompany him to the trunk-room.

"I've got something for each one of you," he said, smiling gayly, as they entered the precincts of the clothes-keeper.

From his trunk he produced a perfumed box, and opening it, revealed to their glances of admiration a number of pretty silk handkerchiefs.

"Take your choice," he said.

"Nonsense!" protested Tom, "we're not brigands. Keep them yourself, Percy."

But Percy so lost countenance at this refusal, and protested so earnestly that nothing would please him more than their each accepting one, that Tom, Harry, Willie, and Joe were fain at length to yield. Nor was Percy yet satisfied. He insisted on instructing each of them how and where to carry his gift; and when all, after due direction, stood before him with the least little tip of handkerchief just peeping over their breast-pockets, he clapped his hands.

But Tom put an end to these proceedings.

"Now it's my turn, Percy. Come to the yard, and I'll teach you a trick or two."

To the yard they went in a body.

"Now," Tom remarked a moment later, "spread your legs just the least little bit so as to make yourself steady, and bend your head till your chin touches your chest."

Percy complied.

"Now be sure to stand steady, or you'll tumble."

"What are you going to do, Tom?"

By way of answer, Tom, bracing himself lightly on Percy's shoulders, leaped clean over him, much to that young gentleman's astonishment, who, after having recovered his partially lost balance, anxiously asked Tom whether he was hurt.

"Bosh!" said Tom. "You can do it yourself."

"Oh dear, no!"

"But you can try."

"I'd be sure to fall on my head, and dirty my clothes; and besides," laughed Percy, venturing on a joke, "I might spill out all my ideas."

"Oh, go on," urged Harry Quip. "Joe and I will stand on the other side, and be ready to catch you if you fall."

Tom had already (to use the technical expression of the small boy) "made a back for him."

"Oh, I can't," said Percy. "It's too high."

"Well, I'll stoop lower, then;" and Tom, bringing his arms below his knees and clasping his hands, doubled himself up.

"That looks easier," said Percy.

Compressing his lips and summoning all his resolution, Percy drew off some fifty feet, then at a great run he cleared Tom's back without, as he had anticipated, "spilling his ideas."

"Oh, that's glorious!" he cried. "Let me try it again."

The experiment was repeated over and over until Percy, who had rarely indulged in exercise more violent than fast walking, was completely out of breath. But he was proud of his success, and the sympathetic encouragement which his playfellows evinced so added to his happiness that,

while his countenance was flushed from the exhilarating exercise, it beamed also with the double happiness of being pleased and of pleasing. Leap-frog came upon him like a revelation; it opened new and undeveloped possibilities in his life.

"Is that the kind of games boys have?" he asked when he had recovered breath sufficient to speak.

"Oh, that's nothing extra," said Joe Whyte. "It's nothing at all to some games."

"You ought to see Foot-and-a-half," said Willie.

"Or Bom-bay," added Harry Quip.

"And Base-ball," Tom chimed in, "is better than all of them put together."

"You don't say! Well, I declare! You astonish me," said Percy. "And now I'm glad I'm a boy."

"That's sensible," said Tom; "and the older you get the gladder you'll be."

Tom had decided views on this point.

Presently Percy was called away by the prefect of studies to be examined. On his return, Tom and Harry were delighted at learning that he was to be their classmate. They were both in the Second Academic, a class in which Greek is begun, and Latin continued from the preceding year.

During class, that morning, Percy listened with great attention. The "*Viri Romæ*," which he vainly tried to make out, as the boys translated and parsed it line by line, troubled him not a little.

Towards the end of class, he said aloud:

"Mr. Middleton, don't you think that the study of Latin is attended with considerable difficulties for a beginner?"

The boys were too astounded to laugh.

"It *is* hard at first," admitted the professor with

a smile. "There's a proverb, you know, which says, 'Knowledge makes a bloody entrance.' Still the more you learn of it the more you will like it, and the easier, too, will it become."

"Thank you, sir," said Percy. "I believe what you say, though it has never struck me that way before. I know it's true in English studies—the more I read the more I love to read. Oh, Mr. Middleton, won't you please tell us a story?"

Percy spoke as he would have spoken to his mother or his sisters. Not a little to his astonishment, then, this sudden and unlooked-for request was greeted with a general burst of laughter.

Mr. Middleton smiled, and "put the question by," in requesting one of the students to parse the fourth line of the lesson.

Charlie Richards was a member of the class, and his attention and contempt were strongly roused by the singular remarks of the new-comer.

"What a silly innocent that fellow is!" he reflected. "He must have been tied to his mother's apron-string. I think we can get some fun out of him."

Richards' course of thinking was not in vain. At recess he held a whispered consultation with Peters.

"We'll scare the wits out of him," said Richards when he had fully developed his plot.

"Oh, it'll be great fun!" chuckled Peters, rubbing his skinny hands together. "I'll fix up your face so you'll look like an awful ghost. I'll put red paint about your eyes, and blacken the rest of your face, so that you'll just frighten him into fits."

For a long time did these two weigh and con-

sider the plans for their vile practical joke. Their innocent victim, meanwhile, was adding to his stock of experiences things to him altogether new.

In the recreation hour after dinner, Tom produced a base-ball.

"See that, Percy."

"Oh, what a hard ball!" cried Percy, touching it in a gingerly way.

"Well, you've got to learn to catch it."

"I? no, indeedy! it's just like a rock. My poor little fingers would be ruined, and then, Tom, I wouldn't be able to play the piano."

"Halloa! can you play the piano?"

"Yes, indeedy! I just love it. And I can sing, too."

"Why, you know everything I don't know, and don't know anything I do."

Percy laughed.

"My sisters taught me," he said, as he shook back his sunny locks.

"Did they teach you to say, 'Yes, indeedy!' 'No, indeedy!'?" queried Tom, slyly.

"Oh la! how you do notice things! 'Indeedy' isn't good grammar, I know."

"It's worse yet," said Tom; "it's girlish."

"You don't tell me!" cried Percy, his blue eyes opening to their widest. "Now I know why everybody laughs when I say it. Thank you, Tom, ever so much. I'll stop using it."

"But what about this ball? You must learn to catch it."

"Catch that ball! I'd as lieve catch a cannon-ball. Oh no, indeedy!—that is," he said, catching himself—"that is, indeed I won't."

"Oh, it's not so hard," said Tom. "Here, I'll make it easy for you, and show you how it's done, too. Take the ball and walk off about twenty paces from me, then throw it as hard as you can at me, and see me catch it."

"But you mustn't be put out if I hurt you," pleaded Percy, as he took his stand at the assigned distance.

"I'll take all risks," said Tom in great glee.

Percy, with the ball in his right hand, made a feint of throwing it.

"Don't balk," said Tom. "Throw it as hard as ever you can. If it's too swift"—here Tom was obliged to pause that he might suppress a laugh—"I'll dodge it."

There was no necessity for "dodging," however.

Percy whirled his arm round and round, and at length let the ball fly from his hand. He trembled for the consequences; not, indeed, without reason. The ball, instead of going towards Tom, went some thirty or forty feet wide of him (were he a giant he could not have "covered so much ground"), and seemed to be making straight for the head of John Donnel, who, with his hands in his pockets, was evincing the deepest interest in the progress of a game of hand-ball.

"Look out, John!" roared Tom. "Duck your head." The warning came just in time. By a quick movement John succeeded in receiving the ball on the back of his head instead of in the face.

"Well, I never!" he said, rubbing the injured part. As he spoke, a piercing, startling scream broke upon his ears. It was from Percy.

"Oh, poor boy!" he cried, running over to John,

tears of sympathy standing in his eyes. "I must have hurt you very much. But, upon my honor, I didn't mean it, sir. Indeed I didn't: did I, Tom? Oh, sir, please tell me you're not seriously hurt. Really and truly, I'm awfully mortified."

If the ball had surprised John, this sympathetic and eager address, coming from the lips of a dainty little lad whom he had never met before, astounded him.

"Oh, I'm dreadfully hurt," he said with mock solemnity. "I suppose somebody will have to carry me over to the infirmary."

"Oh la! deary me!" wailed Percy. "Poor boy! Tom and I will carry you anywhere you wish. Tom, you catch his feet, and I'll take his head. Oh, sir, only say you'll forgive me."

And Percy was on the point of crying.

"Why, you little goose, you don't mean to say you honestly think I'm hurt?" laughed the great second-baseman of the small yard, as he perceived that Percy was taking him seriously. "I'm not hurt a bit. Of course I forgive you; and whenever you feel particularly inclined to amuse yourself, you can come and throw your ball at me again."

"Then there'd be no danger of your being hit," said Tom, gravely. "He won't hit the fellow he's aiming at; it's the other fellow."

Percy, relieved of his fears, joined in the laugh.

"Won't you introduce me?" suggested Percy.

"Certainly. John Donnel, this is Percy Wynn." The bow and the polite little speech were gone through in Percy's best form.

John was amused and charmed. Not only was

he the largest boy in the yard, he was also the most genial. So well established was the kindliness of his disposition that he was styled "the little boys' friend." He readily divined Tom's ideas with regard to "making a boy, a *real* boy," of Percy; and in pursuance of this, he set to work actively at showing Percy how to use his arm in throwing.

A half-hour's practice, and, under the dexterous tuition of Tom and John, Percy succeeded in so directing the ball's path as to make it comparatively safe for the prudent bystander.

"That's enough for to-day," said Tom at length. "To-morrow your arm will be stiff a little, but you needn't mind that. It's always the way till you get used to it."

The reader (who is doubtless "a boy—a *real* boy") must have felt, in reading these pages, that Percy has said and done some very foolish things. Our little hero's judgment with regard to jumping, ball-tossing, and school-boy life in general must have appeared ridiculous even to the intelligence of a lad of seven. But imagine a man, say a fine musician, who, born blind and living in darkness for long, long years, has, on a sudden, his sight restored him. As a musician, he would appear as rational as ever; but as a gazer on the wonders of earth and starry sky, he would be as an infant; more carried away than a little toddler of five attending the Christmas pantomime for the first time. One unacquainted with his previous condition would take him for a madman. Percy's case is somewhat similar. He was bright, clever, accomplished in matters where most young students

are in utter darkness. But in practical knowledge of boys and boy-life he was little more than an infant. Everything about him was a subject of fear or of wonder, of dismay or of delight.

And so the day passed pleasantly enough. Night came, and Percy, thoroughly wearied from his unwonted exercise, fell into a profound slumber almost as soon as his head touched the pillow.

He had been sleeping for nearly two hours, when he was partially awakened by some one touching his feet. Turning restlessly on his side, he was again about to drift into dreamland, when a low, blood-curdling groan brought him to his full senses. Raising his head on his arm, he looked about him. Just at the foot of the bed, a terrible figure met his view—a sheeted form, draped in white. The eyes of the figure were hideous; some sort of a dim light playing about its face revealed the horrid black features.

Have any of you, my dear readers, ever seen a face under the influence of utter terror? The starting eyeballs, the open mouth, the ashen-pale countenance? Have you ever heard the wild shriek of horror from the lips of one thoroughly terrified?

Richards, the ghost, expected all these things, and, as Percy sat upright in his bed, gave another blood-curdling groan.

A clear, silvery laugh was heard.

Could his ears deceive him? Was the timid, girlish victim actually laughing? He groaned again.

"Ha, ha, ha! Oh my! it's as good as the circus. Oh la! what a guy!"

Percy Wynn, seated in his bed, was laughing most merrily, and clapping his hands in unaffected glee.

But the disturbance awoke several near by, among them Harry Quip, whose bed was beside Percy's. Now, Harry was by no means so impressed with the fun of the thing as his merry little neighbor. He perceived at once that some brutal fellow had been trying to frighten Percy. Without ceremony, he jumped from his bed, seized the ghost, who by the way, contrary to the traditions of all ghosts, was the most thoroughly frightened of the company, and with a vigorous grasp brought his ghostship to the floor.

Although Charlie Richards had arranged himself with exceeding care for his assumed character, and even made such preparations as would enable him to slip back into his bed ere Percy's scream of horror should have died away, he had certainly not taken into consideration the possibility of being knocked down. In such event, a lighted candle, placed in the head-dress so as to throw a dismal glare upon the ghostly features, is a decided inconvenience.

As the boy came violently to the floor, he gave a howl of pain and terror.

"Help! help!" he shouted. "I'm on fire."

His statement appeared to be true: the sheet was burning. At once the dormitory, one moment before all buried in silence, awoke to a scene of wild confusion. Every one was awake; every one was in motion.

"Get some water!" "Wake Mr. Middleton!" "Get a priest!" "Fire! fire!" Such and a thou-

sand other like exclamations came from all sides. One timid little lad ran to the nearest window, and began calling wildly for the police, forgetting in his bewilderment that St. Maure's village was a quarter of a mile distant, and that the only policeman it could boast was now, good old man, snug in bed.

Many fell upon their knees; others, still more panic-stricken, made a mad rush for the stairs. Beside the door opening on the staircase was Mr. Middleton's bed. He was a sound sleeper, but, very luckily for the limbs if not the lives of those who were attempting to escape, he awoke and sprang from his bed just in time to confront the foremost in the wild rush. Mr. Middleton took in the situation at once. He was a humane man, and rarely acted in haste. But on this occasion there was time neither for thought nor explanation. With a violent shove he sent the nearest fugitive sprawling on the floor.

"Back!" he shouted commandingly, "back, every one of you!"

The panic was reversed. All turned and fled *from* the door, and Mr. Middleton, who had perceived the poor ghost's predicament, snatched up a blanket and hastened down the central aisle.

But Tom Playfair had anticipated him. Rushing forward with all his bedclothes, he threw himself upon the luckless ghost; and with such energy did he give himself to the work, that he not only extinguished the incipient flames, but also was within a little of suffocating the object of his zeal.

Richards' hair was badly singed, and part of his face was scorched. Still wrapped in Tom's bed-

clothes, he was literally *bundled* over to the infirmary.

Order was soon restored: sleep, so kindly to youth, quickly reasserted her power, and the remaining hours of the night passed as quietly as though all the ghosts of the earth had been laid forever.