

ing the subject, and here he made a mistake; he should have followed up his son's singular contribution to the conversation.

That would have plainly revealed the fact that there was a certain Rupe Collins whose father was a foreman at the ladder works. All clues are important when a boy makes his first remark in a new key.

"Good money?" repeated Margaret curiously. "What is good money?" Penrod turned upon her a stern glance. "Say, wouldn't you be just as happy if you had some sense?"

"Penrod!" shouted his father. But Penrod's mother gazed with dismay at her son; he had never before spoken like that to his sister.

Mrs. Schofield might have been more dismayed than she was if she had realized that it was the beginning of an epoch. After dinner Penrod was slightly scolded in the back as a result of telling Della, the cook, that there was a wart on the middle finger of her right hand. Della thus proving poor material for his new manner to work upon, he approached Duke in the back yard, and bending double, seized the lowly animal by the forepaw.

"I let you know my name, Penrod Schofield," hissed the boy. He protruded his underlip ferociously, scowled and thrust forward his head until his nose touched the dog's. "And you better look out, when Penrod Schofield's around, or you'll get in big trouble! You understand that, 'bo'?"

The next day, and the next, the increasing change in Penrod puzzled and distressed his family, who had no idea of its source. How might they guess that hero worship takes such forms? They were vaguely conscious that a rather shabby boy, not of the neighborhood, came to "play" with Penrod several times, but they failed to connect this circumstance with the peculiar behavior of the son of the house, whose ideals his father remarked seemed to have suddenly become identical with those of Gyp the Blood.

CHAPTER XV. The Imitator.

MEANWHILE, for Penrod himself, "He had taken on new meaning, new richness." He had become a fighting man in conversation at least. "Do you want to know how I do when they try to slip up on me from behind?" he asked Della. And he enacted for her unappreciative eyes a scene of fisty maneuvers wherein he held an imaginary antagonist helpless in a net of stratagems.

Frequently, when he was alone, he would outfit and pummel this same enemy, and, after a cunning feint, land a dolorous stroke full upon a face of air. "There! I guess you'll know better next time. That's the way we do up at the Third!"

Sometimes in solitary pantomime he encountered more than one opponent at a time, for numbers were apt to come upon him treacherously, especially at a little after his rising hour, when he might be caught at a disadvantage—perhaps standing on one leg to incase the other in his knickerbockers. Like lightning he would hurl the trapping garment from him, and, ducking and pivoting, deal great sweeping blows among the circle of sneaking devils. (That was how he broke the clock in his bedroom.) And while these battles were occupying his attention, it was a waste of voice to call him to breakfast, though if his mother, losing patience, came to his room, she would find him seated on the bed pulling at a stocking. "Well, ain't I coming as fast as I can?"

At the table and about the house generally he was bumptious, loud with fatuous misinformation and assumed a domineering tone, which neither satire nor reproof seemed able to reduce, but it was among his own intimates that his new superiority was most outrageous. He twisted the fingers and squeezed the necks of all the boys of the neighborhood, meeting their indignation with a hoarse and rapping laugh he had acquired after short practice in the stable, where he jeered and pummeled the lawnmower, the garden scythe and the wheelbarrow quite out of countenance.

Likewise he bragged to the other boys of the hour, Rupe Collins being the chief subject of encomium next to Penrod himself. "That's the way we do up at the Third," became staple explanation of violence, for Penrod, like Tarzan, was plastic in the hands of his own imagination, and at times convinced himself that he really was one of those dark and murderous spirits exclusively of whom "the Third" was composed—according to Rupe Collins.

Then, when Penrod had exhausted himself repeating to nauseate accounts of the prowess of himself and his great friend, he would turn to two other subjects for vainglory. These were his father and Duke. Mothers must accept the fact that between babyhood and manhood their sons do not boast of them. The boy, with boys, is a Choctaw, and either the influence or the protection of women is shameful. "Your mother won't let you," is an insult. But, "My father won't let me," is a dignified explanation and cannot be hooted. A boy's ruined among his fellows if he talks much of his mother or sisters, and he must recognize it as his duty to offer at least the appearance of persecution to all things ranked as female, such as cats and every species of fowl. But he must champion his father and his dog, and, ever ready to pit either against any challenger, must picture both as rallying for battle and absolutely unconquerable.

Penrod, of course, had always talked by the code, but under the new stimulus, Duke was represented virtually as a cross between Bob, Son of Battle,

and South American vampire, and this in spite of the fact that Duke himself often sat close by, a living lie with the hope of peace in his heart. As for Penrod's father, that gladiator was painted as of sentiments and dimensions suitable to a superdemon composed of equal parts of Goliath, Jack Johnson and the Emperor Nero.

Even Penrod's walk was affected. He adopted a gait which was a kind of taunting swagger, and when he passed other children on the street he practiced the habit of feinting a blow; then as the victim dodged he rasped out the triumphant horse laugh which he gradually mastered to horrible perfection. He did this to Marjorie Jones. Are, this was his next meeting, and such it was, young. What was even worse, in Marjorie's opinion, he went on his way without explanation and left her standing on the corner talking about it long after he was out of hearing.

Within five days from his first encounter with Rupe Collins, Penrod had become unbearable. He even almost alienated Sam Williams, who for a time submitted to finger twisting and neck squeezing and the new style of conversation, but finally declared that Penrod made him "sick." He made the statement with fervor one sultry afternoon in Mr. Schofield's stable in the presence of Herman and Verman.

"You better look out, 'bo," said Penrod threateningly. "I'll show you a little how we do up at the Third."

"Up at the Third?" Sam repeated with scorn. "You haven't ever been up there."

"I haven't?" exclaimed Penrod. "I haven't?"

"No, you haven't."

"Looky here," Penrod, darkly argumentative, prepared to perform the eye to eye business. "When haven't I been up there?"

"You haven't never been up there. In spite of Penrod's closely approaching nose Sam maintained his ground and appealed for confirmation. "Has he, Herman?"

"I don't reckon so," said Herman, laughing.

"What?" Penrod transferred his nose to the immediate vicinity of Herman's nose. "You don't reckon so, 'bo, don't you? You better look out how you reckon around here. You understand that, 'bo'?"

Herman bore the eye to eye very well. Indeed, it seemed to please him, for he continued to laugh, while Verman chuckled delightedly. The brothers had been in the country picking berries for a week, and it happened that this was their first experience of the new manifestation of Penrod.

"Haven't I been up at the Third?" the sinister Penrod demanded.

"I don't reckon so. How come you ast me?"

"Didn't you just hear me say I been up there?"

"Well," said Herman mischievously, "hearin' ain't believin'!"

Penrod clutched him by the back of the neck, but Herman, laughing loudly, ducked and released himself at once, retreating to the wall.

"You take that back!" Penrod shouted, striking out wildly.

"Don't git mad," begged the small darky, while a number of blows falling upon his warding arms failed to abate his amusement, and a sound one upon the cheek only made him laugh the more unrestrainedly. He behaved exactly as if Penrod were tickling him, and his brother, Verman, rolled with joy in a wheelbarrow. Penrod pummeled till he was tired and produced no greater effect.

"There!" he panted, desisting finally. "Now I reckon you know whether I been up there or not?"

Herman rubbed his smitten cheek. "Pow!" he exclaimed. "Pow-ee! You cert'n did lan' me good one nat time! Oo-ee, she hurt!"

"You'll get hurt worse'n that," Penrod assured him, "if you stay around here much. Rupe Collins is comin' this afternoon, he said. We're goin' to make some policemen's billes out of the rake handle."

"You go' spoil new rake you' pa bought?"

"What do we care? I and Rupe got to have billes, haven't we?"

"How you make 'em?"

"Gett' in and pour in a hole we're goin' to make in the end of 'em. Then we're goin' to carry 'em in our pockets, and if anybody says anything to us—oh, oh, look out! They won't get a crack on the head—oh, no!"

"When's Rupe Collins comin'?" Sam Williams inquired rather uneasily. He had heard a great deal too much of this personage, but as yet the pleasure of actual acquaintance had been denied him.

"He's liable to be here any time," answered Penrod. "You better look out. You'll be lucky if you get home alive if you stay till he comes."

"I ain't afraid of him," Sam returned conventionally.

"You are too." There was some truth in the retort. "There ain't any boy in this part of town but me that wouldn't be afraid of him. You'd be afraid to talk to him. You wouldn't get a word out of your mouth before old Rupe'd have you where you'd wished you never come around him, lettin' on like you was so much. You wouldn't run home yellin' 'mom-muh' or nothin'." Oh, no!

"Who Rupe Collins?" asked Herman.

"Who Rupe Collins?" Penrod mocked and used his rasping laugh, but instead of showing fight Herman appeared to think he was meant to laugh, too, and so he did, echoed by Verman. "You just hang around here a little while longer," Penrod added grimly, "and you'll find out who Rupe Collins is, and I pity you when you do."

"What he go do?"

"You'll see; that's all. You just wait and—"

At this moment a brown bound ran into the stable through the alley door, dragged a greeter to Penrod and frantically with Duke. The fat faced boy appeared upon the threshold and gazed coldly upon the little company in the carriage house, whereupon the colored brethren, ceasing from merriment, were instantly impassive, and Sam Williams moved a little nearer the door leading into the yard.

Obviously Sam regarded the new comer as a redoubtable if not ominous figure. He was a head taller than either Sam or Penrod, head and shoulders taller than Herman, who was short for his age, and Verman could hardly be used for purposes of comparison at all, being a mere squat brown spot, not yet quite nine years on this planet. As to Sam's mind the aspect of Mr. Collins realized Penrod's portentous foreshadowings. Upon the fat face there was an expression of truculent intolerance which had been contrived by careful habit to such perfection that Sam's heart sank at sight of it. A somewhat enfeebled twin to this expression had of late often decorated the visage of Penrod and appeared upon that ingenious surface now as he advanced to welcome the eminent visitor.

The host swaggered toward the door with a great deal of shoulder movement, carefully feinting a slap at Verman in passing and creating by various means the atmosphere of a man who has contemptuously amused himself with underlings while awaiting an equal.

"Hello, 'bo!" Penrod said in the dearest voice possible to him.

"Who you callin' 'bo'?" was the ungracious response, accompanied by an immediate action of a similar nature. Rupe held Penrod's head in the crook of an elbow and massaged his temples with a hard pressing knuckle.

"I was only in fun, Rupe," pleaded the sufferer, and then, being set free, "Come here, Sam," he said.

"What for?"

Penrod laughed piteously. "Pshaw, I ain't goin' to hurt you. Come on, Sam, maintainin' his position near the other door, Penrod went to him and caught him round the neck.

"Watch me, Rupe," Penrod called, and performed upon Sam the knuckle operation which he had himself just undergone, Sam submitting mechanically, his eyes fixed with increasing uneasiness upon Rupe Collins. Sam had a premonition that something even more painful than Penrod's knuckle was going to be inflicted upon him.

"That don't hurt," said Penrod, pushing him away.

"Yes, it does, too!" Sam rubbed his temple.

"Pah! It didn't hurt me, did it, Rupe? Come on in, Rupe; show this baby where he's got a wart on his finger."

There are seconds and rounds and roles of fair play, and always there is great good feeling in the end—though sometimes, to vary the model, "the butcher" defeats the hero—and the chronicler who stencils this fine old pattern on his page is certain of applause as the stirrer of "red blood." There is no surer recipe.

But when Herman and Verman set to the record must be no more than a few fragments left by the expurgator. It has been perhaps sufficiently suggested that the altercation in Mr. Schofield's stable opened with mayhem in respect to the aggressor's nose. Expressing vocally his indignation and the extremity of his pained surprise, Mr. Collins stepped backward, holding his left hand over his nose and striking at Herman with his right. Then Verman bit him with the rake.

Verman struck from behind. He struck as hard as he could. And he struck with the fines down. For, in his simple, direct African way he wished to kill his enemy, and he wished to kill him as soon as possible. That was his single, earnest purpose.

On this account, Rupe Collins was peculiarly unfortunate. He was plucky and he enjoyed conflict, but neither his ambitions nor his anticipations had ever included murder. He had not learned that a habitually aggressive person runs the danger of colliding with beings in one of those lower stages of evolution wherein theories about "bitting below the belt" have not yet made their appearance.

The rake glanced from the back of Rupe's head to his shoulder, but it fell on him. Both darkies jumped full upon him instantly, and the three rolled and twisted upon the stable floor, unloosing upon the air sincere maledictions closely connected with complaints of cruel and unusual treatment, while certain expressions of feeling presently emanating from Herman and Verman indicated that Rupe Collins, in this extremity, was proving himself not too slavishly addicted to fighting by rule. Dan and Duke, mistaking all for mirth, barked merrily.

From the panting, pounding, yelling heap issued words and phrases hitherto quite unknown to Penrod and Sam; also a hoarse repetition in the voice of Rupe concerning his ear left it not to be doubted that additional mayhem was taking place. Appalled, the two spectators retreated to the doorway dumbly watching the catagory.

The struggle increased in primitive simplicity. Time and again the howling Rupe got to his knees, only to go down again as the earnest brothers in their own way assisted him to a more reclining position. Primal forces operated here, and the two blanched slightly higher products of evolution, Sam and Penrod, no more thought of interfering than they would have thought of interfering with an earthquake.

At last out of the ruck rose Verman, disfigured and maniacal. With a wild eye he looked about him for his trusty

Rupe addressed his host briefly: "Chase them high out o' here!" "Don't call me 'nig," said Herman. "I mine my own bizness. You let 'em boys alone."

Rupe strode across the still prostrate Sam, stepped upon Penrod and, equipping his countenance with the terrifying scowl and protruded jaw, lowered his head to the level of Herman's.

"Nig, you'll be lucky if you leave here alive!" And he leaned forward till his nose was within less than an inch of Herman's nose.

It could be felt that something awful was about to happen, and Penrod, as he rose from the floor, uttered an unexpected wring of apprehension and remorse. He hoped that Rupe wouldn't really hurt Herman. A sudden dislike of Rupe and Rupe's ways rose within him as he looked at the big boy over-shouldering the little darky with that ferocious scowl. Penrod all at once felt sorry about something indefinable, and with equal regretfulness he felt foolish. "Come on, Rupe," he suggested feebly. "Let Herman go, and let's us make our willies out of the rake handle."

The rake handle, however, was not available if Rupe had inclined to favor the suggestion. Verman had discarded his faith for the rake, which he was at this moment lifting in the air.

"You ole black nigger," the fat faced boy said venomously to Herman. "I'm goin' to—"

But he had allowed his nose to remain too long near Herman's. Penrod's familiar nose had been as close with only a ticklish spinal effect upon the not very remote descendant of Kong-man eaters. The result produced by the glare of Rupe's unfamiliar eyes and by the dreadfully suggestive proximity of Rupe's unfamiliar nose, was altogether different. Herman and Verman's Bangala great-grandfathers never considered people of their own jungle neighborhood proper material for a meal, but they looked upon strangers, especially truculent strangers, as distinctly edible.

Penrod and Sam heard Rupe suddenly squawk and bellow, saw him writhe and twist and fling out his arms like dials, though without removing his face from its juxtaposition. Indeed, for a moment the two heads seemed even closer.

Then they separated, and the battle was on!

CHAPTER XVII. Colored Troops in Action. Colored meat and pure is the task of the chronicler who has the tale to tell of a "good roasting fight" between boys or men who fight in the "good old English way," according to a model set for fights in books long before Tom Brown went to Rugby.

There are seconds and rounds and roles of fair play, and always there is great good feeling in the end—though sometimes, to vary the model, "the butcher" defeats the hero—and the chronicler who stencils this fine old pattern on his page is certain of applause as the stirrer of "red blood." There is no surer recipe.

But when Herman and Verman set to the record must be no more than a few fragments left by the expurgator. It has been perhaps sufficiently suggested that the altercation in Mr. Schofield's stable opened with mayhem in respect to the aggressor's nose. Expressing vocally his indignation and the extremity of his pained surprise, Mr. Collins stepped backward, holding his left hand over his nose and striking at Herman with his right. Then Verman bit him with the rake.

task, but Penrod in horror had long since thrown the rake out into the yard. Naturally it had not seemed necessary to remove the lawn mower.

The frantic eye of Verman fell upon the lawn mower, and instantly he leaped to its handle. Shrilling a wordless wail, he charged, propelling the whirling, deafening knives straight upon the prone legs of Rupe Collins.

The lawn mower was sincerely intended to pass longitudinally over the body of Mr. Collins from heel to head, and it was the time for a death song. Black Valkyrie hovered in the shrieking air.

"Cut his gizzard out!" shrieked Herman, urging on the whirling knives.

They touched and accelerated the shin of Rupe, as, with the supreme agony of effort a creature in mortal peril puts forth before succumbing, he tore himself free of the scythe, and got upon his feet as quickly. He leaped to the wall and seized the garden scythe that hung there.

"I'm go' cut you' gizzard out," he announced definitely, "an' eat it!"

Rupe Collins had never run from anybody (except his father) in his life. He was not a coward, but the present situation was very, very unusual. He was already in a badly dismantled condition, and yet Herman and Verman seemed discontented with their work. Verman was swinging the grass cutter about for a new charge, apparently still wishing to mow Sam, and Herman had made a quite plausible statement about what he intended to do with the scythe.

Rupe passed, but for an extremely condensed survey of the horrible advance of the brothers and then, uttering a blood curdled scream of fear, ran out of the stable and up the alley at a speed he had never before attained, so that even Dan had had hard work to keep within barking distance.

And a cross shoulder glance at the corner, revealing Herman and Herman in pursuit, the latter waving his scythe overhead, Mr. Collins slackened not his gait, but rather, out of great amazement, increased it, while a rapidly developing purpose became firm in his mind and ever after so remained not only to refrain from visiting that neighborhood again, but never by any chance to come within a mile of it.

From the alley door Penrod and Sam watched the flight and were without words. When the pursuit rounded the corner the two looked wanly at each other, but neither spoke until the return of the brothers from the chase.

Herman and Verman came back laughing and chuckling.

"Hi!" sneaked Herman to Verman as they came. "See 'at ole boy run!"

"Who-ee!" Verman shouted in ecstasy.

"Nev' did see boy run so fas!" Herman continued, tossing the scythe into the wheelbarrow. "I bet he home in bed by dis time!"

Verman roared with delight, appearing to be wholly unconscious that the lids of his right eye were swollen shut and that his attire, not too final before the struggle, now entitled him to unquestioned rank as a sanscote. Herman was a similar ruin and gave as little heed to his condition.

Penrod looked dazedly from Herman to Verman and back again. So did Sam Williams.

"Herman," said Penrod in a weak voice, "you wouldn't honest of cut his gizzard out, would you?"

"Who? Me? I don't know. He mighty mean ole boy!" Herman shook his head gravely and then, observing that Verman was again convulsed with unctuous merriment, joined laughter with his brother. "Sho! I guess I uz dess talkin' when I said 'at Reckon he thought I meant it I'm de way he tuck an' run. Hi!"

Reckon he thought ole Herman had man. No, s'hr. I uz dess talkin' 'cause I nev' would cut nobody. I ain' tryin' git in no jail—no, sub!"

Penrod looked at the scythe; he looked at Herman; he looked at the lawn mower, and he looked at Verman. Then he looked out in the yard at the rake. So did Sam Williams.

"Come on, Verman!" said Herman. "We ain' got 'at stove wood 't supper yet!"

Giggling reminiscently, the brothers disappeared, leaving silence behind them in the carriage house. Penrod and Sam retired slowly into the shadowy interior, each glancing, now and then, with a preoccupied air, at the open doorway where the late afternoon sunshine was growing ruddy.

At intervals one or the other scraped the floor reflectively with the side of his shoe. Finally, still without either having made any effort at conversation, they went out into the yard and stood, continuing their silence.

"Well," said Sam at last, "I guess it's time I better be gettin' home. So long, Penrod."

"So long, Sam," said Penrod feebly. With solemn gaze he watched his friend out of sight. Then he went slowly into the house and after an interval occupied in a unique manner appeared in the library holding a pair of brilliantly gleaming shoes in his hand.

Mr. Schofield, reading the evening paper, glanced frowningly over it at his offspring.

"Look, papa," said Penrod; "I found your shoes where you'd taken 'em off in your room to put on your slippers, and they were all dusty. So I took 'em out on the back porch and gave 'em a good blacking. They shine up fine, don't they?"

"Well, I'll be a d-d-d-d-d-d-d-d-d-d!" said the startled Mr. Schofield.

Penrod was zigzagging back to normal.

The midsummer sun was stinging hot outside the little barber shop next to

the corner drug store, and Penrod, undecoding a toilet preliminary to his very slowly approaching twentieth birthday, was as desirous enough to refresh upon his face much hair as it fell from the shears.

There is a mystery here. The torsorial processes are not ungraceful to manhood—in truth, they are soothing—but the hairs detached from a boy's head get into his eyes, his ears, his nose, his mouth and down his neck, and he does everywhere with execratable thoroughness. Wherefore he blinks, winces, weeps, twitches, condenses his countenance and squirms; and perchance the barber's scissors clip more than intended—belike an outlying flange of ear.

"Um-muh-ow!" said Penrod, this thing having happened.

"D' I touch 'r a little?" inquired the barber, smiling falsely.

"Ooh-uh!" The boy in the chair offered inarticulate protest, as the wound was rubbed with alum.

"That don't hurt," said the barber. "You will get it, though, if you don't sit stiller," he continued, nipping in the end any attempt on the part of his patient to think that he already had cut it.

"Puff!" said Penrod, meaning no disrespect, but endeavoring to disguise a temporary mistake from his lip.

"You ought to see how still that little George Basset sits," the barber went on reprovingly. "I hear everybody says he's the best boy in town."

"Puff!" Penrod. There was a touch of intentional contempt in this. "I haven't heard nobody around the neighborhood makin' no such remarks," noticed the barber, "about nobody of the name of Penrod, Schofield."

"Well," said Penrod, clearing his mouth after a struggle, "who wants 'em to Ouch?"

"I hear they call George Basset the 'little gentleman,'" captured the barber, "practically, nothin' with unassisted success."

"They better not call me that," returned Penrod truculently. "I'd like to hear anybody try. Just once, that's all, or I bet they never try it ag- Ouch!"

"Why? What'd you do to 'em?"

"It's all right what I'd do I bet they wouldn't want to call me that again long as they lived!"

"What'd you do if it was a little girl? You wouldn't hit her, would you?"

"Well, I'd— Ouch!"

"You wouldn't hit a little girl, would you?" the barber persisted, gathering into his powerful fingers a mop of hair from the top of Penrod's head and pulling that suffering head into an unnatural position. "Doesn't the Bible say it ain't never right to hit the weak set?"

"Ow! Say, look out!"

"So you'd go and pinch a pore, weak, little girl, would you?" said the barber reprovingly.

"Well, who said I'd hit her?" demanded the chivalrous Penrod. "I bet

They better not call me that," returned Penrod truculently.

I'd fix her, though, all right. She'd see!"

"You wouldn't call her names, would you?"

"No, I wouldn't. What hurt is it to call anybody names?"

"Is that so?" exclaimed the barber. "Then you was intending what I heard you hollerin' at Fisher's grocery delivery wagon driver for a favor the other day when I was goin' by your house, was you? I reckon I better tell him, because he says to me afterwards if he ever lays eyes on you when you ain't in your own yard he's goin' to do a whole lot o' things you ain't goin' to like! Yessir, that's what he says to me!"

"He better catch me first, I guess, before he talks so much."

"Well," resumed the barber, "that ain't sayin' what you'd do if a young lady ever walked up and called you a little gentleman. I want to hear what you'd do to her. I guess I know, though, come to think of it."

"What?" demanded Penrod.

"You'd sick that pore ole dog of yours on her cat if she had one, I expect," guessed the barber derisively.

"No, I would not!"

(To be continued)



The Fat Faced Boy Appeared Upon the Threshold and Gazed Coldly About.



They better not call me that," returned Penrod truculently.