

Fred Fearnot's Day, or The Great Reunion at Avon

Hal Standish

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CHAPTER I. THE GATHERING OF THE ALUMNI AT AVON ACADEMY.

The Alumni of the Avon Academy were hurrying to meet at Avon on the occasion of their annual reunion. Professor Lambert had sent a circular letter to each one, asking for his presence on the occasion, as he expected it to be the most important gathering of the graduates of his beloved Institution since its foundation. Of course, every graduate made it a point of honor to keep the pledge he had made at former reunions, to always attend if in his power to so.

Many of the graduates during the early years of the academy's existence were now men of families, and in business. Some were lawyers, doctors, merchants and railroad men. Not a few had made names for themselves in business or political circles, yet they loved their alma mater, and were hastening forward to meet old friends and new, to join in a tribute to the institution.

Some three or four days before they were all to meet at Avon, there was a little gathering of graduates at Fredonia, where Fred Fearnot, Terry Olcott, Joe Jencks, Dick Duncan and Tom Tipps met by agreement that all might attend in a body.

Tom Tips had married his Poughkeepsie girl, and she was accompanying him to the great reunion.

They were all guests of Terry Olcott, and of course they were a lively party during their stay at the Olcott residence, for it was impossible for such lively young fellows to get together and keep quiet. They sang their old glee club songs, had a dance at the Hamilton residence, spent a day out at the lake, fishing or rowing with more than two score other young people of both sexes with whom they were well acquainted.

"Fred," said Evelyn Olcott, soon after he reached Fredonia, "Terry says that the professor has you down on his list as one of the several speakers at the banquet."

"Yes, so he has, little girl. You know he has always imposed on me."

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"Well, have you got your speech ready?"

"Of course I have. Do you want to hear me fire it off?"

"No, that would spoil my enjoyment of it at the banquet."

"Oh, you think you are, going to enjoy it, do you?"

"Of course I do, for I know you are going to do your best."

"I don't know about that. I did my best last time, and now, in trying to avoid any relation, I'm a little afraid I've spoiled it, and that it will be a failure."

"A failure? I never knew you to make one in your life, Fred."

"Of course not, when you were around, because you were always a source of inspiration to me."

"Well, I'm going to be there, and if that is true, you won't make a failure; but let me beg you not to ring Eunice and me into your speech again, for it is extremely embarrassing to both of us."

"Oh, I don't know what I'm going to do," he laughed. "Like a Quaker, I do as the spirit moves me. You needn't be surprised if I should snatch you up in my arms, set you on my shoulder and sing your praises for all I am worth."

"My! If I thought you would do such a thing as that, Fred, I wouldn't go. I know that Eunice wouldn't stand it, and, furthermore, you wouldn't attempt such a thing with her anyway,"

"That's all you know about it," he laughed. "Eunice and I are great friends."

"Oh, I'm well aware of that, but her rigid dignity and strict ideas of propriety wouldn't stand any such thing as that. Besides, her father and mother will be present."

"Oh, I'm all right with the old folks. They are stanch friends of mine."

"Well, I don't intend to sit close enough to you for you to play any tricks like that on me."

"Oh, you've got to sit alongside of me at the table, for you are my girl, you know, and as your escort I'll have to look after you."

"Yes, but whenever we go up to Avon you are rather shy about looking after me when Eunice is around, for you seem to be afraid to show me anymore attention than you do her."

"Say, old girl, are you jealous of Eunice?"

"No, indeed! You never knew me to be jealous of any one in your life. I merely mentioned that to let you know that I understand you."

"Oh, I've known that a long time. You do understand me, and you are about the only girl of my acquaintance who does; and I understand you, too. You have the good sense to understand what a gentleman's duties are to the fair sex. The fellow who confines his attentions strictly to one girl, ignoring the presence of other ladies, makes a great mistake, and shows a lack of tact and good judgment, and the girl who insists upon her escort ignoring other ladies entirely, evinces a disgusting selfishness. There is a cozy little parlor right in the center of my heart where

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you sit and sing in perfect harmony with its pulsation, even when I am paying attention to other girls."

"That's a pretty speech, Fred," she laughed. "Never heard you put it that way before. It's a new phrase you have coined. Have you spoken it to any other girl?"

"No. I haven't, and I don't intend to, either. I have spoken it to you for the first time, and for once in your life I want you to believe what I say."

"Really, now; Fred, do you wish me to believe that?"

"I do, little girl."

"Well. I will believe it, Fred, but you know how deeply rooted in the mind of everybody is the old saying, 'Actions speak louder than words.'"

"Yes, and it is a true saying, and it's a pity there are so many people who are unable to comprehend what good breeding and politeness require of gentlemen in the presence of ladies, and are so quick to misconstrue both words and actions. If I were to say to you that you were no better than you ought to be, you would understand it, but ninety-nine out of a hundred girls would consider themselves insulted and call me to account. I don't think that you, or any other girl, are any better than you ought to be, yet if you won't scratch my eyes out or pull my hair, I will add that I don't think you could be any sweeter than you are, prettier or better. There's nothing in the world lacking about you except wings, and if you had those, I'd cut one of them to keep you from flying away from me."

"Oh, Fred! it's a habit you have of saying pleasant things. It does no harm, and I confess to enjoying it as an exhibition of your versatility."

"Versatility? Haven't you ever heard Terry talking to Mary?"

"Oh yes, he's been taking lessons from you, but generally he prefers to get her off in a corner where no one else can hear; but by watching her, noting the sparkle of her eyes and the color, chasing each other on her cheek, I know he is saying things to her that are pleasing."

"Say, old girl, have you found out yet whether or not they are engaged?"

"No, I haven't; but if I had, I wouldn't tell you if she wished it to be kept a secret. I'm not the one ever to tell on another any of the affairs of the heart."

"Of course, Mary's going up to Avon with us, is she not?"

"Yes, she's going with me."

"No, she isn't. She's going with Terry, and I'm going with you."

"Oh, we'll all go together," she laughed, "and Mrs. Tipps will chaperone us."

"By the way, what do you think of Tom's wife?"

"Oh, I like her. I like any young married woman who loves her husband and whose husband loves her. They are both very very happy, and that is a sure sign that they are worthy of each other. I think, though, that she is a little bit disappointed about Tom not being among the list of speakers."

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"The deuce you do! Never heard of Tom making a speech in my life."

"No, but she thinks he is a great man, or at least he will be some day."

"Good! I'm glad to hear that. If I can persuade Tom to prepare a neat little speech, I'll see that the boys call him out and give him a chance to fire it off, but it would scare him to death, for the words would stick in his throat and choke him. He couldn't be induced to get up and speak at that banquet if a thousand dollars were offered him to do so. It's out of his line."

"Say, Fred," sang out Terry, as he came into the room with a letter in his hand, "the Wellborn sisters are going up to Avon."

"The deuce you say! What's calling them up there?"

"Oh, I suppose they want to see the fun. Miss Annie wrote me a short note asking me to find quarters for them during the reunion week."

"Well! Well! Well!" ejaculated Fred. "She is right after you, old man."

"I don't know about that," laughed Terry. "I think you are the duck she's chasing."

"Where is she now, Terry?" Evelyn asked.

"Up at Ashton. The family spends each summer there, you know, and she wants to know also if we are going to show up at Dedham Lake again this year."

"They are nice girls," said Evelyn, "and we had a real jolly time with them out at the lake last summer. I'm glad they are going, for I won't feel so much that I'm among strangers. It's always pleasant to have a party of friends with you when away from home."

"Oh, look here, now, old girl," said Fred, "when you and I get off in a corner together, it's company; but if just one more gets mixed up with us, it's a crowd."

"Oh, they can't crowd me," she laughed.

"That's so," he assented, "they can't get into that little parlor with you I spoke about a little while ago."

Evelyn blushed a little at that, and Terry, noting it, asked:

"Say, have you two got a little private parlor?"

"You bet we have, and Evelyn carries the key to it."

"Hush now, Fred. Don't branch off into any rhapsodies."

"Well, they are coming this way, and the probabilities are that we will meet them on the train," put in Terry.

"Say, Terry, is the old man coming along with them?" Fred asked.

"I don't know. She doesn't say anything about it."

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"Well, I hope he won't, for he is a hum-drum sort of an old fellow, who takes life so, easy that nothing disturbs him. He's as monotonous as a hand organ."

On the day set for the Fredonia party to take the train for Avon, quite a crowd of friends assembled at the station to see them off.

Terry escorted Mary Hamilton, Fred had charge of Evelyn, while Dick Duncan and Joe Jencks leaned on each other's arm coquetting with each other like a pair of lovers. As they entered the car they found the two Wellborn girls occupying a seat together. Of course there was a hearty greeting, Evelyn and Mary kissing them with girlish impulsiveness, declaring their pleasure at meeting them.

"This makes up the party just right," laughed Fred. "Tom has his wife with him, I have Miss Olcott, Terry is the devoted slave of Miss Hamilton, but Dick and Joe are without any responsibilities unless you two young ladies will consent to let them look after you."

Dick and Joe had met the two young ladies at Dedham Lake and, of course, the latter had no objections whatever to having them as escorts, so Dick took charge of the elder and Joe the younger.

"Mr. Olcott," the younger Wellborn girl called to Terry, "have you found a place for us at Avon?"

"Of course I have," said Terry. "You don't suppose I would neglect doing so, do you?"

"Well, we were afraid that all the good places had already been secured."

"Well, they would have been had I not telegraphed, and I was fortunate enough to find quarters in the same house where sister and Miss Hamilton are going to stop. We boys with the exception of Tom here, will stop at the academy, occupying our old room in the dormitory."

When they reached Avon they found the professor, his wife and Eunice at the station waiting for them. More than two score other graduates of the academy had come up on the same train, and, of course, the professor, his wife and the Advocate were surrounded on the platform where the boys scrambled over one another in their efforts to shake hands with them. The Advocate was as popular as ever with all the graduates who surrounded her in such numbers that nearly ten minutes passed ere Evelyn and Mary could get to her.

The two Wellborn girls were introduced to the professor his wife and the Advocate, as friends of Evelyn and Mary, as well as of Fred and Terry.

"Now, boys," said the professor, "I have all the carriage that the two livery stables in Avon can furnish to convey you over to the academy. The latch string is on the outside of every door in the institution, and, figuratively speaking the gate of the enclosure has been lifted off its hinges. I bid you all welcome."

"Thank you a thousand times, professor," exclaimed Fred, "we will look after our precious charges first, and then make a charge on the dear old academy."

"All right," laughed the dignified old professor. "I am glad to see your young ladies with you," and he shook hands with Evelyn and Mary whom he had met several times before, while Mrs. Lambert kissed them both, expressing her regret that she was unable to provide quarters for them at the academy.

"Oh, brother and Fred have secured quarters for us at Mrs. Hawthorne's," said Evelyn, "where we stopped on a previous visit. We'll invade the academy ground, though, several times before we return home."

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"Do so, dear. You will be welcome at any and all times."

The boys escorted the girls to the Hawthorne residence where rooms, had been secured for them, after which they went over to the academy to visit the boathouse, the bicycle club, and make the acquaintance of the members of the senior class of that year.

Two other trains arriving later in the day number of the Alumni to nearly one hundred; but of all the graduates, Fred was most sought after, for the boys remembered his eloquent speech at a former reunion, while others who were not present re familiar with his record as an all-around athlete.

It was like a reception in the great recitation room. There were merchants, lawyers and doctors among the graduates, some of whom had made a considerable reputation in their chosen profession. Several were members of the state Legislature, and two of them had been elected members of Congress the year before.

While Fred was shaking hands with the crowd gathered around him, Terry Olcott and Dick Duncan started up a glee club song, and instantly nearly a hundred voices joined in making a volume of sound that shook the very walls. Teachers Brown and Tracey sang as lustily as the boys did, while the professor beamed upon them, every feature of his face attesting the pleasure he felt at meeting so many of his former pupils. As soon as one song was finished, some on of the boys would start up another and the singing went on for nearly an hour.

"Now, boys," said Terry, to a crowd around him, "let's hunt up Black Pete and have some fun with him."

"Yes," added Joe Jencks. "And we won't forget Teddy O'Hara."

Terry led the way out and went in search of the porter and janitor. They found the Irishman first, and shook hands with him, punched him and thumped him, slapped him on the shoulders, and sang and danced around him till the big-hearted Irishman was almost overcome; the Black Pete, the porter, showed up. They made a dash for him and put him through a series of exercises that reminded him of many hazing incidents in the past. They rolled him over the ground, stood him on his head, sang coons songs and otherwise had fun with him. He took it good-naturedly because the mob was too much for him. When they let him go he was pretty well used up. He went away grinning, remarking;

"You boys ain't done stopped your foolin' yit."

CHAPTER II. THE BOYS HAVE FUN WITH BROWN AND TRACY AT THE CLUB-HOUSE.

When the boys were through with the porter and janitor, some of the senior class sang out:

"Come down to the bicycle clubhouse, boys!"

"All right," chorused nearly half of the crowd, and a rush was made down toward the clubhouse, which stood about halfway between the academy and the river in a beautiful grove. As they started off Fred noticed that Teachers Brown and Tracy remained standing on the piazza.

"Hold up, boys," he sang out, "we are leaving two dear old friends behind."

"Who are they? Bring them along," called out a score of voices.

"Brownny and Mr. Tracy."

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"Bring 'em along! Bring 'em along!" and they made a rush for the two teachers, raised them on their shoulders and marched down to the clubhouse with them.

Mr. Tracy was a small, thin man, wearing eyeglasses, and always carried himself with as much dignity as Professor Lambert. The students always stood in awe of him, but now that they were no longer students, they remembered him only as a kind teacher, and were anxious to show their appreciation of him. On the other hand, he appreciated their motive and submitted to them with a graciousness that greatly pleased them.

Teacher Brown, on the other hand, had always been much nearer to the boys, for, like the Advocate, he had many a time stood between them and the stern old professor when trouble was brewing. The boys really loved him. They marched with him at the head of the procession, bearing him on their shoulders, singing at the top of their voices, "Oh, he's a jolly good fellow," They remembered that he had contributed five hundred dollars to the bicycle club fund for the building of the clubhouse.

The crowd nearly filled the upper hall of the clubroom, and there again they sang songs with a vociferousness that nearly raised the roof, after which the elder graduates, who had been away from the academy some six or seven years, called on Teacher Tracy for a speech. They placed him on the platform, where, after several ineffectual attempts to escape, he made a neat little speech, congratulating them on the fact that only two of the graduates had died since the first years of the existence of the Institution, and that so far as the faculty could learn, they were nearly all prosperous and happy. He concluded by declaring that it was his ambition to remain at the institution all the rest of his life, sending out annually young men fitted from an educational standpoint to maintain themselves in the great struggle for a place in the world of letters and business," And, he added, "the greatest wish of my life is to have every alumnus remember me throughout his career as the friend of his youth, and one who had striven hard to perform his whole duty in fitting him for the great battle of life."

"That's just what you are, professor," sang out Fred, "and if it's any satisfaction to you to know it, I can tell you in the presence of the Alumni of dear old Avon Academy, that we are your friends, and will be as long as reason holds sway."

"Yes! Yes! Yes!" came from the boys in a great roar.

Tracy's eyes filled with tears, for he was deeply touched. He again thanked the boys, who at once set up a yell for "Brownny" who was a bashful sort of fellow in his way, and for a time he looked like one cornered or at bay; but he felt in every fiber of his frame that the boys loved him, and he knew that he loved them. Two of them seized him by the arms, hustled him up the little platform, while a third got behind him, pushed his head forward so as to make a bow, lost control of himself and burst into a laugh. That braced up Brown, who made a very fitting little speech that touched some of the boys, and almost brought tears from their eyes.

"As long as I live, boys, you will have a place in my memory collectively and individually. I've not only worked hard to inject some sense into some of you, but often toiled to get you out of trouble into which your natural propensities for mischief had gotten you."

"Whoop! Whoop!" came from scores of the boys. "That is so, and heaven bless you, old Brownny."

"You hit us just right," exclaimed Joe Jencks. "Let us have another right on the solar plexus."

"That's where I am just trying to land, my boy," he replied. "I am aiming, and always have aimed straight for your heart, for notwithstanding your many slips and violations of discipline, your hearts were always in the right place. I have never forgotten that I was a boy once myself, and many a time raided watermelon patches and fruit orchards."

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"Whoop! Whoop!" yelled the boys. "Just listen to that! Brown's one of us yet!"

"Yes," exclaimed Dick Duncan. "I never knew till now what a mistake we made when I was a student at the academy, in not inviting him to raid watermelon patches with us!"

That broke up Teacher Tracy, and he roared with laughter at Brown's expense.

"Oh, that wouldn't do," said Brown, laughing. "I would have declined all such invitations, but I know all the time that brother Tracy and myself, to say nothing of the head of the faculty, were receiving stolen goods nearly every time we accepted invitations to eat watermelons with you. I don't know whether Mr. Tracy thought of that or not, but I did, for I was satisfied that boy nature is just the same as it was when I was a boy."

That was a slap at Tracy for laughing at him, and for a time the latter didn't know just exactly how to take it, but the boys laughed so uproariously he finally joined in and nodded his head approvingly.

"Now, boys," continued Brown. "I wish every one of you long life, prosperity and happiness, and that as the years roll by and time sits heavily upon your shoulders, that the days you spent at Avon Academy shall be remembered as the happiest ones of your lives. Time brings responsibilities, and they are more easily borne when one understands how to meet them. Knowledge is power, and he who starts out on his career well educated, and who has been taught to reason well and logically, has a better chance to rise in the world than he who struggles with nothing but brute strength. The great fortunes of the world have been won by brain power rather than by physical labor. Here at the academy the faculty have striven to lay a firm foundation for you by bestowing an education that is thorough rather than one simply artificial. Again I thank you for your manifestation of friendship for myself individually, and I assure you that whatever fortune may befall you, my heart is ever with you, even to the end."

It was not only a neat little speech, but a sensible one, and it struck home to many of the boys, who applauded it with the greatest enthusiasm.

"By George, Terry," said Fred to his chum as they were standing side by side listening. "I didn't know that Brown could talk that way. He's a deeper man than I thought."

"Yes, and he is a good fellow, too," assented Terry.

Just then some of the boys started up a cry for "Osgood! Osgood!" who was a member of the first graduating class of the academy some seven or eight years back. He was a lawyer who had made quite a reputation as a member of the State Senate and as an orator. He was a fine-looking man, about twenty-eight years of age. He ascended the little platform and made an eloquent speech of some ten or fifteen minutes length, which aroused the highest enthusiasm of the and boys. Several others were called out, and then some one started a cry for "Fearnot! Fearnot!" and of course whoever was called for was forced to speak whether he wanted to or not. He began in a happy vein, and said that he had been looking forward for several months to the day he would have the pleasure of meeting the Alumni of the dear old academy at this the annual reunion.

"I have enjoyed the speeches," continued he, "that we have heard here in this clubroom this afternoon, but none has touched me so deeply as that made by our beloved Brown. The frank admission of his guilt in receiving stolen goods from the hands of his pupils was so entirely unexpected that for a few minutes I was quite upset. I never knew til to-day that he suspected us of borrowing these watermelons when the farmers who raised them were not present. I didn't know that he was on to us until this moment. Often we sent fine melons to the professor, his wife and the beloved Advocate, and now I'm wondering if they dropped on to us also. I remember hearing a parent say, when speaking of his hopeful son, that he wondered if his parent tumbled to him as he tumbled to his boy. Just think of it, boys, how we used to chuckle and nudge each other as we saw the faculty stuffing themselves with the

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delicious watermelons we presented to them, and the good advice they gave us at the same time. How they smacked their lips over the stolen sweets. I tell you, boys, there is no use in trying to fool the old boys who have passed along the highway ahead of us. They are on to us every time."

The boys screamed with laughter, while the tears actually ran down the faces of Tracy and Brown when Fred was speaking. They both laughed until they were nearly hysterical. When he ended, Brown turned to Tracy and remarked:

"I would have given a month's salary if Professor Lambert could have heard that speech."

"Yes," returned the other teacher. "I don't know but what I would too: but on my word, I never once thought that we were eating stolen watermelons when the boys were so liberal at time in supplying us with them. I remember on several occasions when they bought and paid for watermelons out of farm wagons that were driven up to the gate."

"What sort of youthful days did you have?" Brown asked.

"Not a very pleasant one," was the reply. "I didn't have the opportunity to indulge in such sport, for I was born and reared in a city miles away from where melons and other fruit were raised."

"Well, then, let me tell you that you I missed a lot of fun, for when I was a youth, it was never considered dishonest for a boy to jump over a fence, fill his pockets with apples or peaches or yank a big ripe melon off the vine."

"That's a slang expression, Mr. Brown," said Tracy, straightening himself up with no little dignity.

"Yes, it was once upon a time, but it's in the dictionary now. The English language has grown by the accumulation of words that started as slang expressions."

"Yes, it was once upon a time, but it's in the dictionary now. The English language has grown by the accumulation of words that started as slang expressions."

"You surprise me, Mr. Brown. I don't think I've ever seen the word in my dictionary."

"Well, it isn't in the dictionary in your library, but the later editions have it."

It was a happy informal union of the Alumni, and when it was over the boys gathered about in groups talking and laughing, comparing notes and telling stories.

From the bicycle clubhouse they adjourned to the boathouse on the river bank, where Terry told the story of how Fred did up the crowd of seven of them right there in a corner of the boathouse, when they made an attempt to haze him, and his recital of the incident set them all in a roar. Teacher Tracy, on leaving the clubhouse, returned to the academy while Brown remained with the boys. He told the professor and his wife what had taken place, and of the fun the boys had in laughing at him and Teacher Brown about their eating stolen watermelons. The dignified professor laughed till the tears ran down his face.

"It has been the case since boys first appeared on the face of the earth," laughed the old professor, "and it's best always not to attempt to change a boy's nature while trying to perfect him in his studies. Every boy has his good points, and as they are enlarged and cultivated the bad traits weaken in proportion. I have found that some are much harder to manage than others, particularly the obstinate, sullen ones, but those who remain to receive their parchment go away a hundred per cent, better mentally, morally and physically than when they arrive."

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"I quite agree with you, sir," said Tracy, "but I really envied Brown at the way the boys treated him. He is right in the hearts of all of them, and upon my word he astonished me by the little speech he made. It was sound, sensible and philosophical."

"Oh, Brown is a pretty deep man, Mr. Tracy. I think he passes a happy boyhood, for he always had charity for their faults and shortcomings."

It was nearly sunset when the crowd march up from the river bank to the academy. They came singing the old academy songs, and Eunice and her mother ran out on the porch of the cottage to listen and wave their handkerchief in appreciation of the great humor that prevailed.

Terry managed to get away from the crowd, ran over to the cottage, and told the Advocate and her mother of the fun they had with Brown and Tracy down at the clubhouse.

"Oh, he made a grand speech, and surprise us by saying he was onto us in our rackets all the time, that he knew nearly every time he ate watermelons with us that he was filing himself with stolen goods."

"What!" exclaimed Mrs. Lambert, "did he really charge you boys with stealing watermelons? I wouldn't have thought he would do such a thing."

"Oh, look here now! You have never been a boy, and there are some things you can't understand," laughed Terry. "It isn't stealing to take watermelons out of a patch, or fruit out of an orchard, any more than it is to pick up an umbrella when you are compelled to go out in the Iran. If we went into a farmer's stable and took his horse or cow, it would be stealing, but to slip into his orchard an fill one's pocket with apples has never been considered stealing, though it might be wrong."

The Advocate laughed heartily, and admitted that several times he thought that she had eaten watermelon that hadn't been paid for.

"Of course you did," laughed Terry. "There are some boys who claim that a watermelon that is paid for in cold cash isn't as sweet as one which had been tossed over the fence to another boy, when the farmer wasn't around. I don't know whether the Advocate here will subscribe to the idea that a stolen kiss is sweeter than one given with a cold, formal smack, but it is."

"Well," laughed Eunice, "it depends altogether upon who it is that steals it."

"That's it," laughed Terry. "One fellow would get a slap in return for his impudence, while another would get another kiss sweeter than the one he stole. Such things go by favor, you know."

"Ah, Terry, I guess you are an expert in such matters," said the Advocate.

"I can't say that I am, but I do claim to know a good thing when I get it. If a thing is sweet, I know it when I taste it, and if it isn't, just one is enough."

"Terry, are you boys going back over to town to-night?" Eunice asked, when her mother returned inside the cottage.

"Why, yes. Evelyn and Mary and the two other young ladies are over there, and of course we must go over and sit up with them."

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"I'm so sorry we didn't have room over here for them, but there are so many of the graduates present, that we have had to crowd as many as three in a room."

"Well, what's the matter with you going over with us? The girls expect us to bring you over."

"Oh, I can't think that they do, for each of you has a girl to look after."

"You can bet your life, Advocate, that none of us will neglect you, for we are not ungrateful for past favors."

"Oh, I don't wish to be looked after through a sense of gratitude."

"Oh, come, now! Don't you know what the poet says about gratitude? that it is akin to love?"

"Yes, I've read all about that, but you and Fred and the other boys have your girls to look after and I would be an extra number."

"Well, you are about the only girl I know who is generally considered extra. We look upon you as triple extra quality."

"Stay right there, Terry," she laughed. "that's the way Fred talks. I'll go over with you, but I really don't believe the first care to have me go there."

"So much the better for you if they don't. Just pitch in and cut them all out."

After a little more banter with her, Terry joined Fred up in the dormitory, where they were all making ready to go down into the large dining-room and gather around the long table as soon as the evening meal should be announced.

A few minutes later the bell was heard and the entire party, nearly a hundred in number, filed into the dining-room, where they found the professor at the head of the table of is table on his right and the Advocate seated at his left.

CHAPTER III. HOW FRED AND DICK DUNCAN GOT A DUCKING.

Professor Lambert and his wife were loyal hosts. The table groaned under a load of good things and the member of the Alumni feasted heartily. Many of them had missed their noonday lunch, and had ravenous appetites. There were not wines, but plenty of tea, coffee and milk, and many toasts were drunk in different beverages. The entire faculty was toasted and so were the professor's wife and daughter.

Nearly an hour was spent at the table, after which the boys returned to the dormitory where Fred, Terry, Joe and Dick put on their dress suits and went downstairs and sat on the steps of the Lambert cottage, where they sang sentimental songs until the Advocate appeared in evening dress prepared to accompany them over to the Hawthorne residence.

"My!" she exclaimed, as they started off, "are all you boys here to escort me?"

"Every one of us, Advocate," laughed Fred.

"Well, we'll attract attention, so many of us together."

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"There you go, now," laughed Terry. "You are maneuvering now to get just one fellow to yourself and let the others get out of the way. "

"Terry, you are becoming an incorrigible tease," she retorted. "If you boys begin talking that way I won't go."

"Oh, I'll arrange it," said Fred, "Terry and Dick will go on about a hundred yards ahead of us. Then you and I will follow, with Joe and Tom about a hundred yards behind us."

"Great Scott, boys," exclaimed Terry, "let's mob him. He's actually trying to use us as dogs to keep the other boys away, while she leans on his arm and coos and coos all the way over there."

"Send him away quick, Fred," laughed the Advocate.

"Well, ain't you going to change about with us?" Terry asked.

"No, variety is not the spice of life in this instance."

"Whoops, boys! You hear that? Fred is all the variety she wants."

"Here, get away with you," said Fred. "I've made the choice, not she. You don't seem to understand the fitness of things. When we are out for a walk, three is a crowd; but when we get over to the house, you can all crowd around and bask in her smiles to your heart's content."

"Yes, provided there are any smiles left for us when you get her there," retorted Terry. "Come ahead, boys. She's sweet, but she isn't the only lump of sugar in the barrel," and amid a good deal of laughter Terry and Dick started off ahead, Fred and the Advocate following, while Joe and Tom brought up the rear.

The arrangement suited Eunice, and Fred thought she was never so pleasant as on that evening. They laughed and chatted gayly all the way over, and for a wonder she showed no desire to twit him about his attentions to Evelyn. She was fast learning that it was bad policy for her to do so, but on the way she asked him if he had his speech ready for the night of the banquet.

"Yes, I fixed up a few points in my mind so I won't forget them," he answered, "but don't ask me what they are."

"Why, are you going to spring something new upon us?"

"No, I don't know that I am. It depends altogether upon how sweetly you smile upon me while I am speaking; but let me tell you that you will hear a great speech when Osgood rises to respond to the toast."

"Is he a good speaker?" she asked.

"Splendid, I never heard him until this afternoon. He has quite a reputation in this part of the State as an orator, and I guess you'll soon hear of him as a rising young statesman, and an honor to the academy."

"Now, Fred, I don't think that any student ever left the academy who will be a greater honor to us than you are."

"Great Scott, Advocate! Stop a moment. Let me lay my handkerchief down on the ground, kneel on it and say my thanks for the compliment."

"Oh, come now, Fred, no foolishness. I mean that, and father thinks that way, too."

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"Well, I'm sure I feel highly flattered. I'm hardly yet on the threshold of my career. Osgood has started out well. He's a brilliant fellow, and if I can do as well as he is doing I shall feel very proud of it, and, by the way, there are several of the graduates who are members of the State Legislature, and two are members of Congress. For a young institution the academy is looming up grandly. Osgood was speaking to me about you this afternoon."

"Indeed! Indeed! What did he say?"

"Why, he said that he was just three or four years too soon in his attendance at the academy as a student, for then you were in short dresses attending the girls' high school and were not known as the Advocate of the boys. He expressed his surprise at hearing your praises sung so lustily by the Alumni, and many of us told him of several instances where you saved a number of the boys from the penalty of expulsion. One of them declared that you were the prettiest, the sweetest and the kindest-hearted young lady he ever knew."

"Who was he Fred?"

"Oh, I don't think I ought to tell on him."

"Why, it's no secret. What harm would there be in your telling me who he is?"

"Why do you wish to know?" he asked. "It won't do for you to begin showing tiny partiality where there are so many admirers."

"Say, Fred, it was you, wasn't it? Tell the truth now."

"I always tell the truth, Advocate, and I'll own up that it wasn't me."

"Oh, what an aggravating tease you are."

"Well, he's a married man, that's why I won't tell on him."

"Did he bring his wife here with him?"

"No, she's at home taking care of two babies, and of course you don't want to try to break up the happy family."

"My! But I'm tempted to pull your hair, Fred."

"My hair isn't long enough, I'm trimmed up for any emergency that may arrive. I can take care of myself against anything that can't get its fingers in my hair."

He teased her that way during the entire walk over to the Hawthorne residence but she enjoyed it as she always did when in his company.

It was a happy party that evening over in Avon, and the boys saw to it that the Advocate never lacked for attention. Evelyn was the only girl she was jealous of, but of course she had learned not to make any exhibition of jealousy in her direction.

Evelyn was loving and affectionate toward her, and they talked over the romance of the Duke of Scadsborough and Miss Merton, while on a visit to the Fearnots in New York. It was the first time she had met Evelyn since that incident.

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"Yes, Fred wrote Terry all about it," said Evelyn, "and I really think he did the girl a good service in baffling the duke in the pursuit of her fortune."

"Yes, indeed, but how is it that his sister Marguerite didn't come up with him to the reunion?"

"She will be here to-morrow," said Evelyn. "She had to wait for her mother. They will come up together."

"My! What a surprise!" exclaimed Eunice. "Really I don't know what to think of Marguerite not letting me know of it. I was her guest for several weeks and I have letters from her at least once a week."

"If you had asked Fred about it, he would have told you, I guess. I didn't know myself that they were coming until Fred reached Fredonia. They half expected the judge to come with them, but at the last moment his business engagements were such as to prevent it."

Eunice appeared to be considerably disturbed over the little bit of news, and when she had the chance to do so, she asked Fred if he knew what trains mother and sister would arrive on.

"I think they will be here about noon," he said, "if they come at all. The truth is, it is yet doubtful about their coming, and that is why I've said nothing to you on the matter, thinking that a surprise is more welcome always than a disappointment."

"Well, really, I shall be disappointed if they don't come, and I'm really sorry that Marguerite didn't write to me about it."

"She wanted to do so, but mother told her to wait until she could find out whether or not she really could come."

"Well, I'm going to drive down to the station to-morrow to meet her and if they come, they shall have my room in the cottage at home, while I will sleep with mother, and send father up into the dormitory."

"That's kind of you, Advocate, but really don't put yourself to so much trouble."

"Fred, I would be utterly miserable if they should come to Avon and not stop with us. Your mother and sister were kind to me when I was down there in the city, and really I am in love with both of them."

"So they are with you; but I don't think they would enjoy the visit if they knew that they were discommoding the professor at a time when you are all so much crowded."

"Don't talk that way, Fred. I have a little will of my own, and I'm going to exercise it."

"That's right," he laughed. "If you have a will, exercise it to the limit, when it's in the right direction."

Nothing more was said about it that evening, and the young people enjoyed themselves with a heartiness that was unmistakable. All the boys were attentive to Eunice without at the same time neglecting any of the other girls. Evelyn and Fred were the life of the party although Dick and Terry were just as lively themselves. The great banquet was yet forty-eight hours off, for the next day was to be devoted to the renewal of old friendships and making of new ones, and athletic exercises in all the games that the senior classes of the academy had indulged in from the beginning of the institution.

It was nearly midnight when the party at Mrs. Hawthorne residence broke up, and again the boys prepared to escort the Advocate back to her home. There being no people on the street at that late hour, to make any comment on their racket, the others, instead of giving Fred the exclusive companionship of the young lady, gathered around

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them in a circle and started off with them in the center. Eunice laughingly protested, as did Fred also, but without avail. All the way back to the academy the entire batch kept up a running fire of conversation with them thus preventing Fred from monopolizing her company. Finally she suggested in a laugh–ing way that Fred pitch in and put them to fight.

"The odds are too great," he replied. "Besides I would not think of striking a friend of yours."

"Well, they are not behaving like friends now."

"We are better friends than you think," retorted Dick Duncan. "That fellow is a fortune hunter, and we intend to baffle him just as he did the duke. He is setting his cap for you, or rather a trap, and we are going to see that he doesn't walk off with the prize without giving some of the rest of us a show "

Fred enjoyed it immensely. The Advocate, however, was more than annoyed, but the boys were so good–natured and persistent that she was forced to join in the laugh and make the best of it. When they reached the gate of the enclosure, Dick, who had assumed the leadership, suggested that they cease their noise for fear of awaking the sleepers in the dormitory as well as in the cottage.

"Step easy, now," said he. "We will leave her at the door of the cottage, for if we left him to take her there, the goodnight hug and kiss would awaken everybody on the grounds."

"Fred Fearnot," said Eunice. "I've never asked a favor at your hands, but if you will thrash Dick Duncan for that tomorrow I will appreciate it more than anything that you could do for me."

"All right Advocate, I'll take him down to the boathouse to–morrow morning and throw him into the river."

"Yes," chuckled Joe Jencks, "we'll do him as we boys used to do the kittens–tie a rock to him to make sure he doesn't come up to the surface again. When I was about twelve years old we had too many kittens at home and it was necessary for three of them to be drowned, so I took them in a old bag out to the old mill pond, and–"

"Oh, do hush that! I don't want to hear it," interrupted the Advocate, starting off alone toward the cottage, which was nearly a hundred yards away from the gate. The boys instantly surrounded her, and quietly escorted her to the porch of the cottage, where each one whispered:

"Good–night, find pleasant dreams, Advocate."

"Good–night," she replied, running up the steps mad enough to yank a handful of hair off the head of every one but Fred.

The boys turned away and went up to their rooms in the dormitory chuckling way down in their shoes, but making as little noise as possible.

They were up early the next morning, and went down to the river for a swim before breakfast. There Fred pushed Dick Duncan off the float before he could undress.

"What in thunder do you mean, Fred?" Dick asked as he came to the surface.

"Oh, I am keeping my promise to the Advocate to throw you into the river."

"Well, that's all right. Every dog has his day, and there's a whole week waiting for you."

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He scrambled up on the float out of the water, and said he would go back to the dormitory to put on some dry clothes.

"Call on the Advocate before you make the change," laughed Fred.

Dick rushed at him, seized him around the waist and tried to throw him into the water. Fred, however, was too good a wrestler to be caught that way, and Dick, seeing he couldn't throw him in, raised him in his arms and plunged in with him.

"That's all right, old man," laughed Fred, when he came to the surface "you had to come in with me."

"Oh, I didn't mind that, for I was already wet."

The boys laughed heartily, had their swim, after which they accompanied Fred and Dick back to the academy, reaching there just a few minutes before breakfast was ready. They found Eunice and the professor talking with a number of the older graduates out on the piazza, and of course greeted them with a cheery good-morning

"Why, how's this, boys?" exclaimed Professor Lambert, "two of you are dripping wet."

"Oh, we frequently bathe that way," remarked Fred, at which the boys roared, and Eunice, who suspected what had happened began to blush and looked confused. On the other hand, the professor began laughing, suspecting an accident which the boys were not willing to concede.

"How did it happen, boys?" he asked.

"Well, I'll tell you how it was, professor," said Terry, "Fred and Dick are rivals for the smiles of a creation young lady not a thousand miles away from the academy, and they undertook to settle the matter down at the boathouse, with the result that both of them went into the water."

Eunice blushed furiously and ran into the house.

"Oh, indeed?" said the professor, his eyes opening wide. "I'm sorry to see two such ardent friends become enemies."

"Oh, we made friends again," laughed Dick, throwing his arms around Fred's neck and kissing him. Fred reciprocated and the crowd standing around on the porch fairly roared with laughter.

"That's right, let there be peace," said the professor. "You'd better run up to your rooms and take off those wet clothes before you catch cold. Breakfast will be ready in a few minutes, and a cup of hot coffee for each of you will be the best thing you can take."

"I think something stronger than coffee would be a better remedy," suggested Lawyer Osgood.

"None on the place," said the professor.

"Don't you be sure of that, professor," laughed Fred. "I'll wager there's a bottle of whisky in every room in the dormitory."

"I hope not! I hope not!" said the professor, shaking his head, as though the suggestion of such a thing was extremely repugnant to him.

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"Well, I haven't got one in my grip, nor have I seen one anywhere, but when men travel away from home something of that kind is generally slipped in among the toilet articles," and with that Fred and Dick brushed past the professor, ran up to their rooms and about twenty minutes later re-appeared in dry clothes.

The others were all in the breakfast room and as Dick and Fred entered, they glanced at Eunice who was sitting at her father's left at the head of the table; but she wouldn't look at him. She was teased more than ever in her life.

After breakfast the majority of the graduates strolled about the grounds smoking cigars, in which they were joined by the professor and all the teachers. More than a score of them had brought boxes of fine cigars to the faculty and it was estimated by some of them that they were supplied with smoking material for at least a year.

Teacher Brown was the most popular of all and at least a thousand cigars fell to his share.

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CHAPTER IV. FRED WINS IN THE ATHLETIC EXERCISE—HIS MOTHER AND SISTER ARRIVE AT AVON.

Soon after breakfast all the graduates went to the clubhouse to witness and indulge in athletic exercises in the gymnasium.

"Now, gentlemen," sang out Teacher Brown, from the platform at the further end of the little gymnasium, "I suggest that in order to make these exercises more interesting, a referee be appointed to decide on the result of each contest skill, and that the winners be crowned, and he who wins the most of the contests have the day named after him."

"That's a good idea," exclaimed several.

"Yes." said Lawyer Osgood, "and I suggest that Teacher Brown act as chairman of the meeting, as well as referee."

"Good! Good!" came from all parts of the house, and the teacher was unanimously elected.

"Well, I'm sorry I made the suggestion," said Brown, "for while I'm very fond of witnessing all kinds of athletic sport, I have participated but very little in them."

"Oh, that's all right, Brownny," sang out Dick Duncan, "you know a good thing when you see it and that's enough."

"Well, I'll do my best to serve you impartially. What is the first game you will have?"

"Appoint a committee to arrange a program," suggested one, and as it met the approbation of the boys, a committee was appointed, and while they were consulting in another room over the program the boys indulged in singing glee club songs, so many of them joining in the chorus as to almost raise the roof.

Before the committee was ready to report, Professor Lambert entered the room and the boys set up a great shout of welcome. They escorted him to the platform and insisted on a speech.

"My dear boys," said he, "I merely dropped in to see how you were enjoying yourselves. I can't help but feel like a father toward every one of you, and I want the satisfaction of knowing that all present have a good time, and when you disperse to your homes feel that it was good that you came to the old academy again to renew

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acquaintances."

"Mr. Brown has just informed me that you are going to indulge in various games of skill and strength, and I assure you that I shall be pleased to witness your performances." Just then the committee filed into the room to report, and the Professor sat down.

The committee reported that games played indoors should be gone through first. Those outside to follow. The first was to be some wrestling matches; then glove contests, followed by fencing with the foils, after which would come the regular gymnasium exercises on the crossbars with Fred Fearnot as leader or instructor.

"Oh, we don't need any instructors," protested Fred.

"You have nothing to say about it, my boy," said Teacher Brown, "you were captain of the various teams while a student at the academy and it is but natural that you should officiate as such on this occasion, so I rule your protest out of order."

The boys cheered the decision and proceeded at once to their dressing-rooms to prepare for the beginning of the exercise

Nearly a score of them appeared to indulge in wrestling, and an hour was passed in the exercises, the end of which found that Fred Fearnot was the only one that had not been thrown. He was declared the winner.

"Upon My word," exclaimed professor Lambert, "I don't think I ever witnessed finer wrestling in my life."

"Oh, wait" laughed Terry. "till you see the boys get the gloves on, then you'll see something exciting."

"Well, I hope that there will be no slugging."

"Oh, it isn't slugging when you have the gloves on," laughed Terry. "It's somewhat like the college girls' pillow fight, only on a pretty forcible scale."

Fred, Terry, and Dick Duncan, who had been together so much leaving the academy, proved to be the best boxers. They knocked the others right and left until they remained masters of the field. Then Terry and Dick had a bout in which the latter was knocked out. Then Fred and Terry went at it and, after a tremendous set-to of several rounds Fred was proclaimed the victor.

Then came the contest with the foils, and it was surprising to see the number of experts among the graduates. But Fred and Terry proved again to be the best of the whole lot, for they had given more attention to it than all the others. The majority of them had heard of Fred's famous duel with two French officers in France, and were afraid to cross foils with him. Only two of them attempted it, and were conquered in a couple of minutes. Terry was the only one who could hold his own with him, but he finally succumbed to his endurance and lightning-like work.

"He's a young man," whispered Professor Lambert to teacher Brown.

"He is indeed," assented the fatter, "and what Terry knows about things he taught him. You know his motto, which is 'Work and Win,' and his rule is that whatever you undertake to do, do it well. That is the secret of his marvelous success. Notice the muscles of his arms and limbs. He has trained until they are like limbs of oak, and his muscles like steel."

Then came the exercises on the trapeze, during which Professor Lambert actually caught his breath several times, fearing fatal accidents.

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"Why, bless my soul," he gasped, "I never saw better work in a circus ring!" laughed Brown. "They could organize the best circus in the world on extremely short notice. Fred and Terry can turn somersaults and land on their feet as easily as the best acrobat, and Dick Duncan and Jencks are not far behind them. You see they have been together a great deal since leaving the academy."

"But how can he stand so much of it? He has been for over two hours now in the exercises and won in all."

"It's marvelous endurance; his training. He can do more with less exertion than any one I ever saw. If you watch him you will find him husbanding his strength where others waste theirs for lack of knowledge. It seems to be intuitive with him."

"It does, indeed" assented the professor.

"Now, gentlemen," said Brown, rising to his feet. "we've had nearly three hours of exercise. We will adjourn until after lunch, when the field sports will begin. Bicycle riding, foot race, and other exercises. Mr. Fearnot is proclaimed winner of all the contests so far."

The boys nearly raised the roof with their cheers for Fred Fearnot, and insisted on a speech from him.

"Oh, let up on that, boys," he sang out. "You'll hear speaking enough before we break up."

"That's all right," said Osgood, "we have heard for more than two years of your splendid record, is an all-around athlete and a leader in field sport. We want to hear from your own lips how you have succeeded so well in that direction."

"That's it! That's it!" said Professor Lambert, looking toward Fred. "There are scores of friends present who don't understand how you have acquired so much skill."

"Well, that is easily told," said Fred, jumping up on the platform alongside, of the professor. "It is just like everything else. If a boy or man desires to do a thing, and goes at it with a determination to do it, it is nearly half done at that point. My motto is 'Work and Win,' and the whole secret lies in those three words. I have made it a rule that whatever I have to do, to try to do it well. When I saw others do things better than I could I knew that it was the result of intelligent work and skill, and went at it with a fixed, determination to become a thorough master of the same art myself. Strength is a good thing, and when combined with skill it is the best thing. Skill saves strength; one may have the strength of an ox, but if he hasn't the knowledge of how to apply that strength it is of but little value to him. Of what use would Professor Lambert's great learning be to him as a teacher if he didn't know how to impart that knowledge to others? That is the secret of his great fame as an instructor of youth. What he knows he understands how to impart to others, so as to make it easy to be understood, and you will find the same rule good in physical as well as mental exercise. One must keep perfect control of his mental and physical faculties in the gymnasium in order to avoid disaster. If he doesn't keep his eyes about him on the crossbars, he will be as apt to land on his head as on his feet. In a glove contest, if your eyes wander away from those of your antagonist you will find thunderbolts wandering all over your head and chest. You must study to be quick so as to slip in between the guard of the other fellow, and get onto his solar plexus, for frequently the opening lasts but the fifth of a second, after which it may be closed and you will find yourself receiving a blow instead of giving one."

"The most sensible talk I ever heard," said Professor Lambert when Fred ceased talking, and it applies equally as to every branch of business that one can enter."

"Yes. I found it so," remarked Fred. "Whatever is worth doing at all is worth doing well, and in all branches of mechanical art the most skillful receive the best pay, and those who are negligent and slipshod in their work earn the least. Say, Terry," said Fred, as the two hurried to their dressingroom in the gymnasium "we've got to

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hustle in order to reach the depot in time for the train, to meet mother and Margie, if they should come up."

"Do you really think they will be here, Fred?"

"I don't know what to think, Terry. It seems to me that if they were coming they would have telegraphed me; but I have received no dispatch, yet it won't do to take any chances, we must hurry to the train."

They dressed themselves with all dispatch and hurried away from the clubhouse to a carriage which Fred had ordered sent over front town for him.

"Take us to the depot as quick as you can. We haven't more than five minutes to spare," said he to the driver.

"All right, boss," and they dashed away, not having time even to stop at the house for Evelyn and Mary Hamilton.

The train was about five minutes late and when they reached the station they were surprised to find Evelyn and Mary already there in a carriage, as well as Mrs. Lambert and Eunice in another.

"Oh, Fred, come here!" called Evelyn from the carriage, and on reaching it she handed him a dispatch, saying:

"It was delivered at the house not more than ten minutes ago, and as it was addressed to you I suspected it was from your mother or Margie and knowing that it couldn't be sent over to the academy in time for you to reach the train, I took the liberty of opening it to see if they were coming up, I found that they were, so I sent around to the stable for a carriage in order to meet them. I know you will forgive me the liberty I have taken."

"Why, bless you, old girl, you did just right. I was wondering why it was that I had not received any dispatch. It was thoughtful of you to bring a carriage for them. I see Mrs. Lambert and the Advocate are here in their carriage waiting for them too."

"Well, do they know that they are coming up?" Evelyn asked.

"No, no more than I did, but the Advocate told me last night that she would come down to meet them anyway."

"Well, where are they going to stop, Fred? You haven't secured quarter for them have you?"

"No, but I believe there is one room yet at Mrs. Hawthorne that they can have. The Advocate told me last night that they had to stop with her, or she would know the reason why."

"Oh, indeed! She expressed her regrets to me that they didn't have room for us over at the academy?"

"Hush, dear," he whispered, placing his hand over her mouth, as she sat back in the carriage. "She thinks she is under obligations to make any kind of a sacrifice under the circumstances, because she was Margie's guest several weeks you know last winter."

Just then they heard the whistle of the train as it approached the station.

"Come, let me help you out," and he opened the carriage door and assisted Evelyn and Mary out, while Terry did the same for Mrs. Lambert and the Advocate. They were on the platform when the train slowed up, Fred sprang aboard, rushed into the car and greeted his mother and sister only as loving son and brother could.

"Never got your dispatch until a few minutes ago," he said to his mother.

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"Well, it looked as though we would not be able to get away, said Mrs. Fearnot.

"Oh, there's Evelyn, Mary, and Miss Lambert!" exclaimed Marguerite, looking out the car window to those on the platform.

"Yes, they are all here waiting for you," and he assisted his mother out of the car while Marguerite ran forward and sprang off the steps almost into the arms of Terry.

It was a glad, joyous meeting of friends, and there were a great many exclamations and osculatory smacks accompanied by much laughter. Marguerite was introduced to Mrs. Lambert for they had never met, and the dignified wife of the professor gave her a motherly kiss and embrace.

"Now, my dear Mrs. Fearnot," said the Advocate's mother, "Eunice and I insist that you shall make your home with us while here. I believe that Fred has secured quarters for you elsewhere but he did so without my knowledge or consent. and really I cannot sanction it."

"Well, I will leave it with you and Fred to settle that matter," laughed Mrs. Fearnot, "provided you don't quarrel about it."

"The matter is already settled," spoke up the Advocate. "You come home with us, and if Fred wants to fight about it, he'll have to pick a quarrel with his shadow. He is stopping over there at the academy himself, and I am sure it would be more pleasant for all for his mother and sister to be there too."

"Evelyn, where are you and Mary stopping?" Mrs. Fearnot asked.

"We are stopping over in town at Mrs. Hawthorne's," replied Evelyn. "and there is a room there for you; but really I think that it is due Mrs. Lambert that you should go home with her."

"Thank you, dear," said Mrs. Lambert, scarcely able to conceal her surprise at generosity.

"Then I guess we will accept your kind invitation," said Mrs. Fearnot, turning to the professor's wife.

"Of course, that's the best thing to do mother" put in Fred

"Let me assist You to the carriage," and he and Terry conducted the ladies to the, Lambert carriage, while Evelyn and Mary returned to theirs and entered it without assistance.

As the Lambert carriage drove away, Fred and Terry returned to the two girls.

"By George the Advocate captured them, didn't she?" said Terry.

"Oh, it was the best for them to go over there," returned Evelyn. "I'm really glad they did."

"So am I," added Fred, –but I don't envy the Advocate's frame of mind under the circumstances."

"Why, what's the matter with her. Fred?" Evelyn asked.

"Oh, she's in a peck of trouble. She never heard that they were coming up until last night, and you remember how she apologized to you and Mary about her inability to take care of you during your visit here. The truth is, she knew that your popularity with the boys was such that she preferred to keep you as far away from them as possible, and now mother and Marie's coming plainly reveals the fact that she didn't mean just exactly what she

said."

"Oh, circumstances after cases, Fred. Don't think hard of her at all. for she and her mother doubtless think that it is obligatory upon them to entertain your mother and sister, as neither of them has ever been in Avon before."

"Well. I confess feeling a little bit vindictive about it old girl. She's well acquainted with both you and Mary, and she's always claimed that Terry and I were favorites of hers as well as the professor's. She's afraid of you two girls, and if I don't touch her up a little bit on it when I get the chance, it will be because I don't know how.

"Now, Fred, don't do that. It would be ungenerous on your part, because if the truth were known it is all on your account."

"I don't think so, but even if it were I don't like to have my best girl slighted on anybody's account."

"Say, Fred," said Terry, "Let's dismiss our carriage and ride back with these girls."

"All right, go and pay him off, and I'll wait here for you; or, hold on, old man. You take your girl out of this carriage, and use the other one. Evelyn and I can fill this one."

CHAPTER V. EVELYN CREATES A SENSATION ON THE ATHLETIC GROUNDS.

Fred's suggestion that Terry and Mary take the other carriage pleased the former Immensely, and he assisted his sweetheart out and into the other one with the greatest alacrity.

"Now, what was the use of the expense of in extra carriage, Fred?" Evelyn asked.

"Thunder! Don't you suppose that Terry is willing to pay a dollar for a little ride with his girl. And don't you think I am built the same way myself? Don't go to teasing me now just because I'm stuck on you."

"Well, I won't tease you, but I do want to tell you not to say anything to Eunice about her inviting your mother and sister to stop with her after telling Mary and me that she had no extra room."

"Why should I not, dear? I'm just itching to let her know that I noticed it."

"Well, you shouldn't do anything of the kind. and you know that as well as, I do. If you were dealing with a man it would be a different thing."

"Bless your dear heart! You are the most generous girl I ever knew in my life, and I'm almost tempted to register a vow that when we are both old enough to fall in love, I'll come sneaking around your home in Fredonia to find out whether or not I'll be permitted to make up to you."

"All right. The gate and the door be open to you," she laughed, "and maybe by that time we'll be old enough to know whether or not a little bit of courting would be enjoyable."

"Oh, everybody seems to think that courting is fine fun, and I think that even before that time we might try our hands in the way of a little practice at it so as to be able to avoid blunders when we commence in earnest."

"Yes, we might. Most girls enjoy being courted, and I don't know but what I would myself but where have you and Terry been all the morning? You left us girls to amuse ourselves, and we haven't seen you since last night."

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"Well, that's an explanation I wanted to make. The boys decided that they would spend the day going through athletic exercises at the gymnasium, and of course they wouldn't listen to any excuse that Terry or I might put, up to get out of it."

They reached the Hawthorne residence where Fred and Terry alighted and assisted the two girls out, dismissed one of the carriages, entered the other together and drove over to the academy.

"Why Fred," exclaimed Eunice. "why in the world didn't you and Terry bring the girls over?"

"Did you invite them to come over?" Fred asked her.

"No, I forgot to do so."

"Well, they didn't forget, and neither did Terry nor I. We brought them up here with us, and we are not going to neglect them."

And with that he passed into the cottage where he again kissed his mother and sister, and began playing with them in his rollicking way, telling them what a splendid time he was having with all the graduates of the academy, many of whom he had never met before.

"Some of them are splendid fellows who are making their mark in the world; so, little sis, you'd better look out, or they'll be after you. They know a pretty girl when they see one." Then turning to his mother he added: "You can now understand why we boys are so much in love with Avon and its splendid academy. Did you ever see such magnificent grounds or finer scenery? I would like nothing better than to live here all the days of my life."

"Well I'm glad you've found a spot somewhere on the face of the earth where you are willing to settle down and stop roaming all around the world." laughed his mother.

"Well, don't you think it is a place fit for a high-strung boy like me to live in?" he asked, and leading her out on the porch, he pointed to a low range of mountains beyond the river and a magnificent stretch of country farther down the stream.

"I tell you it is one of the finest places in the whole State. The air is fine, the water pure, and no better people can be found in any community in the whole country."

"It is indeed lovely," assented his mother.

"Yes," added Mrs. Lambert. "I have been in love with the place myself ever since I first saw it, and the professor has spared no expense in trying to build up an institution worthy of its environment."

Just then Professor Lambert came around from the academy and joined them. He welcomed Fred's mother with a warmth that was genuine and expressed his gratification at her presence at such a time.

"The banquet to-morrow night," said he, "will be one not easily forgotten, for some of our students have made their mark in the world, and you will perhaps hear speeches during the evening that would be an honor to The Senate of the United States."

In a little while dinner was announced, and the professor tendered his arms to Mrs. Fearnot and Margie, while Fred promptly tendered his to Mrs. Lambert.

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"Say, Advocate," he laughed, "here's the left arm for you. They say that a fellow's palpitations are generally heard on that side. Terry, the rascal, ought to be here to look after you, but as he is not. I'll do the best I can for you, and the best is all a fellow can do. If your mother has cut you out. Blame her and not me."

"I won't take a particle of blame," laughed Mrs. Lambert.

"Neither will I," said Fred, "for one is not to be blamed for a strict performance Of duty."

"That saved you," laughed the Advocate, taking his arm and accompanying them into the dining-room.

It was known that the two strangers who had just arrived were Fred's mother and sister, and all the graduates gazed at Marguerite and inwardly pronounced her beautiful.

After the meal they intercepted the Advocate and insisted that she should introduce them all to Miss Fearnot, and for nearly an hour the two girls held a reception in the academy hall. They found Marguerite bright and witty like her brother, and they were all greatly charmed with her. The time was short, however, as the boys had to return to the clubhouse to renew their athletic exercises, leaving the ladies in possession of the buildings. They were out on the athletic grounds beyond the clubhouse engaged in bicycle racing when the ladies up at the cottage heard great cheering. They ran out on the plaza and saw it carriage surrounded by nearly the entire force of graduates.

"My!" exclaimed Eunice, "somebody has arrived whom the boys are cheering."

"Who can they be?" Marguerite asked.

"Indeed I don't know. I wish I did. Just listen. The boys are singing a song of welcome."

Eunice sent for Black Pete and ordered him to go down to the athletic grounds and find out who the new arrivals were. He returned a few minutes later and reported that four young ladies were in the carriage, and two of them and were Misses Olcott and Hamilton.

"Why, it's Evelyn and Mary!" exclaimed Margie. "We ought to go down there and join them."

"Why in the world didn't they come by here?" Mrs. Fearnot asked, looking around at Eunice and her mother.

"Indeed I don't know," replied Eunice "I went over to see them last night."

"Yes, and we expected them out to-day," added the Advocate's mother.

"Well, that's not like Evelyn. She is very far from being a thoughtless girl. It must be that the boys are at the bottom of it."

There was a worried look on Eunice's face. She new that she had failed to invite the girls over, and feared that she had not only blundered, but had given cause for offense.

"What are the boys doing there?" Mrs. Fearnot asked.

"I believe they are going through some athletic exercises. All those who were not at the academy when Fred and Terry were here are extremely anxious to see them in their feats of skill and strength. It is claimed that their class excelled all the others before or since in athletic sports and hence there is a great deal of interest among the different classes to see what they can do. I was told that Fred won every contest in the clubhouse this morning."

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"Of course he did," laughed Margie. "I've never known brother and Terry to be beaten yet. Neither of them seems to know what fear is, and greater friends than they I never knew or heard of."

"How about Damon and Pythias?" Eunice asked.

"They are a second edition of Damon and Pythias," added Margie. "I believe that one would die for the other if it were necessary. "

"Really, I do, too," laughed Mrs. Fearnot. "I never knew two brothers to love each other as those two boys do, and as for Evelyn she is one of the most unselfish girls I ever knew. She always thinks of others rather than herself. I never heard of her being angry in my life, and with all that she is as sensible as people, twice her age."

That unstinted praise was gall and wormwood for Eunice, but her face was as placid as a May morning as she listened to it.

"Let's go down and see them, Eunice," suggested Marguerite.

Eunice hesitated before replying, then she remarked:

"None of the gentlemen invited us to witness their exercises, and they may have invited Evelyn, Mary and the other two young ladies."

"Oh, well. what if they did? My brother is there, and you are the Advocate, beloved by all of them. What difference does it make?"

"Yes, dear go down there and ask the young ladies to come up to the cottage," suggested Mrs. Lambert to Eunice.

"Who are the other young ladies?" Mrs. Fearnot asked.

"I think they are the Misses Wellborn; two sisters, who came up with Fred and the girls."

"Oh, I remember hearing Fred speak of them. Their father bought a building lot up at Dedham Lake. They spend their summer up there at Ashton, and Fred says they are very nice girls."

Eunice and Margie put on their hats, took their parasols and walked down to the athletic ground. where Fred and the champion of the seniors of the year before his were now dashing around the enclosure on their heels. The boys were so deeply interested in the race, they didn't see the two young ladies making their way toward the carriage, nor did Evelyn and Mary see them until they were right alongside of them.

"Oh, my. here's Eunice and Margie!" exclaimed Mary, shaking hands with the two girls. Evelyn, however, was so intent on watching the race that she never looked at them; in fact hadn't seen them.

"Fred is winning! Fred is winning!" she cried, clapping her hands. "They can't beat that boy." Then she saw the other two and exclaimed:

"Oh, my, are you two here? Excuse me, I was watching the race," and she kissed both of them with girlish enthusiasm.

The next moment she was watching the bicyclers, and cheering Fred on until he crossed the line.

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"Fred won!" she cried, "I knew he would win!" and she threw her arms around Margie's neck and kissed her again.

"Did you ever see such an enthusiastic girl?" laughed Eunice.

"Oh, I'm so fond of all sorts of sport," returned Evelyn. "Excuse me, I really forgot," and she introduced the Wellborn girls to the Advocate and Marguerite.

"Oh, I'm so glad to meet you," exclaimed Margie, greeting the two girls. "I've heard brother speak often of you."

"We are glad to meet you," said the elder of the two sisters, "for if ever a brother loved a sister, your brother loves you. He not only loves you but is proud of you, and I'm sure you ought to be proud of him if you are not."

"Why, I am proud of him. He is one of the best brothers in the world, and so is Terry."

Margie and Evelyn, with their arms around each other's waist, strolled off a little distance together, for they had many little confidences to whisper to each other. They were soon joined by Fred, while Terry and others went to the carriage to talk with the Advocate, Mary and the Wellborn sisters.

"You won again, Fred," said Evelyn, her eyes sparkling and cheeks glowing as she extended her hand to him.

"Yes, of course I did. Our class is the best that the academy has ever turned out."

"Of course it is. It's because you trained them."

"Thank you, old girl. I've heard it score of them say that same thing within the last hour, and of course I'm feeling a little bit proud. Has the Advocate invited you up to the cottage yet?"

"Yes, she came down with Margie, but wanted to know why we didn't drive by there before we came here."

"What did you say to that?"

"Why, I told her it was more fun being with you boys."

Just then they were joined by several others, and again Marguerite held a reception there on the athletic grounds. All wanted to pay their respects and congratulate her on the number of victories Fred had won that day. She had a pleasant word for every one. Her repartee was almost as keen as that of Evelyn.

Some fifty feet away the other girls were holding a little court near the carriage, with about two score of young men around them. They were finally interrupted, however, by Teacher Brown, who called the next race between the champion runners of different classes. There were some seven or eight of them, each class having put up its own champion, and again the attention of the entire crowd was centered upon the runners. The girls all got together to watch them, and before two laps had been made, Fred, Terry and Dick Duncan were seen to be in the lead.

"Mary! Mary!" cried Evelyn, clapping her hands, "our boys are winning again!" and her girlish enthusiasm seemed to electrify the whole crowd. As the race neared the end she clapped her hands and called out:

"Beat 'em Fred! Do your best, Terry! Keep up with 'em, Dick! You are three of a kind, all good boys!" and as the three passed over the line as winners, she started up one of the old glee club songs with an enthusiasm that fairly took the boys' breath away. They looked at her admiringly, some of them lovingly, and all joined in the chorus

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with a hear that filled the very air with harmonious vibrations.

CHAPTER VI. FRED FEARNOT'S DAY.

Several other games were played, keeping the crowd on the athletic grounds till near sunset, and during the entire time Evelyn had the Alumni around her, following her wherever she went, yet she appeared to be utterly unconscious of the attention she was attracting. Her passionate love of athletic sport, her familiarity with all the rules and her enthusiasm over the desperate struggles of the contestants, seemed to electrify every man on the ground.

"Gracious what a girl!" exclaimed one of the young men. "She an entire host in herself."

"Yes," said another, "I never saw one so well up in the different games in my life."

"No, there isn't another one like her in all the country," put in a third. "She is absolutely infallible on all the rules of baseball. As a mascot she pulled Fred Fearnot through some of the hardest fought games ever seen on the diamond."

"The deuce! Is she the girl?" exclaimed a fourth. "I remember reading of those games at the time they were played."

"Yes, she's the girl."

"Well, it's not to be wondered at that they swept the field, east and west."

When the last game was won the entire crowd unanimous proclaimed it "Fred Fearnot's Day," as he had come off victorious over every competitor. He was the leader for his class, and his companions took him on their shoulders and bore him around the field. Again Evelyn burst forth into a triumphant song that was more appropriate to the occasion than anything else yet heard on those grounds, and again the boys joined in at the top of their lungs. Fred waved his cap at her as they bore him past on their shoulders and all the girls waved their handkerchiefs and fans at him.

The boys finally stood him on his feet in front of her and some of them called out:

"Crown him! Crown the victor," and she laughingly took off her hat in the absence of anything better, placed it on his head and tied it under his chin.

How the boys screamed and yelled.

They sang song after song, and kept up the racket for some ten or fifteen minutes longer. Then Teacher Brown called out:

"Attention!" and as the noise subsided he pronounced as the result of the games that it should be known in the records of the Alumni of the academy as "Fearnot's Day."

"How about Miss Olcott's day?" some one called out to him.

"It's her day all the time," responded Brown. "One of perpetual sunshine, from the first day in the year till the last one."

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"Good! Three cheers for Brownny," sang out Dick Duncan.

"Oh, my!" exclaimed Evelyn to those around her. "Even Mr. Brown has caught on to Fred's style of speaking."

"That's the neatest thing I ever knew Brownny to say," said Terry. "He's a bachelor, and a bashful sort of a fellow, but pure gold."

Just then Professor Lambert, accompanied by his wife and Mrs. Fearnot, appeared on the scene, wondering what all the wild enthusiasm was about. A dozen of the boys tried to tell him at once.

"Oh, it's the work of the dear little mascot," he laughed. "She can put more heart into the boys than any young lady I ever heard of."

"Oh, but you ought to have heard what Brownny said about her," remarked one of the boys, and when his compliment to Evelyn was repeated, he laughed and said:

"Very fine! Very fine indeed!"

Mrs. Fearnot put her arm around Evelyn's waist and kissed her, saying:

"My dear child, you've been helping my boy out again, have you?"

"Oh, I couldn't help it," was the laughing reply. "He beat everybody on the ground, won every game, and Terry was next to him every time!"

Mrs. Fearnot looked at Mary Hamilton, who had been blushing like a rose all the time, and asked if she had enjoyed the games.

"Yes," replied Mary, "but I wasn't a mascot to-day."

"Oh, she's a mascot all the time," said Terry, who was standing alongside of her.

Mrs. Fearnot looked at him and smiled, for she knew well that the remark came from his very heart.

"Oh, mother!" exclaimed Margie, "Evelyn is a captain. I believe she could lead all the games herself."

"Yes, I was with her on the grand-stand at Yale, and she kept saying that Fred would win when every one of us had lost heart entirely."

"Now, boys," sang out Professor Lambert, "come up the academy and sing some of the old songs for the ladies, they want to hear you."

"All right, lead the way, we'll follow," and nearly a dozen of the boys scrambled over each other trying to get up to act as her escort; but she reached out and caught hold of Teacher Brown's arm and clung to him.

Another one of the boys took charge of Mary, while Lawyer Osgood succeeded in capturing Eunice. Fred and Dick Duncan escorted the Wellborn sisters so the procession up to the academy began.

It was a hilarious crowd. They sang all the way and Mrs. Fearnot and Mrs. Lambert laughed till their sides ached.

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"I never really understood what the attractions of these reunions were until to-day," remarked Fred's mother to the professor. "I am tempted to register a vow never to miss one of them in the future."

"Do so! Do so!" urged the professor, "I feel younger by several years every time they occur, and by and by I will be a boy again."

In the great hall of the academy the boys burst forth into song again accompanied by Evelyn, Mary and Eunice, the Wellborn sisters not being familiar with the club songs.

As night was coming on the four girls spoke of returning to the carriage, when the professor, his wife and daughter strenuously protested. The girls insisted, but Mrs. Lambert went to each one in person and begged her to remain and spend the evening with them. Eunice, however, stood talking with Anne Wellborn, and of course failed personally to invite Evelyn or even Mary to remain; but Mrs. Fearnot and the professor's wife prevailed on them finally, and they all went to the cottage to await the announcement of supper.

"Say, Mr. Brown," said Fred, "I want to ask a favor of you. "

"All right, my boy, I'll grant it if I can."

"Well, look after Evelyn, take her in to supper, and see that she has a good time."

"Why, my dear boy, you are conferring upon me the greatest favor, I could ask. That's just what I wanted to do."

"All right, then," and Fred forthwith took charge of one of the Wellborn girls, while Dick Duncan took charge of the other. Another one of the graduates offered his services to Mary while Terry was standing alongside of her.

She turned and looked at him and Terry remarked:

"That's all right, Mary, he's a good fellow."

"Do you want to get rid of me?" she asked.

"No, but I do want to make the poor fellow happy once in his life."

"Well, that's just the way to do it," said the other, and Mary yielded and took the young man's arm.

Eunice had excused herself to nearly a dozen of the young men, nor did she accept any offer until she found that Fred had charge of Miss Wellborn.

It was really a banquet, but not so termed, for they remained nearly two hours at the table listening to toasts and short speeches. Terry made the hit of the evening by making an excruciatingly funny speech of about fifteen minutes' length. He told a story how some students, when he was attending at the academy, went to the Advocate in the deepest distress to get them out of trouble with the faculty, and his description of the suspense the boys were in until word came from the Advocate that sentence was suspended sent the crowd almost into convulsions. During the time he was relating the story, Eunice's face would have been a picture for an artist, for his embellishment of the scene was at times quite embarrassing to her on account of the warmth of his praises of her generosity and kindness of heart. Then he had the laugh on Teacher Brown by describing how one of the students, who was quite a ventriloquist, had brought about a dog fight in room 40 of the dormitory, and how the teacher, who had charge of that end of the boys' department, made a vain effort to find the two canines. He described how he got down on his hands and knees and searched under the bed and in the closet of the room, and then roasted the boys about their hardihood in getting up dog fights right inside the building.

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Brown twisted and squirmed like a worm on a hook, then he blushed like a school girl, but was forced to join in the laugh at his expense. The venerable professor, his wife and Mrs. Fearnot, laughed till the tears coursed down their cheeks.

Then they called on Fred, and he astonished every one in the room by singing a sentimental song. "With all her faults, I love her still," and as he was standing alongside of Miss Wellborn's chair, he frequently turned and gazed at her as he sang, but not once did he look at Eunice or Evelyn. It was rather embarrassing for the young lady, but she stood it well, and joined in the applause when he finished. He attempted to resume his seat, but the graduates yelled at him:

"Speech! Speech!"

"I don't do it!" he retorted; "I want to give you fellows a little show, for I've beaten you at everything to-day."

It was a hard hit at which the boys laughed, and he was permitted to keep his seat.

After two hours spent at the table the party broke up into groups, the majority of them remaining with the young ladies, and it was not until a very late hour that Evelyn, Mary and the other girls could get away to return to the Hawthorne residence over in town.

When they were escorted out to the carriage, Mary Hamilton made the discovery that the horses had been unhitched from it.

"Why, where are the horses?" she asked.

"They've been sent to the stable for their feed." said one. "They'll be here in a few minutes," and the young ladies were assisted into the carriage, the door shut, and the boys started off with it on a run. They drew up in front of the Hawthorne residence with nearly fifty boys drawing it.

"Well, this is something I'll never forget," remarked Evelyn. "I believe it is the first time in my life I was ever so escorted anywhere."

It was such a late hour that very few of the denizens the town witnessed the unique procession. The boys gave the girls a farewell cheer, and started off with the carriage to leave it at the stables where it belonged.

In the house the girls had something to talk about. The Wellborn sisters declared it was an episode in their lives which they could never forget.

"Oh, they are just the best boys in the world," said Evelyn. "It's the greatest fun to be with Terry and Fred, and Dick and Joe when they have any games on hand; but really I was surprised when I found they were going to draw us over here themselves."

"I think, though, that Eunice is angry," remarked Mary.

"I'm afraid so, too, but really we are not to blame."

"No, of course not. I had no idea the boys would become so enthusiastic, but it was all on your account, Evelyn."

The next morning the little Avon paper was filled with accounts of the incidents of the day previous, calling it "Fred Fearnot's Day." It was a very graphic description, and of course the reporter exhausted his vocabulary of fine words in trying to portray the beauty and enthusiasm of the young lady who cheered the boys in the games.

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Over at the academy Fred and Terry, as soon as they were up and dressed, waited at the door of the Lambert cottage to escort Marguerite and her mother to the breakfast room up the large building. Eunice and Marguerite came out together.

"Oh, you two boys!" exclaimed Marguerite, "what a racket you raised last night."

"Well, you had a good time, didn't you?" Fred asked.

"Of course we did. I think it mean of you, though, for not inviting Eunice and me to a ride in that carriage."

"Why, you two were already at home. I didn't know you wanted to go."

"Oh, I would have enjoyed it ever so much."

"But there was no room for you," exclaimed Fred.

"Oh, we could have been crowded in had you wanted us."

"Say, Terry," said Fred, turning to his chum, "what do you think of that?"

"I don't know what to think," was the reply.

"Neither do I. Say, Advocate, why the deuce don't you let us know when you wish us to do anything that we don't happen to think of?"

"Oh, had you wanted us to go you would have asked us," and Eunice looked reproachfully at him. Fred caught his breath, staggered toward Terry and fell into big arms as though in a fainting condition.

"Brace up, old man," laughed Terry, trying to stand him on his feet. "It isn't the first time that we've been accused wrongfully, and it probably won't be the last."

Just then the breakfast bell rang, and Fred straightened up, looked Eunice full in the face and asked:

"Can I have the pleasure?"

"Would it be a pleasure?" she asked in turn.

"Yes, if you'll just smile once more."

"What is there to smile at?"

"Why, your humble servant, of course."

"Oh, you feel very humble, I suppose. You ought to, anyway, for you slighted me outrageously last night."

"Great Scott, Terry, it's a suit of sackcloth and ashes for the next six months! When one thrives so hard to please everybody, and finds that he has succeeded in pleasing nobody, life loses all its charms."

"Oh, you pleased several last night." retorted Eunice. "You didn't try to please everybody at all, and I was astonished at your showing so much partiality at a time when impartiality was an imperative duty."

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"Well, I assure you, Advocate, that whatever errors I committed emanated from the head, not from the heart. Let me plead with you to smile again and not spoil the very great pleasure that I have anticipated at this great reunion."
"

Terry had led off with Marguerite hanging on his arm, and as soon as they were out of hearing of Fred and Eunice, he asked:

"What in thunder is the matter with the Advocate this morning?"

"Don't ask me, Terry. I don't believe she knows herself, but she is considerably out of sorts."

CHAPTER VII. THE CONVENTION OF THE ALUMNI

At the breakfast table the clatter of knives and forks and the hum of conversation had been going on for several minutes when a big pet cat entered the dining-room, and some of the graduates called attention to it as an old friend who was there when they were students.

"Yes. I remember him." said Fred, as he looked around to catch sight of the cat, and failing to see it ducked his head down almost under the table.

The next moment they were all started by a yowl and a tremendous cat fight was on. Every one around the table sprang from their seats, and the ladies, screamed and fled from the room. The old pet cat himself seemed to be as much astonished as any one else in the room, and fled, too; yet the fight continued nearly half a minute under the table, all the graduates trying to get a sight at them.

Professor Lambert was on the verge of scolding some of the waiters for permitting the cats to enter the breakfast room when Terry's outburst of laughter and exclamation of "That was good one, Fred." attracted his attention.

"Say, was that you, Fearnot?" Teacher Brown asked.

"Thunder! Do you take me for a cat?"

"No, but you can imitate one so perfectly as to make a cat fight its shadow."

"Why my soul, Fred," exclaimed Professor Lambert, "was that you? I forgot that you were a ventriloquist."

"Yes." laughed Fred, "I hope I haven't spoiled your appetite for breakfast."

The graduates tumbled to the racket and a roar of laughter went round the room.

Out in the corridor, where the ladies had fled, Marguerite, on hearing the first burst of laughter suspected that Fred was at the bottom of the cat fight.

"Oh. I know brother did that!"

"My!" exclaimed Eunice, "I forgot that he was a ventriloquist," and then the two girls began laughing until they became almost hysterical. They ran back into the room, the two elderly ladies following, greatly amused, yet half in doubt. They resumed their seats at the table, but the hilarity had gotten the start and was kept up all through the meal.

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Terry told several stories of how Fred had played it on the, porter and janitor of the Institution: how the Irishman was demoralized at finding a green snake in his coat pocket, and Black Pete was frightened till he almost turned white by having it flung in his face.

"Say, professor," called out one of the older graduates, "what's the matter with having these reunions quarterly instead of annually?"

"It would interfere with the business of the institution," he replied, "but you may hold them over in town once a month if you wish."

"Well, we'll make it a question for discussion when we meet in convention at eleven o'clock," remarked the alumnus who had mentioned the matter.

The breakfast over, the boys scattered about the grounds as on the previous morning, the majority of the Alumni smoking cigars and discussing the incidents that had happened since they came together. Fred and Terry remained with the two girls, who were soon surrounded by a score or so of the young men who were discussing the ovation given Miss Olcott the evening before. Every one seemed to have a compliment for the beautiful enthusiast, which was not very pleasant for Eunice to hear. She made a great effort, however to appear pleased at hearing the compliments passed upon one whom she regarded as a rival.

"She is the best mascot for a baseball team that I ever knew." remarked Fred. "She has a magnetism about her that is simply irresistible, and her greatest charm lies in her utter unselfishness. I actually believe that if she was engaged to a young man whom she loved with her whole soul, all the beautiful women in the world couldn't excite her jealousy."

"Oh, that seems incredible, Fearnot," remarked one of the young men.

"Not a bit of it. She hasn't a particle of jealousy in her entire make-up."

"I don't believe that any women ever lived who was entirely devoid of jealousy," said the other. "Miss Olcott may have the good sense and the tact to keep it concealed, while at the same time feeling the pangs of jealousy most painfully."

"Oh, you don't know the girl," laughed Fred. "It is the unanimous verdict of all who do know her that she is entirely free from jealousy which is born of selfishness."

"I think you've got it wrong there Fearnot," said Lawyer Osgood. "It is born of love, not selfishness."

"Yes, self love," assented Fred "for there are bitter jealousies where no other sort of love exists. Men are jealous and envious of each other. You remember the old story of the day the Athenians voted for the banishment of Aristides. One man who didn't know him and couldn't write went up to the honest old philosopher and asked him to write his name on the shell for him, which he handed to him.

"Why do you wish to banish Aristides?" he asked the man. "What harm has he done you?"

"No harm whatever, but I'm tired of hearing him called honest."

"There was a spirit of envy and jealousy. Now, if I was in love with a girl, I would feel insulted were she to show any jealousy, because I would regard it as a lack of confidence in me. Some people are foolish enough to try to excite the jealousy of their sweethearts; but if I loved a girl, I would cut my right hand off before I would attempt such a thing; and furthermore, I'd cut both off before I would think of marrying one who was jealous of me, as it

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would show a lack of confidence in me on her part, and where perfect confidence does not exist, perfect love is a stranger."

"Oh, you'll get all that notion out of your head as you grow older," said Osgood.

"I don't think so, as I've made it a little bit of study. I have watched the reports of divorce cases in court and find that more than seven-eighths of them were based on jealousy on the part of one or the other. Where jealousy comes in at the door, confidence, escapes through the windows, leaving misery and unhappiness to occupy the whole house."

"That's all a theory," remarked Osgood, who was a married man and the father of two children. "I have conducted divorce cases where no jealousy was involved at all."

"Unquestionably," assented Fred, "but a considerable majority of the cases do have jealousy as the starting point of the disagreement, your experience as a lawyer to the contrary notwithstanding, and if you will take a vote of all the lawyers in the state you will find that they agree with me. Now, boys, watch your girls closely, and when you find exhibitions of jealousy, look out! For there's trouble ahead of you as sure as you lead them to the altar."

During the discussion Eunice and Marguerite stood by listening, their arms around each other, the latter smiling, while Eunice had an extremely serious expression on her face.

"What do you young ladies think of it?" one of the young men asked.

"Well," said Margie, "I think that when two people love neither should do anything to make the other jealous."

"That's what I think, too," spoke up Eunice quickly.

"And I agree with you both," added Fred, "but unfortunately jealousy springs up where no just cause for it exists other than in the imagination. At the same time there are foolish people whose vanity is greater than their love, and they like to do and say things to excite jealousy, which is all wrong and ought to be severely punished."

"Were you never jealous, Fred?" Eunice asked.

"No! I don't think I ever was. If I see a fellow develop a skill and ingenuity greater than that I possess myself, instead of envying him I prefer to congratulate him, and then set to work to do my best to be as skillful and ingenious as he. I remember when I was taking sparring lessons every knock out I received was an incentive to greater attention and exertion on my part to be able to do the knock-out business myself."

"That's the point," laughed Terry. "The first time I was up against you, you knocked me out quicker than a wink and I made up my mind to learn how to do it myself and now you are only just about an inch or two ahead of me. I wasn't jealous, but, by George, I was hungry to get satisfaction."

"That's the idea," and they all laughed heartily and the crowd dispersed, as consultations were to be had before the convention of the Alumni convened. Of course Fred and Terry both were very busy, and a couple of hours passed before either of them met the two girls. By that time the faculty and the senior class of the girls high school began to arrive in carriages, having been invited by Professor Lambert to be present at the meeting of the Alumni. The Mayor of Avon and at least half a hundred prominent citizens with their wives and daughters also put in an appearance, and the scene in and about the academy was an exceedingly beautiful one. Many old acquaintances met and little groups of friends were seen walking about through the grove, and merry peals of laughter were heard from all sides. The young ladies whom Fred had rescued in a runaway accident were among the visitors, and of course he paid most devoted attention to them; but when the carriage bringing Evelyn, Mary and the two

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Wellborn sisters arrived, he, and Terry hastened to assist them to alight, and upward of a score of the Alumni put in an appearance to pay their respects to them.

When the meeting was called to order the great hall of the academy was jammed with the Alumni and friends of the institution. Professor Lambert welcomed them in an admirable speech, and stated that so far as he knew there was no particular business to transact, but they had met solely to renew acquaintances and friendship and attest their love and devotion to the institution. He gave many interesting statistics, and congratulated himself over the fact that young as the institution was it had furnished two members of Congress and at least half a score of members of the State Legislature, besides a number of others in professional life who were fast making their mark in the world. He also spoke of the strong friendship that always existed between the girls' high school and the academy.

"And you will be astonished," he added, "when I tell you that twenty-two of the Alumni of this institution have selected wives from the graduates of the girls' high school."

That announcement called forth the greatest applause that greeted the professor's remarks, and the members of the Alumni gazed admiringly at the senior class of girls who occupied seats set apart for invited guests.

"That's not to be wondered at," sang out one of the boys. "There's a lot more of us who are going to try the same thing."

That produced another wave of laughter, and caused the girls to blush furiously and giggle behind their fans.

The professor then introduced Lawyer Osgood as the oldest member of the first class that graduated at the Institution, and he made a brilliant speech which was received with uproarious applause. It was devoted mostly to the excellence of the institution and the advantage of a thorough education that could be acquired there. Other speakers followed in quick succession. each class being honored with one speaker, according to the years of their graduation. At last it came Fred's time to appear for his club, and when he arose the entire audience rose with him.

"Keep your seats my friends," he said. "Don't leave; we are not through yet." and the innocent expression on his face as he said that provoked an uproarious burst of laughter.

"I am in an unfortunate position, friends," he began. "I had to await my turn, and before it came all the good things had been said that I wanted to give utterance to. I had no chance to arrange with the other speakers to have them leave unsaid some of the things that I had been full of for a long time. Each one of them has spoken of his love of the institution and the faculty of which we are all so proud, and yet, when we speak of love, we tell a story that has been repeated since the beginning of time more than any other story that falls from the lips of a man or woman, and still it is always new. The widow who marries a half dozen times thinks that each love story that is poured into her ears is not only new, but sweeter than all the others that she heard previously and another of the same sex will smile, flirt and look unutterable things just to tempt some one to repeat the old story that she may sit trembling with the thrills that it awakens, and although it may be exactly in the same words of others she had heard, it's always new; always fresh, always thrilling, and I don't believe that those of the sterner sex are any the less susceptible; so now I'm going to turn to our old guide and preceptor, on whose head are the silver threads woven in the loom of time, and pour into his ears the story of my love for him and his institution, and each member of the faculty."

Then he began his story of love and devotion for the Institution, and it came from his lips with the melody of a sweet song. He told how he first admired and loved the scenery around Avon as far as his vision could reach.

Never was an audience so spellbound by the eloquence of a young speaker, as were those who listened to Fearnot on that memorable occasion. Frequent bursts of applause, interrupt him. Professor Lambert sat like one in a dream

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and at times tears coursed down his cheeks. From him Fred passed on to the other members of the faculty with words of love and praise accompanied by a keen analysis of personal characteristics of each. When he came to Teacher Brown he hailed him as "dear old Brown," at which the boys sprang, to their feet and cheered

He spoke of his charity for the shortcomings of the boys, his tenderness of heart, and consideration for their sorrows and troubles. Teacher Brown was utterly overcome, as were some of the boys, and tears coursed down his cheeks in spite of his efforts to conceal them.

"Now my friends, in conclusion, permit me to pay a tribute to two others whose duties lie outside of the recitation room of Avon Academy, the janitor and the porter."

The boys screamed with laughter and from that moment hilarity reigned supreme, as he proceeded to describe the good points as well as the bad ones in the two individuals, told stories about them, described their mental qualities, their superstitions and many other things that kept the audience shaking like a bowl of jelly. To the astonishment of all the boys, Fred wound up his speech without having once mentioned the Advocate. She, of course, was in the hall surrounded by many young ladies of Avon, who every moment expected to hear her name mentioned. When he sat down, she turned to her friends and exclaimed:

"Oh, I'm so glad that he didn't do what I so much feared he would!"

"Well, we are all disappointed," remarked one of the young ladies.

"So am I, but most agreeably so. I think they must have agreed among themselves not to do it, for none of them has."

"Oh, you'll catch it at the banquet to-night," said another.

"I hope not, for they made it very unpleasant for me last year."

There was one other speaker that followed Fred, a graduate of the year before. He was a brilliant young fellow and made a fine impression, and after his speech all the Alumni arose to their feet, and for nearly half an hour indulged in singing glee club songs, and then the meeting was over. The great banquet was to come off in the evening, but for nearly an hour after the adjournment, spectators mingled with the boys and discussed the speeches that had been made.

Everywhere was heard praise of Fred's address and particularly that part which mentioned the janitor and the porter. Both O'Hara and Black Pete were standing at the door listening, and two prouder individuals could not have been found in the whole country than they were as they listened. They laughed as heartily as the others, but deep down in their hearts they loved young Fearnot more than ever before in their lives.

The boys surrounded them out in the grove and had no end of fun with them.

"Boys," said Dick Duncan, addressing the little group of the Alumni out under the shade of one of the big oaks, "did you ever see Brownie so touched up before?"

"No! No!" they replied, "and he struck the old man hard, too, didn't he?"

"Yes, yes. This is 'Fred Fearnot's Day' as well as yesterday was."

CHAPTER VIII. FRED AND TERRY ACCUSED.

As soon as he could get out of the crowd, Fred went in search of Evelyn and Margie. He found them surrounded by nearly two score of the Alumni who were congratulating his sister on his account. Eunice was surrounded by a party of high school girls and another crowd of young men.

"Oh, brother," exclaimed Marguerite, as Fred elbowed his way to her side, "what a splendid speech you made!" and she threw her arms around his neck and kissed him. The boys cheered, and he turned to Evelyn with the query:

"Can't you congratulate me, too, little girl?"

"Yes, with all my heart," she exclaimed, extending her hand. He grasped it, shook it warmly, and asked:

"Isn't that rather a cold congratulation?"

"Oh, I'm no sister to you," she laughed.

"Thank heaven for that," he exclaimed, raising her hand to his lips, while the boys smiled. She blushed in spite of herself, and some one of the boys remarked:

"That's a pretty broad hint, Miss Olcott."

"Oh, he can throw hints around like a farmer sowing wheat, but really I did enjoy the speech, Fred."

"Thank you, dear," and he made a very profound bow.

"Oh, we all enjoyed it," exclaimed Marguerite. "I couldn't help crying myself when I saw the tears coursing down the Professor's face."

"I felt like it myself," he remarked, "but I knew it wouldn't do, so I shut the tears off."

"Fred, I'm trying to persuade Evelyn to dine with us over here to-day, but she won't do it."

"Well, I don't think you are the one to extend the invitation to her. I'm going to see her home myself. Where's Mary and the Misses Wellborn?"

"Oh, the boys have got them somewhere," laughed Marguerite. "If you find Terry you'll find Mary."

The boys laughed heartily at that, and began a hunt for Terry, and, sure enough, they did find him with Mary. Both the Wellborn girls had groups of admirers around them nearby. Fred got them all together; but as the young men insisted on escorting the girls over to Avon, the carriage had to return empty, as they preferred to walk. A number of young men surrounded Marguerite and prevented her from accompanying them. Fred, of course, had Evelyn leaning on his arm, and they were permitted to go along quietly without any one intruding upon them.

"Fred, how in, the world is it that none of the speakers mention the Advocate?" she asked.

"Hanged if I know. I omitted to do so myself simply because those who preceded me did; but I think she will catch it to-night at the banquet."

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"Are you going to say anything about her?"

"Well, I will if the others do. I think, though, it would be rather embarrassing for her."

"Well, I am quite sure there will be considerable disappointment if none of the speakers mentions her. She is justly entitled to it, and I think you should pay her a glowing tribute."

"Well, I will if I can."

"You can well enough if you try. I never heard you speak so well before as you did to-day, and the ladies around me where I sat thought it was the finest speech they had ever listened to. I am so glad your mother was here to hear you. I watched her while you were speaking, and I'm sure she was not only proud, but happy as a mother could be. Did you have all that written?"

"No, not the half of it. The first thing I knew I found myself being swept along by a sudden inspiration, and I spoke just as my feelings urged me. Now, tell me, are you enjoying this visit?"

"Yes, indeed; but aside from your speech to-day, I enjoyed the games on the athletic grounds most yesterday. I don't know how I came to have such a fondness for athletic sport."

"Well, do you know you captured the whole crowd of the Alumni? Your name is on the lips of every one of them, and the married ones of the older graduates are as enthusiastic admirers as the unmarried ones."

"Well, I never thought of that," she laughed, "but really I do enjoy having so many friends."

"Of course, that's natural, and I'll wager something that before you leave Avon, you'll have at least a dozen application for correspondence."

"Oh, nearly a dozen have already asked Margie to correspond with them, and several have asked me, and there's one young man that's nearly gone crazy about Mary. Both the Wellborn sisters have promised nearly a dozen young men to correspond with them, and two happier girls I never met."

"Great Scott, is that so? These reunions are great things, ain't they?"

"Yes. Both of them say they are coming back again next year."

When they reached the Hawthorne residence, Terry, who had just preceded them, called to Fred and stated that Mrs. Hawthorne had just informed him that there were two seats at the table for them.

"Well, what are you going to do about it?" Fred asked.

"Let's dine here," said Terry.

"There'll be a kick over at the academy."

"Let 'em kick. I prefer my girl to the whole gang of them over there."

"So do I," laughed Fred. "Shake, old man," and the two chums shook hands in a jolly way.

"Now, boys, you'll get into trouble at the academy," laughed Evelyn. "It may hurt the professor's feelings if you don't show up there for dinner."

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"Oh, they won't miss us in the great crowd they've got there now, and, even if they do, we'll have a good excuse."

"Why, what excuse can you put up?"

"Why, Adam's excuse about eating the apple with Eve; that the woman tempted me, and I did eat."

"Oh, you'll lay it on us, eh? That's just like old Adam."

The two boys remained for dinner at the Hawthorne residence and then went into the parlor and sang with the girls when a batch of about a dozen of the Alumni put in an appearance.

"Here they are!" they cried, when they saw Fred and Terry.

"What's the matter? Are you looking for us?" Terry asked.

"No, we were looking for the girls, for we knew if we found them, you two wouldn't be far away."

"Wise men," laughed Fred.

It turned out that the visitors had really called to see the girls, and, of course, they were made welcome. They hired carriages at the livery stables, and a crowd of them went out for a drive, spending the entire afternoon that way.

Fred, Terry, Mary and Evelyn occupied one carriage.

"Now, Fred," Evelyn asked, "I want to beg you not to play any tricks on me at the banquet. I'm not connected with the academy like the Advocate is. Say what you please about her, but leave me out"

"I don't know how it's possible," he laughed. "I'm thinking of paying a little compliment to Mary, too."

"Then I won't go," said Mary. "I couldn't stand that."

"Well, then, I'll leave that to Terry."

"Oh, I can trust him," laughed Mary. "He won't say a word about me."

"No," put in Terry, "but you can bet your life I'll be thinking about you all the time."

"Hold up, now," put in Fred, "no spooning. You and I will have a fight on hand when we show up at the academy again, slipping away to dine over in town, and spending the afternoon with these girls."

"Well, I guess I can stand it," laughed Terry. "I don't see why they should single us out for any fault finding. We all came up to enjoy ourselves just as we please."

It was near sunset when the boys returned from the ride, and then they hastened over to the academy to prepare for the great banquet in the evening. Of course, every alumnus had his dress suit with him; but before they could reach their room in the dormitory, Fred and Terry was intercepted by Teacher Brown and Marguerite.

"You two boys have gotten yourselves into trouble," said the teacher.

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"Indeed you have," laughed Marguerite. "Where in the world have you been? Even mother has been inquiring after you."

"Didn't you tell her where we were?" Fred asked.

"No, how should I know where you were?"

"Oh, you little know—nothing! You know very well that we were with Evelyn and Mary, and mother knew it, too."

"Why, you never said anything to us about it?"

"No, it wasn't necessary."

Brown laughed heartily, and remarked that the inquiry had gone all around for them during the afternoon.

"Well, Terry and I have to speak to—night, and we've been in search of inspiration."

"That'll do," said Brown, "I see the point. I don't think you will be able to persuade the Advocate to rescue you from punishment."

"Why, is she angry?"

"Really, I don't know. Haven't heard her say a word, but it's my opinion that she thinks you both have been very remiss in absenting yourselves from the academy grounds so long I want to thank you, my boy, for the kind things you said about me to—day," and Teacher Brown grasped Fred's hand, shook it warmly, and added:

"I can't say to you how much I thank you, but I felt it deeply, and shall feel grateful to you as long as I live."

"Ah, my dear friend! You will live in the hearts of all the boys who attended the academy while you were a teacher. You are one of the few teachers who remember that they have been boys themselves, and it is something that the boys appreciate. You can rest assured that none of us will ever forget you. Now, if you will excuse us, we'll go up to our rooms and don our dress suits for the evening, and, Marguerite, I hope, you have not missed me, for when I left the grounds you were surrounded by admirers, and I knew you would not lack for entertainment."

"Oh, I haven't been at all lonesome," she laughed. "Mr. Brown here has been a most devoted companion, and I have enjoyed his company ever so much."

"Good! Good! Set your cap for him. He's the best catch on the grounds to—day," and with that Fred and Terry dashed up the stairs to their room in the dormitory, and a half hour later came downstairs in evening dress.

Marguerite and the Advocate were in the cottage where they spent at least a couple of hours at their toilets, and when they appeared they were pictures of loveliness.

Fred and Terry made profound bows toward them at long range. Marguerite saw them and laughed, but not a smile appeared on the Advocate's face,

She looked at them for several minutes, and then Fred stepped behind Terry, pushed him forward, looking over his shoulder at her, until they were within a few paces of her, Marguerite laughed in spite of herself, and at last the Advocate had to smile.

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"There, Terry, look at her smile! She isn't angry," and Fred advanced toward her, saying:

"I never saw you looking so beautiful, Advocate."

"Fred, what in the world has come over you?" Eunice asked. "You went away and dined elsewhere without saying a word to any of us about it. Was that right?"

"Now, Advocate, I know of nearly a score of the boys who accepted invitations to dine with friends over in the town, and yet I've heard of no fault being found with them. Has it come to pass that I am to suffer, while others go free?"

"Let each one suffer for his own sins," returned the Advocate. "Why did you leave us?"

"To escort Evelyn and Mary over to town, which it was our duty to do, and Mrs. Hawthorne and the others insisted on our dining there, as the dinner was then waiting. It was no sin. It was not wrong, and I'm ready to discuss the constitutionality of it with the entire faculty, including yourself."

"Oh, we won't discuss it, but I do blame you for not notifying us of it before you left."

"Bless your dear heart, neither of us dreamed of dining over there. We expected to come back here; but we are going to dine here to-night, be as happy as we can, and pay our tribute to the youth and beauty of the assembly."

Just then they were joined by Mrs. Fearnot and Eunice's mother. Neither one of them said anything to Fred and Terry about their prolonged absence for they had other and weightier matters on their minds.

"Fred, what time will the girls be over?" Mrs. Fearnot asked.

"Indeed I don't know, mother; but they told us they would be over early. Dick and Joe will look after them, thus saving us the trouble of making the trip ourselves."

"Oh, that would be a lot of trouble to you, would it?" laughed Margie.

"Yes, dear, a deal of trouble. There's a lot of trouble on hand now about going over with them after the convention."

"Oh, the troubles you boys have don't amount to much," said Mrs. Fearnot.

"Look out, mother That's a reflection on the girls," returned Fred. "They are about the only troubles we have."

"Very few boys have any troubles until they begin to mingle with the girls."

"Oh, you are wrong there, Fred," laughed Terry. "I have a very lively remembrance of trouble with a slipper long before I had any inclination to chase the girls."

"Well, it was a woman's slipper, wasn't it, and In the hands of a woman, too?"

"Oh, just listen to them, now," laughed Margie "They agreed to discuss that matter before us just to escape the scolding they deserve."

"All right, have it your way," retorted Fred, "but just wait until we get you two girls into the banquet room to-night where we will have the advantage. We've got it in for the Advocate, and if we don't get even, it will be

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because we have forgotten how."

"Fred, what do you mean?" Eunice asked, with an expression of alarm on her face.

"Just what I say. You roasted me this morning, and now you are frowning, pursing your lips up at me and accusing me of about all the crimes in the catalogue. I'll have my revenge to-night. Even the worm will turn, you know, when stepped upon."

"Fred, if you say anything about me to-night in your speech to make me feel uncomfortable, I'll never forgive you."

"That's all right, Advocate, I won't sue for forgiveness, because revenge is sweet enough for me. You've spoiled a good deal of pleasure that I expected to get out of this reunion, and I intend to see if I can't pay you back in kind."

"Oh, don't you be frightened, Eunice," laughed Marguerite, "Fred wouldn't say an unkind thing of you for anything in the world, nor do I believe a single alumnus of the academy would permit him or any one else to do so."

"Oh, he won't say anything unkind, I know, but he'll make me appear and feel ridiculous, for he has an enormous capacity for such mischief."

"No I won't say an unkind word about you, Advocate, but at the time I'll get even with you."

The invited guests who were to be at the banquet now began arriving, and the ladies were dressed as if for the opera. As they entered the great hall of the academy, they were pictures of loveliness. Many of the Alumni were at the gate and about the main entrance of the hall to see and greet the ladies of their acquaintance.

By and by some one told Terry that his sister had arrived, and he and Fred hastened to meet her at the gate. Dick and Joe were assisting them out of the carriage when they reached there. They were dressed beautifully, and certainly two more beautiful girls than Evelyn and Mary would have been hard to find anywhere that evening. The two boys took charge of them, while Dick and Joe looked after the Wellborn sisters, and escorted them into the great hall where the guests were gathering waiting for the time to enter the banquet room.

CHAPTER IX. THE GREAT BANQUET.

Soon after the arrival of Evelyn and Mary, the faculty and senior class of the girls' high school arrived, and the Alumni formed two lines extending from the gate to the piazza of the academy, and stood with hats off welcoming them as they passed between the lines into the house. The girls, fifteen in number, all dressed alike, marched two by two behind their teachers. They enjoyed the reception very much, and many of them were greeted by names as they passed the boys, and when they disappeared inside a great cheer went up from the latter out in the yard.

Professor Lambert and his teachers escorted them to seats in the hall, and the boys soon after entered. It was an informal meeting, and the buzz of conversation filled the great hall. They were waiting for the hour set for the banquet. A band discoursed sweet music, and many of them secretly wished for an opportunity to dance, but the crowd was too great for that. Fred and Dick passed about through the great hall exchanging greetings with friends here and there, while Evelyn and Mary were surrounded by admirers among the students of the graduating class of that year. Others of the Alumni were among them also.

In a little while about a dozen of the best singers among the Alumni proceeded to entertain the crowd with

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selections from their many academy club songs, and for nearly an hour the audience listened and applauded. Then came the announcement that the gentlemen must secure their partners and be ready to lead them into the banquet room. It had been so arranged that enough ladies were invited, including the senior class of the high school girls, for every alumnus to have a partner. Of course, Fred and Terry went straight for Evelyn and Mary. Nearly a half hour was spent by the guests getting their seats, for everything was done deliberately and in order. The great hall was beautifully decorated, and the long tables groaned under a load of rich viands and delicacies, with mountains of flowers here and there, making the whole scene like a fairy palace.

Soft strains of music filled the room, and no one seemed disposed to speak loud enough to disturb harmony. Then the waiters proceeded to serve the guests, and for an hour or so every one was helped to whatever he or she desired.

Eunice had been escorted into the room by a very popular young man who had graduated at the academy four years before, and he was extremely attentive to her. She was seated quite a distance from Fred and Terry, who sat close together with Evelyn and Mary.

In due time the mayor of Avon arose from his place and, in a neat little speech, stated that he had been asked by the faculty of the academy to act as toast master, and that a committee of arrangements had placed in his hand a list of the toasts and speakers. He said that the Alumni of each year had suggested the names of those who were to speak for their classes. Then he read off the toast of the first class that had graduated at the academy, and Osgood was called on to respond to it. The young lawyer rose in his place, and if he surprised the audience in the convention that morning, he thrilled them with his eloquence that evening. It was a magnificent effort upon which he had spent several weeks in the preparation. It was a glowing tribute to the institution, its faculty and its great value to the youth of the country. It was highly applauded for its beautiful sentiment and the fervid strains of his oratory. There was very little humor in it, for he was not much given to expressing himself in a humorous vein. Then came a song from another member of the same class. He was followed by the speaker of the Alumni for the succeeding year, and he too made a splendid speech and quite a hit by a short but beautiful tribute to the influence of the Advocate, who was then just beginning to make her influence felt among the students of the academy, and the other speakers that followed had still more to say in that direction. The third one grouped the high school girls as another influence that had an important bearing upon the destinies of the graduates of the academy.

The next speaker who followed made another hit after getting off the speech he had prepared, by announcing that he had been informed through a source that could not be doubted that two of the high school senior girls had been captured that very day by two of the Academy Alumni.

What a sensation the announcement created! The high school girls looked at each other, their eyes and faces expressing astonishment, and every glance seemed to be an interrogation.

"Who are they? Who are they?" was whispered all around the table, and the balance of the young man's speech was scarcely listened to. Everybody wanted to know who the happy couples were. The girl seniors were blushing furiously under the gaze of the spectators, and of course nearly every one of them was suspected of being the happy one.

There was just one more speaker before Fred's time came, and he spoke about the practical side of a thorough education; how it would assist one in whatever avocation he might adopt after acquiring it. It was a sensible speech, full of thoughtful philosophy, and one that greatly pleased the faculty and all the elderly people present.

"Terry, old man," whispered Fred, "that speech has given me two or three good points, and I'm sorry I haven't got time to work them up into the shape I would like to have them."

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Just then Fred's name was announced as the next speaker, and as soon as it was done the cheering began by the men and the waving of handkerchiefs by the ladies. He arose to his feet and stood there two or three minutes waiting for the noise to subside. He was standing right alongside of Evelyn, who was on his right, and at his left sat one of the young ladies, a high school graduate, whose life he had saved in a runaway accident on Main street in Avon two years before, while he was a student at the academy.

When the noise subsided he still remained silent for a couple of minutes, looking up and down the length of the two tables, where every face was turned toward him.

"Friends," he said, "I fear you have frightened my speech out of me. Never until this moment did I ever feel my utter inability to find words in which to say that which is in my heart to say to you. My tongue fails to keep pace with the thoughts that flash through my mind. Yet in the presence of so much youth, beauty and wisdom, one should not lack for words to express his delight in finding himself in such a situation. They will come to me in time, but the hours have crept on until there is a limit which must be respected."

"Never mind about the limit," exclaimed Professor Lambert "Take your time, my boy."

"Thank you. Time is not mine. It's other people's time that I am taking but old Father Time waits for no man. It is passing and the panorama of life is unfolding itself before us all. With me, it begins at the time when I first appeared at the academy and as it rolls by I recall the faces and the voices of loved companions with whom I romped and played, got into mischief through thoughtless violations of rules and regulations, and then humbly presented myself to the beloved Advocate for her intercessions in my behalf."

The wild cheering that followed and Eunice's blushes was a memorable scene. When the noise subsided, he went on picturing the panorama with a series of word paintings that nearly every one present, particularly the Alumni, could see as though there were magnificent pictures hanging on the walls before them. It was an awakening of recollections that were dear to all the boys, and in each one the Advocate figured as an angel of mercy and forgiveness.

From that theme he branched off into another, addressing himself particularly to the Alumni of the academy.

"It is our Alma Mater," he exclaimed, "to which we will turn as the years roll by with a loving devotion equaled only by the Mohammedans' love for their holy city, Mecca. For more than a thousand years the Mohammedans all over the world have struggled to accumulate means by which they can make at least one pilgrimage to the tomb of their prophet in the Holy City. So it will be with us as the years go by, we will long to go on a pilgrimage to Avon, the home of our loved Alma Mater, and when its founder shall have passed away to sleep with his fathers, we shall come to his tomb and do reverence to his genius, his learning, his grand humanity, with the devotions of Mohammedans around the tomb of Mahomet; and these walls then grown gray with age, shall hear the trembling voices of old men paying tribute to the spirit of the Institutions where they first received the armor that enabled them to fight the battles of life; and as the eyes of many of the Alumni of this Institution have looked longingly across the river to that other institution on the hills beyond, so will their sons gaze in the same direction with the same longing, and some of them will swim the river, if the bridge has been swept away, in quest of the treasure more precious to man than all the gems that are dug from the bosom of the earth. I wonder if it is a design of Providence that the two institutions should be so near together? At any rate it seems to be the design of a little god whom we know by the name of Cupid. He's little, but, oh, how he can move the hearts of men and women! One of the speakers who preceded me rejoices that he captured one of the treasures of that institution, and now his life is one sweet song. Other hearts besides his are tuning up to sing the same sweet song, for we've been told that two of them today have begun resining the bow for a sweet accompaniment for the march to the altar I greatly suspect that I know who they are, and I am prepared to sing with them. for I am so mentally and physically constituted that I am ever ready to be happy when others are so. It is not altogether true, as a famous poetess wrote:

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'Laugh, and the world laughs with you, Weep, and you weep alone,'

for if I find my friend in tears, if I can't dry them for him, I will mingle my tears with his; for that bond of sympathy is worthless which is only strong when prosperity and hilarity reign. Give me the friendship of a man. the grasp of whose hand sends an electric thrill of sympathy through my entire being in the hour of trouble, rather than the joyous handshake that comes to me only in the clay of prosperity."

It was a speech that thrilled old and young alike. Many a time a lofty sentiment called forth expressions of approval from those over whose heads weary years had passed and left behind the inevitable trail of time. When he sat down he received a perfect ovation, and many minutes passed before the next speaker was announced, who was Terry Olcott who was as full of humor as it was possible for any human being to be.

Terry kept them in roars of laughter for fifteen minutes. He was an inimitable story-teller and his mastery of Dutch, Irish and negro vernacular enabled him to make a hit in whatever directions he turned.

Both Mary and Evelyn became almost hysterical as they listened. He could take an old worn-out chestnut, dress it up anew in a way that would conceal its age, giving it a freshness almost indescribable. The principal of the girls' high school nearly fell off his seat, while Professor Lambert laughed till the tears ran down his checks. He too paid a tribute to the Advocate and at times indulged in pathos that brought tears to the eyes of many.

After him came more songs, and the great reunion ended with the banquet. As the participants returned to the great recitation hall the leave-taking began, and though it was near midnight, at least an hour was spent in exchanging farewells among both sexes.

The principal of the girls' high school remained till the last in order to give the boys a chance to pay their respects to and bid good-by to the girls. The Inquiry, however, for the identity of the seniors who had that day become engaged kept going around. Each one of the girls seemed to be as anxious as any of the others to find out the identity of their fortunate companions. As Fred had claimed that he knew who they were, he was besieged by many of them.

"Oh, no! Oh, no!" he laughed, "not for my good right arm would I give the secret away."

"Fred, do you really know?" Evelyn asked.

"I think I do," he replied, "and after they are married, I'll tell you who they are."

"Oh, pshaw!"

"Well, look here, now, old girl, if you were engaged, you'd be very angry if one who had found out the secret would give it publicity before you were ready for the public to know it. Let the bride herself be the first to announce it. I certainly would not be the one to do so."

Old men and elderly ladies before leaving came to Fred, shook hands with him and congratulated him on his speech that evening, and he was satisfied that he had done even better than he had expected.

Eunice came to him leaning on the arm of the young man who had escorted her to the table, extended her hand to him, smiled and said:

"Fred, I forgive you everything."

"Bless you, Advocate! Your heart wouldn't let you bear malice if your head wanted to."

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"When are you going to return home?" she asked.

"I don't know. I am in no hurry to tear myself away. Mother and Margie are here, and I shall be guided entirely by their wishes."

"Oh, they are not going to leave for some time yet."

"Neither will I then. Terry and I will hang around and may probably raid some of the watermelon patches in the vicinity for the sake of old times. I saw Farmer Andrews yesterday, and he told me that his melons were ripening fast, and that whenever Terry, Dick, Joe and myself wanted to have a few of them all we had to do was to put in an appearance at his home; we told him that we would certainly do so after we recovered from the effects of this banquet to-night.

CHAPTER X. CONCLUSION.

The next day there was a great crowd at the railway station at Avon to see the departing Alumni off to their respective homes. They lived in all parts of the State, and some beyond its borders. The professor and all the faculty of the academy were present, including the Advocate and her mother. The entire senior class of the girls' high school came down in carriages, and again the inquiry passed around as to who the two engaged couple were.

"Terry, old fellow," sang out one of the Alumni, "you are going to hang on a while longer here, are you?"

"Yes. It's about the hardest place to get away from I ever was in."

"How long are you going to stay, Fred?" another asked.

"Just waiting on my mother," he replied, "who was never in Avon before."

"No waiting on your girl, eh?"

"Yes, I wait on her all the time, and the fact is, I'm waiting for her."

"Just what I suspected," and he looked at Evelyn, who laughed and remarked:

"Fred will say anything, you know. He can say more and mean less than any of you academy boys."

"Well, whatever he says, he says well."

"Oh, yes, he's a good talker, and we all like to listen to him,"

After the train moved out the professor and his wife turned to Fred, Terry, Dick and Joe and invited them and the young ladies to make their homes over at the academy during the remainder of their stay in Avon.

"It's better," added the professor, "that you should all be together, and now that the others have gone, we have ample room for your entertainment."

"Thank you, professor," said Fred, "we'll go back to the house and consult the ladies about it. I believe that Tom and his wife are going to leave in a day or two, and the Misses Wellborn will go with them as far as Fredonia, where they will take the train for Ashton, where they are summering."

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The professor's party returned to the academy, while Fred and Terry accompanied the girls back to the Hawthorne residence, where they remained the greater part of the day resting quietly from the fatigue of the convention and the banquet of the evening before.

"I'm glad it's all over with, Terry," remarked Fred, as they sat on the piazza talking over the incidents of the great reunion.

So am I. It has been a splendid advertisement for the academy, and I think the professor is about the happiest man in the State to-day."

"No doubt of that," assented Fred. "it hasn't cost him a cent less than a thousand dollars."

"A thousand dollars wouldn't cover it, Fred," said Terry. "But it will be worth ten thousand dollars to him in the future. He has a good head for business, and he knows as much about advertising as the famous showman Barnum did."

After a little more talk they decided that it was best for them to accept the professor's invitation to go over to the academy and be his guests during the remainder of their stay in Avon. Evelyn insisted that it was Fred's duty to keep with his mother and sister as much as possible and see that they enjoyed their visit.

"But really," she added, "I think that the rest of us should go home because the invitation extended to us was merely on your account."

"Oh, drop that now," said Fred, "the professor and his wife think just as much of Terry as they do of me or any other student, and if you and Terry and Mary don't go over, I won't either."

"Well, we leave to-morrow," said Tom Tipps, "and the Misses Wellborn will go with us."

"Well I'm sorry you break up the party," returned Fred.

"We'll stay here then until you and the ladies leave. Then Terry and I will take the girls over to the academy. Dick, what are you and Joe going to do?"

"Just as we please," said Dick. "We'll go over to the academy for a few days to relieve you and Terry of the burden of four young ladies."

"Good!" laughed Terry. "I like a fellow that sticks to his friends."

"See here," said Fred, "I suggest that we all go over to the academy this evening and have a jolly time, return here, see Tom and the ladies off to-morrow and then move over and stay there until we are fired out."

The suggestion was acted upon, and that evening after tea, the entire party went over to the academy where they spent several hours singing songs and telling stories.

Tom Tipp and his wife and the two Wellborn girls then took leave of the professor's family, Mrs. Fearnot and Margie, after which they all returned to the Hawthorne residence.

The next morning Tom and his party left, and an hour or two later the two girls and four boys moved to the academy to prolong their visit to the professor's family.

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"Now, there's four pair of us," laughed Fred. "and we ought to have a good time while we are together. I suggest that every morning we draw straws to settle the question as to which of the girls we shall have for the day."

"Why, what an idea," exclaimed Marguerite.

"Well, it's the only way to prevent us boys from fighting," laughed Terry. "We've got sporting blood enough in us to stand by the decision of the straws for twenty-four hours."

"I think it's a good idea," laughed Evelyn, and of course the girls agreed to it.

They remained together in a bunch pretty much the whole day, and spent the evening singing and chatting till a late hour. On the following morning the straws were drawn to settle the question of escorts for the day, and the result was extremely laughable. Both Fred and Terry drew their own sisters for partners.

"Say, let's try this over," suggested Terry. "This isn't just in accordance with the fitness of things."

Amid a great deal of laughter the straws were drawn again, when Fred won Eunice, Dick secured Evelyn, Terry had Margie, while Joe was to take charge of Mary.

"Now, that's just as it ought to be," said Terry.

It was extremely satisfactory to the Advocate, who greatly feared that she had seriously blundered the day before, after listening to Fred's remarks about the jealousies of people. She had heard him declare that jealousy was a detestable trait, and that he would cut off both his hands rather than marry a jealous-hearted girl. She had resolved never to exhibit any jealousy again in his presence, even though she might be almost consumed by it.

Fred never found her so pleasant before, and he exerted himself to his utmost to entertain her, but adroitly managed to keep them all pretty much together in order to avoid any tendency toward spooning.

In the afternoon he suggested that they all go down to the boathouse and row up to the Andrews farm to indulge in a feast of watermelon. The suggestion was hailed with delight, and they hurried down to the boathouse where each of the boys procured a boat and put his girl into it.

"Now, girls," called out Fred, "these are racing sculls, you know, so you must sit perfectly still, or overboard you'll go. They are the easiest things capsized of anything on the water."

"I'm very much afraid of them," remarked Eunice. "I think it would be better if we either walked or went up in carriages."

"Oh, we'll stick to the boat," said Fred, and they managed to get the girls seated in the boats and started off up the river. They reached the Andrews place after a brisk row, and were welcomed by the family of the old farmer.

There was a great feast of melons, and the party remained there for two or three hours, after which they started back on their return to the academy. When within about a hundred yards of the boathouse, Evelyn called to Eunice. The latter in trying to turn around so as to look at her, capsized the boat and she and Fred were in the water. The other girls screamed, when Evelyn and Dick were upset.

Of course the two boys were excellent swimmers, as was Evelyn also; but Eunice couldn't swim and she came within an ace of drowning Fred, who of course was doing his utmost to swim ashore with her. It was an utter impossibility to climb into the little boat. Evelyn swam ashore, telling Dick to secure the boat as she could swim like a fish. Dick, however, gallantly kept alongside of her till they reached the river bank a little above the

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boathouse, while Fred was exerting himself trying to persuade Eunice to keep still and let him get her ashore. She was so terribly frightened, however, that she clutched him around the neck with both arms, greatly impeding his efforts to save her. He managed to reach the shore with her, however, where Joe Jencks, after landing Mary, pulled her out of the water. She fainted dead away, and the girls had a lot of trouble bringing her to.

Evelyn, though, dripping wet, laughed at the accident, and said she didn't mind it at all. She devoted herself to looking after Eunice, who, when she came to, threw her arms around Fred's neck, and called him her savior.

"That's right," laughed Evelyn, "he saved me several times, and I kissed him for all I was worth. The rascal likes it. I believe he turned the boat over just for the very purpose of playing the hero."

"Did Dick turn the boat over for you?" snapped Eunice.

"No, I did it myself, just to keep you company. I knew I could swim out."

"Yes," laughed Dick, "she can swim like a duck. I tried to hug her in the water but she wouldn't allow it, while you were nearly choking Fred to death."

Oh, but Eunice was mad! Dick and Evelyn were disposed to destroy the romance of the rescue.

"Say, Evelyn, you and Dick shut up now. Just because you two can swim is no reason why you should make light of such a serious matter. It was a new experience for the Advocate, who can't swim, and I tell you it was a pretty hard effort on my part to save her. I made up my mind if I couldn't get her out alive, I'd go to the bottom with her."

"Oh, you would have to," retorted Evelyn, "judging from the way she held on to you, it was evident that if she couldn't get out, you shouldn't."

"Oh, you did the very same thing once, old girl, out at the lake, too," retorted Fred, "before you learned how to swim, and I had the mark of arms around my neck for a week afterward. Terry, run up to the house, get the carriage and have it sent down here for these two half-drowned girls."

Terry started off, but before the carriage could get there, the two mothers, Mrs. Lambert and Mrs. Fearnot, came running down to the boathouse frightened almost to death.

"All's well that ends well," laughed Fred. "There's nobody hurt, and none of the sweetness of either girl has been dissolved by the water."