

THE WHISTLING MOTHER

all right and answered it. And that—yes, it was actually the only minute she gave me that evening that tried my pluck. She began to talk in the nicest, most matter-of-fact way in the world. Not too awfully cheerful, you know, overdoing it, but just as if I'd come home for the summer vacation, and there was all the time anybody needed to talk things over. And she kept that up. The only thing that marked the difference was that her hand was in mine all the time we sat there—but that was nothing new, either, and didn't break me up at all. Maybe you could imagine how grateful I was to her. Good Lord—what if I'd had to face a mother like Hoofy Gilbert's! What a chance to put a fellow on the grill and keep him there—his last evening at home! No wonder Hoofy had dreaded to go.