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COMPANION LIBRARY.
NUMBER EIGHTEEN**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649324248

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The Companion Library.

Number Eighteen.

SELECTIONS

From The Youth's Companion.

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Boston, Mass.

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"I knew we should do it."

The Waumbek Boat-Race.

We did not pay much attention to athletics at Waumbek Institute. We could not afford it. Most of us came from homes where a dollar must go a long way, and some of us even earned our own dollars as we went along. When a student pays his own way, he does not spend much of what he earns in preparing for college races.

Of course we were interested in them and knew who were likely to win. We even had a baseball nine of our own, but it was always beaten in the annual match with the town boys. Occasionally the two lower classes would get up a rowing match, and we upper-class men would go down to the boat-house and applaud the winners, but we did not have a regular crew.

So you may judge of our dismay when we of the senior class received a challenge from the Seniors of St. Andrews for a boat-race. St. Andrews is a fashionable school of rich men's sons from all over the country. The St. Andrews boys are devoted to athletics, but I do not know that their scholarship is higher than Waumbek's. If they had sent us a challenge to a debate, or for a contest in any scholastic matter, we should have met them fair-handed. But a boat-race!

We called a class-meeting at once. All knew that we could not row them. The question was, how to get out of it with least discredit to ourselves. We appointed a committee to draft a letter declining the challenge.

It was while the members of the committee were out in a corner with their pencils in their hands and their heads down that Billy Peters rose. Billy is a first-rate fellow, but he has more muscle than head, so we thought then.

"I should like to ask," said he, "why we've got to decline this challenge? What's the reason we can't accept it and beat them?"

"We can accept the challenge and be beaten," said Hendricks, the only fellow in the class who knew a straw about rowing. "If you want to furnish money for a new boat and training-table and all the other expenses just to see the St. Andrews fellows row us out of sight, why, go ahead."

"Why can't we row them out of sight?" asked Peters.

"Because we can't!" declared Hendricks, flatly. "They have a good shell to row and men trained to row it. We have nothing here except some scows and a river. They might as well send the challenge to the girls in town as to us."

"I don't think," said Billy, who, when he advanced an idea, stood by it, "if they had sent it to the girls, the girls would sneak out without even trying."

"Well," said Hendricks, by way of a poser, "how much will you contribute toward a shell?"

Billy searched gravely in all his pockets, and pulled out various things that were not money; but the cash was only fifteen cents. "You're quite welcome to that," he remarked, with a grand air.

Just then Wilkins came in. Wilkins is a queer fellow, who leads the school easily in classics, but has to work for dear life to pass in mathematics. He is a long-legged fellow, a trifle stooping, and is just raising a mustache. He seldom attends class-meetings, and we were surprised when he came in. But when he heard what was going on, he rose up a little straighter than usual.

"If this class declines a challenge from St. Andrews for fear of being beaten," he declared, "I shall at once leave this institution."

Some of the boys laughed, but most of us rose to the solemnity in Wilkins's demeanor. He was so much in earnest that the matter no longer appeared trivial. Wilkins had hardly taken his seat before Billy Peters was on his feet again.

"Old Wilkie is right!" he shouted. "If we can't beat them, we can at least try."

The class now became excited. All began to talk at once.

In the midst of it all Wilkins slowly stretched himself up again.

"Mr. President!" called he, twisting his mustache a little, as he was trying to learn to do when he wanted to be impressive. Hendricks was president, though he had forgotten all about it till he heard the solemn call of Wilkins.

"Mr. Wilkins," announced he, as soon as he could pull his wits together. "Class come to order!" he shouted, rapping on the back of a chair. "Mr. Wilkins has the floor."

"I don't believe in crying before you're hurt," went on Wilkins. "I therefore move you, Mr. President, that this challenge be accepted; that a crew be selected forthwith; that a boat be ordered; that a training-table be hired, and that the crew begin practice at once."

"Is that all?" asked Hendricks, with a sneer; but Billy Peters promptly seconded the motion.

"It is moved and seconded," said Hendricks, "that this challenge be accepted; that a crew be selected; that a boat be ordered; that a training-table be hired, and that the crew begin practice at once. Remarks are now in order."

To his surprise no one said a word. He had to go on.

"All in favor of this little motion will please raise their—rise," he substituted.

Billy Peters had been busily whispering to those nearest him, and although he was at the foot of the class in everything except physics, he evidently understood wirepulling. When Hendricks paused, Billy punched two or three fellows suggestively and rose. Those he had punched got up rather slowly.

But Wilkins pulled out his long legs and rose up with such an air of its being the only right thing on earth to do, that the rest of us fellows could not sit still. By the time he got his head well up into the air and was twisting his mustache, everybody was moving, for no one wanted to be the last one up.

"Well!" gasped Hendricks. "You're the biggest set of idiots—" Then he remembered his duties as president, and declared the motion carried.

In an instant the class was in an uproar. But Billy Peters insisted that the whole matter was simple enough; and Wilkins, who until then had had a great contempt for Billy's scholarship, now sat at his feet in great respect, as Billy's quick mind worked out schemes for raising money.

It resulted in Wilkins and Peters going around with a subscription paper; and as all the Waumbek people became greatly interested at once, and each gave something, the money was raised very soon.

Hendricks was not enthusiastic, but he was a good fellow; and as he was the only one of us all who had ever pulled in a shell, we made him captain.

He pulled stroke. Logan, a big, healthy chap, with muscles developed by woodchopping, pulled second. I was third, and Billy Peters was fourth.

You should have seen Wilkins's face when it was settled.

"Why, Wilkie!" laughed Hendricks. "You didn't want to pull, did you? Why, just look at your arm!"

Wilkins held out a member that looked like a jointed rod. Hendricks laid his fingers on the place where the biceps ought to be and wasn't. Then he bared his own arm; and Wilkins almost shed tears at the difference. He looked with envy at Billy Peters, and I really think that at that minute he would gladly have exchanged places with him, rank and all.

One of the professors undertook to oversee our training-table. We had plenty of good, plain food — beef, bread and oatmeal. We easily went without pies, cake and tobacco.

"No candy?" asked Billy, anxiously. He had the sweetest tooth in Waumbek.

"No, indeed!" ordered the professor.

"I'll never be able to get past Fountain's the days he puts out fresh creams," Billy confessed.

"Yes, you will!" said Wilkins, grimly. "I'll walk down with you every day, to make sure," and although Billy groaned, Wilkins was as good as his word. Billy said afterward that he did not get as much as a peppermint until after the race.