

THE HOPE OF HADDON HALL

For the first time in the history of Haddon Hall the interscholastic field and track sports were to be held on its athletic field. In previous years Gramercy School, Oak Ridge Seminary and the rest of the big institutions of learning had claimed that honor, and with reason, too, for their athletic fields were larger and more finely kept, and, besides, they had sent the best teams to the meet year after year. As the most important members of the interscholastic league of schools in this Western State they had claimed the honor, and the records made on their tracks had nearly rivaled those of the big Eastern colleges—that goal to which all undergraduate eyes were turned. Much was expected of the new equipment, and Haddon Hall hoped to win first prize. The freshmen class had developed two brilliant men. One of them had equalled the interscholastic record for the pole vault in indoor practice, and in competition he was expected to do even better. Another had a special aptitude for the hurdles, and was felt to hold all competitors safe at two distances. But Hope—Charley Hope—who had won the 220-yard dash the last year, was not out training with the rest. Hope had come back this year with the knowledge that his people could not let him complete his course. The money was needed at home, and this year was to be his last unless he could win a scholarship, and he was trying for one, "grinding" every hour, giving up his running, after a mighty struggle, to save the time and the necessary training involved. Of course there was a fuss about this among his closest friends, and the whole school felt a sense of loss, a personal injury, that Haddon Hall's chances of success should be thus lessened "just because a chap was stuck on grinding," as the freshmen put it. "It's much too late to start training now," said Charley Hope to Mabel Moore, who was filled with enthusiasm for Haddon Hall. "Monsieur, I'm not one of the parlor girls, and I know the game. It doesn't take long to train for speed, that's all. We all know you've got the speed, Charley; an hour a day from now on will see you fit, I thought of asking you to do it for me, Charley, but I won't. It's for Haddon Hall."

"'Oh, I suppose I must,'" answered Charley, gloomily, but she saw his eyes brighten at the thought of running, and the next day found him about "pounding the track," as the freshmen said, and all the second year men cheered, for they had seen him before. Field day came all too slowly for the undergraduates, but came at last. The delegations from the large schools strained the utmost resources of the grandstand and side lines. The swarms of strange young fellows from the other seminaries and prep schools outnumbered Haddon Hall's own home crowd, but in the centre of the grandstand conspicuous by bright colors and evident by girlish laughter sat the "co-ed" girls, a loyal home following just overlooking the finish line. The events passed off smoothly enough. The 100-yard dash came second; rather an unusual proceeding. Charley thought, as he crouched for the starter's pistol. He got away well and did not have to extend himself at all. He seemed to have a perfect fire of vigor in his limbs. He wished the second man would crowd him closer and as he near the finish he felt like exerting himself a little more and winning by 5 feet instead of 2. But he restrained himself, calling it a "kid's trick," as the freshmen would say. He wondered, as his chest broke the tape, how it was felt so fresh when he had trained so little, when any coach could have told him that he was in just the highest pitch of fitness that comes before a chap goes stale, that the second season a fellow runs is his best, often, and that he can very easily overdo the hard work and fatally tighten the muscles that must be fresh for speed. They hurried him off to the training quarters and steamed and kneaded him, slapped and pounded him, pinched him and rubbed him down. He protested and grew a little angry; he wanted to dress and go up in the grandstand with Mabel Moore and her father, and see the rest of it, but they said "coach's order," and he subsided, for the coach rules as an absolute monarch. "Just as if I were going in the two-twenty," mused Charley, between pounds. Wish I was, too. Maybe they've entered me by mistake. If they have I've run, too. I feel so good. No such luck, though. I've a mind to ask the coach, anyhow. Maybe they could slip me in. Not much use, though, running against that new man of ours, Davis."

He slipped his bathrobe on over his running togs and turned him out. He ambled back to the bench beneath the grandstand just in time to hear the announcer calling the entries for the 220-yard dash. "Crane, Peltz, Krady, Robinson, Collins, Townsend, Drake, Grey and Hope," he called through his megaphone. "Queen that," thought Charley. "They can't mean me, for I'm not in. It must be the Delta Hope. Didn't know he ran, though. Wonder where Davis and Banks are, and why they weren't called?" He looked in vain for the two new men, but they were not in sight, and the other fellows were going out to line up for the start. "Hope! Hope!" called the announcer. A tall fellow with a big white G on his jersey showed a sudden interest. "What Hope is that?" he called to the announcer. "Not the Gramercy School Hope? I'm in for the hammer and shot put, but I don't run." "The Hope of Haddon Hall!" was the answer through the megaphone. Charley was astounded for a moment. So they had entered him by mistake after all! A sudden gust of cheering from the girls above on the grandstand dazed him still more. They had caught the phrase "The Hope of Haddon Hall," and in a moment their clear voices began a steady chant, "Hope! Hope! Hope! The Hope of Haddon Hall!" The coach came running toward Charley from somewhere in the crowd. "You've got to run, Hope," he said. "These two men, Davis and Banks, are disqualified by a new clause in the interscholastic rules. They've run for other schools, you know. Come along, sharp now!" "But I'm not in," said Charley. "I only entered in the hundred." "You've entered you, and you've got to run and win," answered the coach, grimly. "Be off, lively there!" Charley threw off his robe and started up the track toward the rest who were awaiting him up by the starter. As he came in sight the chant from the grandstand rose higher. "Hope! Hope! Hope!" and it sounded good. He tried to catch Mabel's voice, but the starter scowled at him and he fell into line. It felt unreal somehow; he felt too good. It didn't seem fair to those other chaps to feel so good. At the crack of the pistol he was away. He got out in front, for he was very good at starting, and he just seemed to go along somehow without half trying. Then a little fellow from Hill School shot by him, almost a foot ahead he was, this chap, before Charley could get the extra pounding into his feet, the extra upward strain on his legs that brought the distance down and left breast to breast. But he was persistent, this Hill School boy, and forged ahead again, and it was only by a supreme burst of speed, a final climax of exertion, that Charley caught him and then passed him a very little, keeping just there, but getting no farther ahead till he broke the tape, winning by inches. He hardly knew how he had done it, and he frowned in a puzzled way at the girls up there in the grandstand, who seemed to have all gone crazy, waving things at him and shouting: "Hope! Hope!" The coach caught him by the arm and started him toward the training quarters again. The meaning of this flashed upon him suddenly. Davis, one of the men who had been disqualified, had been depended upon to win the quarter mile! Now they wanted him to run! But his legs were tired, his wind was gone. The grueling strain of the 220-yard dash had told upon him. It was asking too much of one chap to go in those three events, anyway, and he had not trained for the quarter mile; that long, nerve-racking, muscle-tearing journey with a sprint at the end of it! He stopped short and began to speak, but the coach cut him short, angrily, "You've got to run, Hope," he said. "Davis is out, and we can't even get second place unless you run second. That's all I want of you; to run second in the quarter-mile. Win if you can, of course, but don't worry if you don't. But the school counts on you to make good; understand that! Just listen to those girls!" They were still at it there in the grandstand and the undergraduates about were beginning to join in. The captain of the football team passed them on a jog: "Good boy, Hope," he called. "You'll see us through yet!" A member of the faculty waved a dignified cane at him. "Well done, Mr. Hope," he shouted, his white tie curling cutely under one ear. "Don't fail us in the quarter mile!" "Don't I know that?" snarled the coach. "Don't I know what I am about? What better training could a man in just your condition want than a hard 221 feather-head? You've got to win, that's all. Green, little Green, the fellow who made the varsity and got hurt, he was counted on for third in the running broad, and when he heard the girls shouting for you he shook his fist at the grandstand and yelled: 'You can count on me, too. I'm going in for a first!' and he did, too. He won the jump by half an inch, beating Hartly, Hill Schools crack man and equaling the record! It was the greatest surprise of the day. Don't you see what we've done? Two men out and yet we're in second place. The other boys are going until they drop to win for Haddon Hall, and here you want to lie down. Fine sort of chap to wear an H on your jersey, you are; but you've got to win, that's all!" He yanked Charley roughly by the arm and started him into an unwilling trot toward the training quarters. And there came from the grandstand the closing words of the girls' chant—"Hope! The Hope of Haddon Hall!" The did astonishing things to Charley. They boiled him, and the coach personally supervised a lot of hard-working chaps who kneaded his muscles and made them pliable; who twisted the cramps out of his limbs and made them glow with perfect circulation of his quickened blood. Then a last rub down with alcohol and witch hazel and the coach rushed in back to the field. There were only two events remaining to be decided, the hammer throwing, "chuckin' the knocker," as the freshmen said, and the quarter-mile. Haddon Hall did not expect a place

in the hammer-throwing contest. Only one man was entered, and he was a big, raw freshman. The event was generally conceded to Oak Ridge, who now stood one point behind Haddon Hall, while Gramercy School held the top score, with 24 points to its credit, 6 points ahead of Haddon Hall. When Oak Ridge won the hammer event they would have 23 points, which would bring them within halting distance of the leaders. But if by chance Haddon Hall's big freshman, Finnegan, should get a place in the event, then they would still stand a chance for second place, provided Charley Hope won the quarter-mile and Oak Ridge did not get second or third place; and if Gramercy School did not get a place the score would stand: Gramercy School, 24; Haddon Hall, 23; Oak Ridge, 22—a splendid showing and almost a victory. Three men had their turns with the hammer. Charley was on fire from the coach's words and from the desire to be off in the long race. He looked about impatiently for some of his friends. He did not care to watch the hammer event. Haddon Hall could not win it, he felt, and so what was the use? A voice from the grandstand called him, and, looking over, he saw Mabel Moore. He walked over to a place beneath her and she leaned down almost to him. "We're going to win, Charley," she said. "I know we're going to win. Little Mr. Green won for us, and Mr. Finnegan has promised to. He's just as full of it as we are; he says he can feel our combined enthusiasm in his arms, and that he'll just chuck that hammer out of sight!" "Pretty good freshman," said Charley, "but I guess a third is the best he can do. Good men against him, you know." "But there are good men against you, Charley. The best men have been saved for the quarter-mile. And yet you're going to win. Do you understand? You must win. Can't you feel all the stir of it, the longing and thrill and intensity that we girls feel here whenever a Haddon Hall man starts in an event? Doesn't it brace you up like an electric shock? Doesn't it fill you with a fire like the old Marathon chaps in our Greek translations? Why, we've been counting on you all along, Charley. We weren't sure of the other boys, but we had them up here and made them feel our school spirit and filled them with it, and they won for us, and they could have won against better men, too, after that. And you've got to win." Her last words were drowned by a mellow cheer from the grandstand. Handkerchiefs fluttered and fans waved. An answering roar came from the undergraduates on the side lines. Finnegan had the hammer and was about to throw. The girls leaned far over the edge of the box-like front of the grandstand and cheered—cheered till Finnegan, his face all flushed, seemed to swell and glow manlier, somehow, before their eyes. His great arms knotted and corded, his shoulders twitched, his legs stiffened, and he stood very erect. He had caught the spirit of the will to win that the girls were sending to him. He bent to the swing of the iron globe, and it fairly sang as he swung with it, and with a mighty heave of his shoulders it was away and soaring straight as a die, landing six inches beyond the farthest mark. Finnegan had won at the first trial! Then pandemonium broke loose. The unexpected had happened. Although Haddon Hall was still in second place, things looked very different. Oak Ridge had only achieved the second place in the event just passed, scoring three points, and Gramercy School was third, with one point. The five points Finnegan had won for Haddon Hall made the score now stand: Gramercy School, 25; Haddon Hall, 23, and Oak Ridge, 20. Haddon Hall now stood to win if only Charley Hope could capture the quarter-mile. Charley felt it too as he ambled toward the starter, who was lining up the men for the race. He felt that they depended on him to win, and he thrilled with pride as he thought of their confidence in him. This was his distance, really, the quarter mile. He had the long-stretching lunge that carries a chap so swiftly at almost top speed; the ground-devouring stride that bears a man close to records and leaves a little in store for the fierce punishing sprint at the end. But he hadn't trained for the distance. He had been only in for the sprints, and could he last the whole way? The other chaps were in fine form, he knew, and he would have to run the race of his life. And then the sprint at the end! Could he make one after that long, grueling journey? Had the desperate two-twenty he had won exhausted his speed? The coach seemed to think not, and the girls felt he could win. Well, he would do all he could. And now the undergraduates went wild. A senior led them in cheering for a few moments, but this broke into a discordant roar of "We win! We win! Charley Hope! Hope! Hope!" Up in the grandstand they kept better time. Mabel Moore was standing on a front bench leading the girls, waving her arms in rhythm as a leader of an orchestra directs his men.

We win! We win! We gloat! We grin! Our track team beats 'em all. He's slick as soap, is Charley Hope, The Hope of Haddon Hall! The volume of their voices swelled like music to Charley as he crouched for the start in line with the rest. Crack! went the starter's pistol, and he was off with the rest, running easily in a good position, full of strange vigor he had never felt before. The girls were singing the ode now, the old school song. Charley could not distinguish the words, but he knew it was for him and to hearten him on his hard journey. For him, too, was the clamor of the undergraduates in the side lines, so hoarse from cheering as to do no more than croak. But it was music to Charley. The great muscles above his knees gave little jerks of vigor, little tugs of impatience, and fierce desires to go faster surged through him. He wanted to run away from all this crowd at once; to stride out at a pace that would leave them all behind. He felt that he could do it, too. That he could do anything; run away from any winner that ever lived. He did not know what it was, but it was the school spirit that possessed him. The combined longing of so many of his schoolmates for victory that had centered in him and given him the same flush of power and strength that comes sometimes to the football team when it hammers the other eleven down the field, never halting, one down from another, regular as clockwork, through guard and tackle, past an end. Every man sure to make his gain, everything smashing in its place, a confidence and a sense of strength that is only born of enthusiasm and grown by the nourishment of school spirit. Charley kept his head and did not go out in front, as he felt like doing. He couldn't stay too far back, though. He kept at the shoulder of the fourth man, Dangerfield, the crack runner of Gramercy School, worrying him badly, pulling up beside him and forcing him to increase his stride a little every few yards, crowding him nearer and nearer to the pacemaker out in front, who was already tiring badly and wobbling at the knees. Then a big, raw-boned Hill School man shot past from the bench and the Gramercy School man went after him. Charley felt that it was a snare, for there was another Hill School man at his elbow, running easily and waiting for the sprint. Ah, that spring! It would come soon. The pace was telling on everyone. It was too fast. The pacemaker and then the Hill School man had tried to kill them off. Charley began to feel little twinges in his thighs and an aching strain in his calves. He was tiring and felt it. He must make an effort now and catch the Gramercy School man running ahead there, paced by the Hill School chap. He quickened his stride a little and began to close slightly. But then came a surprise. The Hill School man who had been at his elbow went by him like a flash, on a sprint at the top of his speed, and in a few seconds had closed with the two leaders. Then the first Hill School man dropped out and his mate, who had come up from the rear, took his place still on the grinding sprint with Dangerfield, the Gramercy School winner, at his elbow. Then Charley understood. Hill School, hopeless of winning, had their men pacing Dangerfield to beat off Haddon Hall. They would pace Dangerfield out in front there so that when the rest started the sprint he would be too far ahead to catch, and if he was caught by any chance he would be fresher than his pursuers, tired by their efforts to come up even with him, and he would romp away from them in the fast few yards. Charley knew that there was but one thing to do. They were at the 220 mark now. The tape lay 220 yards away. He had been over that route before, but he did not feel the same now. He must do a 220 sprint, sprint all the way to the finish. Catch them fellows and pass them so quickly that he would gain a yard perhaps before they could quicken their pace to his, then let them catch him if they could. The grandstand was strangely silent now. He had a good position, but from where the girls sat it must look as if he was hopelessly behind. Well, he wasn't; he would show them. He forgot almost his aching calves and as he swung into his 220 gait he felt better. He passed an Oak Ridge fellow as if he were stand still. The fellow tried feebly to increase his pace, but he could not. He was a quarter-mile, not a sprinter. Charley drew up a little more and still nearer to the pair in front. Their pace was not so killing as it had been; he had eased up a bit. In a few seconds more Charley had cut down half the distance separating him from the flying two before him. Then the grandstand awoke into a blaze of color and a volume of noise. The girls could see Charley closing up the gap. The sound of words reached him. "Hope! Hope! Hope!" they cried. He forgot about the long stretch he had covered at high speed. He was doing a 220 now. Those chaps were ahead of him and had to be caught. "Hope! Hope!" sang the grandstand. He was grinding hard at it—the old grueling sprint he knew so well, all the way, all the way, sprint, sprint, now he had them. He was at Dangerfield's elbow now and the Hill School man was dropping back. But Dangerfield kept along. He was a fine runner, that chap, the best Gramercy had. He let Charley pass him, but kept at his elbow, sprint for sprint, stride for stride. How the grandstand sang—the compact, well-timed column of their voices could be heard above all the roars of the crowds of fellows, visitors as well as home chaps. They were cheering on their men and imploring them to sprint, sprint! They were at the hundred-yard now. The song of the old school ode came

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