

# PENROD

By BOOTH TARKINGTON

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Penrod brought forth the bag, purchased on the way at a drug store and till this moment unopened, which expressed in a word the depth of his sentiment for Marjorie. It contained an abundant 15 cents' worth of lemon drops, jawbreakers, licorice sticks, cinnamon drops and shopworn chocolate creams.

"Take all you want," he said, with abundant generosity.

"Why, Penrod Schofield," exclaimed the wholly thawed damsel, "you nice boy!"

"Oh, that's nothing," he returned airily. "I got a good deal of money nowadays."

"Where from?"

"Oh, just around." With a cautious gesture he offered a jaw breaker to Mitty-Mitch, who snatched it indignantly and set about its absorption without delay.

"Can you play on that?" asked Marjorie, with some difficulty, her cheeks being rather too hilly for conversation.

"Want to hear me?"

She nodded, her eyes sweet with anticipation.

This was what he had come for. He threw back his head, lifted his eyes dreamily, as if he had seen real music. Then, with a sudden, startled expression, he turned to produce a wonderful calisthenic noise which was the instrument's great charm. But the attention evoked a long wail which was at once drowned in another one.

"Ow! Owowow! Wovohab! Wavowow!" shrieked Mitty-Mitch and the accordion together.

Mitty-Mitch, to emphasize his disapproval of the accordion, opening his mouth still wider, lost therefore from the jaw breaker, which rolled in the dust. Weeping, he stooped to retrieve it, and Marjorie, to prevent him, hastily set her foot upon it. Penrod offered another jaw breaker, but Mitty-Mitch struck it from his hand, desiring the former, which had convinced him of his weakness.

Marjorie moved inadvertently, whereupon Mitty-Mitch pounced upon the remains of his jaw breaker and restored it, with acclamations, to his mouth. She sister, uttering a cry of horror, sprang to the rescue, assisted by Penrod, whom she prevailed upon to hold Mitty-Mitch's mouth open while she patted.

This delicate operation being completed and Penrod's right thumb severely bitten, Mitty-Mitch closed his eyes tightly, stamped, squealed, bellowed, wrung his hands and then, unexpectedly, kicked Penrod again.

Penrod put a hand in his pocket and drew forth a copper two cent piece, large, round and fairly bright.

He gave it to Mitty-Mitch.

Mitty-Mitch immediately stopped crying and gazed upon his benefactor with the eyes of a dog.

This world!

Thereafter did Penrod—with complete approval from Mitty-Mitch—play the accordion for his lady to his heart's content, and here, never had he so soon upon her. Never had she let him feel so close to her before. They strolled up and down upon the sidewalk, talking, one thought between them, and soon she had learned to play the accordion almost as well as he. So passed a happy hour, which the town king knew of Anjou would have envied them, while Mitty-Mitch made friends with Duke, romped about his sister and her sister, and clung to the hand of the latter, at intervals, with fondest affection and trust.

The noon whistles failed to disturb the little Anjou. Only the sound of Mrs. Jones' voice for the third time summoning Marjorie and Mitty-Mitch to lunch—sent Penrod on his homeward way.

"I could come back this afternoon," he said in parting.

"I'm not going to be here. I'm going to Baby Rosedale's party."

Penrod looked blank, as she intended he should. Having thus satisfied her heart, she added:

"There aren't going to be any boys there."

He was instantly radiant again.

"Marjorie!"

"Hm!"

"Do you wish I was going to be there?"

She looked shy and turned away her head.

"Marjorie Jones!" (This was a voice from some one.)

"How many more times shall I have to call you?"

Marjorie moved away, her face still hidden from Penrod.

"Do you?"

At the gate she turned quickly to ward him and said over her shoulder, all in a breath: "Yes, come again to-morrow morning and I'll be on the corner. Bring your 'cordion!"

And she ran into the house, Mitty-Mitch waving a loving hand to the boy on the sidewalk until the front door

## CHAPTER XII. The Inner Boy.

PENROD went home in splendor, pretending that he and Duke were a long procession, and he made enough noise to render the auricular part of the illusion perfect. His own family was already at the lunch table when he arrived, and the parade halted only at the door of the dining room.

"Oh, something!" shouted Mr. Schofield, clapping his bilious brow with both hands. "Stop that noise! Isn't it awful enough for you to sing? Sit down! Now with that thing on! Take that green rope off your shoulder! Now take that thing out of the dining room and throw it in the ashcan! Where did you get it?"

"Where did I get what, papa?" asked Penrod meekly, depositing the accordion in the hall just outside the dining room door.

"That da—that third hand concert!"

"It's a 'cordion," said Penrod, taking his place at the table and noting that both Margaret and Robert Williams (who happened to be a guest) were growing red.

"I don't care what you call it," said Mr. Schofield irritably. "I want to know where you got it."

Penrod's eyes met Margaret's. Here had a strained expression. She very slightly shook her head. Penrod sent Mr. Williams a grateful look and might have been started if he could have seen himself in a mirror at that moment, for he regarded Mitty-Mitch with concealed but vigorous aversion and the resemblance would have horrified him.

"A man gave it to me," he answered gently and was rewarded by the visibly regained ease of his patron's manner, while Margaret leaned back in her chair and looked at her brother with real devotion.

"I should think he'd have been glad to," said Mr. Schofield. "Who was he?"

"Sir!" In spite of the candy which he had consumed in company with Marjorie and Mitty-Mitch Penrod had begun to eat lobster croquettes earnestly.

"Who was he?"

"Who do you mean, papa?"

"The man that gave you that ghastly thing!"

"Yes, sir, a man gave it to me."

"I say, Who was he?" shouted Mr. Schofield.

"Well, I was just walking alone, and the man came up to me. It was right down in front of Colgate's, where most of the paint's rubbed off the fence."

"Penrod!" The father used his most dangerous tone.

"Sir!"

"Who was the man that gave you the concertina?"

"I don't know. I was walking alone."

"You never saw him before?"

"No, sir. I was just walking."

"That will do," said Mr. Schofield, rising. "I suppose every family has its secret enemies and this was one of ours. I must ask to be excused."

With that he went out crossly, stopping in the hall a moment before stepping beyond hearing. And after lunch Penrod sought in vain for his accordion. He even searched the library, where his father sat reading, though upon inquiry, Penrod explained that he was looking for a misplaced school book. He thought he ought to study a little every day, he said, even during vacation time. Much pleased, Mr. Schofield rose and joined the search, finding the missing work on mathematics with singular ease—which cost him precisely the price of the book the following September.

Penrod separated to study in the back yard. There, after a cautious survey of the neighborhood, he managed to dislodge the iron cover of the cistern and dropped the arithmetic within. A fine splash rewarded his listening ear. Thus assured that when he looked for that book again no one would find it for him, he replaced the cover and he took himself pensively to the highway, discouraging Duke from following by repeated volleys of stones, some imaginary and others all too real.

Arrived upon the populous and festive scene of the dog and pony show, he first turned his attention to the brightly decorated booths which surrounded the tent. The cries of the paint vendors, of the popcorn men, of the toy balloon sellers, the stirring music of the band, playing before the performance to attract a crowd; the shouting of excited children and the barking of the dogs within the tent, all sounded exhilaratingly in Penrod's ears and set his blood a-tingle. Nevertheless he did not squander his money or fling it to the winds in one grand spree. Instead, he began cautiously with the purchase of an extraordinarily large pickle, which he obtained from an aged cresser for his old cent, too obvious a bargain to be missed. At an adjacent stand he bought a glass of raspberry lemonade (so alleged) and sipped it as he ate the pickle. He left nothing of either.

Next he entered a small restaurant tent and for a modest nickel was supplied with a fork and a box of sardines, previously opened, it is true, but more than half full. He consumed the sardines utterly, but left the tin box and the fork, after which he indulged in an inexpensive half pint of lukewarm cider at one of the open booths. Ming in hand, a gentle glow radiating toward his surface from various centers of activity deep inside him, he passed for breath, and the cool, sweet cadences of the watermelon man fell delectably upon his ear.

"Ice cole watermelon; ice cole watermelon!"

meant. The biggest s-s or ice cole, ripe, red, ice cole, is a rare; the biggest slice of ice cole watermelon ever cut by the hand of man! Buy our ice cole watermelon!"

Penrod, having drained the last drop of cider, complied with the watermelon man's luscious entreaty and received a round slice of the fruit, magnificent in circumference and something over an inch in thickness. Leaving only the really dangerous part of the rind behind him, he wandered away from the vicinity of the watermelon man and supplied himself with a bag of peanuts, which, with the expenditure of a dime for admission, left a quarter still warm in his pocket. However, he managed to "break" the coin at a stand inside the tent, where a shrew, oblong paper box of popcorn was handed him with 20 cents change. The box was too large to go into his pocket, but having seated himself among some wistful Polish children he placed it in his lap and devoured the contents at leisure during the performance. The popcorn was heavily larded with partially melted chocolate, and Penrod sandwiched mouthfuls of peanuts with gobs of this mass until the peanuts were all gone. After that he ate with less avidity, a sense almost of satiety beginning to manifest itself to him, and it was not until the close of the performance that he disposed of the last morsel.

He descended a little heavily to the outflowing crowd in the arena and bought a caterwauling toy balloon, but showed no great enthusiasm in manipulating it. Near the exit as he came out was a hot waffle stand which he had overlooked, and a sense of duty obliged him to consume the three waffles, thickly powdered with sugar, which the waffle man cooked for him upon command.

They left a hotbit taste in his mouth; they had not been quite up to his anticipation. Indeed, and it was with a sense of relief that he turned to the hokey-pokey cart which stood close at hand, laden with square slabs of Neapolitan ice cream wrapped in paper. He thought the ice cream would be cooling, but somehow it felt short of the desired effect and left a peculiar savor in his throat.

He walked away, too languid to blow his balloon, and passed a fresh taffy booth with strange indifference. A bare armed man was manipulating the taffy over a book, pulling a great white mass to the desired stage of "candy-like," but Penrod did not pause to watch the operation. In fact, he averted his eyes (which were slightly glazed) in passing. He did not analyze his motives. Simply he was conscious that he preferred not to look at the mass of taffy.

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