

**THE BOYS OF
SPRINGDALE, OR, THE
STRENGTH OF PATIENCE**

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The boys of Springdale, or, The strength of patience by Robert Richardson

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ROBERT RICHARDSON

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BY

ROBERT RICHARDSON, B.A.

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THE BOYS OF SPRINGDALE.



CHAPTER I.

IN THE PLAYGROUND.

IT was between three and four o'clock on a bright afternoon in May. In the playground of Springdale House a group of schoolboys was collected beneath an old elm tree. School was over for the day, and the boys were preparing for a game of cricket. Before at once leaving the playground this afternoon, however, they had to consult about getting a new ball, their present one being nearly worn out. George Curtiss was the first to speak. He was one of the oldest of the boys, about thirteen years of age, and took the lead among his schoolmates in all matters of sport and amusement. He

was a handsome boy, with dark quick eyes and dark hair, a fine colour, and an active, graceful figure.

'We want a new ball badly,' said George, 'and the sooner we get one the better, for I don't think the old one will last two days longer. I was at Pendrill's yesterday, and I saw a fine new lot he's just got in, which he's selling at four shillings a-piece. Now there are just twelve of us boarders, you know, and if we each give fourpence, we shall make up the exact sum. What do you say, boys?'

George's proposal met with general consent, and was followed by cries of 'Agreed' and 'All right' from the rest.

'Look here, though,' said one boy; 'if you're all going to pay at once, I don't see how I can join. I've only got twopence in the world, and I shan't have any more money for a fortnight, till I get some from home. But I expect my aunt to send me half a crown then.'

The speaker's name was Tommy Trent. He was a short, rather stout boy, with a round, freckled face, and a comical little nose. He had rough, frizzly hair, that looked as if no amount of combing or brushing could reduce it to order. His collar and necktie were creased

and rumped, and his clothes generally somewhat untidy. As he spoke, Tommy took from his trousers pocket two pennies, and holding them out before him in his right hand, looked at them in a reflecting sort of way, with his brows knitted, and a doleful expression on his face that made the other boys burst out laughing.

'It isn't much to go for a fortnight on,' continued Tommy; 'and what shall I do if I have to give even that. By the by, too, now I think of it, I owe a penny to Mrs. Tucker for almond-rock. That leaves me one penny. A penny a fortnight, how much a day? It would take a clever chap at arithmetic to work out that sum.'

'You're always running short of pocket-money,' said Willie Norton, a boy with a bright face and sparkling blue eyes; 'and yet you get as much as any of the rest of us. I think you must spend more at Mrs. Tucker's shop.'

'I won't have much to spend for some time to come, at any rate,' replied Tommy. 'Fancy having to go fourteen days without a single apple or a mouthful of hard-bake? I don't know how any of you would like that.'

'I wouldn't get into debt, anyhow,' said Willie, 'especially for sweets and apples.'

'Well, never mind that now,' said George Curtiss. 'Look here, Tommy, I'll lend you fourpence till you get your next pocket-money.'

'Thank you, old fellow,' said Tommy. 'I'll do as much for you some day.'

Tommy felt greatly relieved. He tossed his pennies into the air, caught them again, and returned them with much satisfaction to his pocket.

'The next thing is,' continued George, 'to choose some one to keep the money and buy the ball.'

The boys agreed to choose George himself for this purpose.

'Very well,' said he. 'But perhaps it would be better that there should be two of us, and we can go to the town to-morrow afternoon.'

Willie Norton was the one fixed upon as George's partner in the matter of choosing the new ball.

'Those of us who have any money had better pay now, I think,' said Willie.

Most of the boys had the required sum in their pockets, and those that had not ran back to the house to fetch it from their boxes or