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once and for all time.

Jasper Titewadd had occasionally found other suitors in the field. But his huge bump of conceit saved him from the qualms of jealously and the undaunted wooer woul' return to the siege, calling twice weekly and entertaining the rest of the family if Calamity happened to be engaged with another gentleman in the parlor. Nothing came of these experiments, however. The quondam suitors would depart and Jasper still maintained his silence as of old.

'Varsity, 'Varsity — and yet more 'Varsity — was the dinner table topic. Alec had won a scholarship and Walter was captain of the football team.
"Blondy" Bennet had distinguished himself neither in science nor athletics, but in the field of amateur theatricals.

"And, mother, if only you could have seen him doing Desdemona in our closing!" Walter cried.
"Not dressed like a woman!"
"Sure! And talk of beauties! He's

been called "Blondy" ever since. He had all the blondes in T—— looking like faded pea-straw. Eh, Alec?"

"That's right, folks. He had a yellow wig on, done a la Fritzi Scheff, a girdled white dress, and pumps, powder, paint, perfume—all the 'fixings.'"
"Perfect, mother," assured Walter.

don't tell her you're going to 'land' the old guy. She really likes him, you

"All right! Now, Alec, but what if some of the neighbors drop in too?" was "Blondy's" next problem.

"Well, fellows, if they do, we'll just haze them, too. "Blondy's" a stranger to this part of the country, and he's leaving on Monday, so he need not care. I'm going to get mother wise."

At eight o'clock next evening Mr. Titewadd arrived on the Patton doormat. This was not one of his schedule calls, but an extra thrown in. With the ease of long habit he hung his hat on its accustomed hook and singled out his favorite chair. The entire family, with the exception of Calamity and Mr. Bennet, soon made their appearance. Mrs. Patton conttinued her knitting, the girls brought in the lights and drew the curtains, the boys and Mr. Patton brought their chairs about the centre table and peace reigned on the little group. But for all Mrs. Patton's placidily, a twinkle of mirth lurked in her eye, and Mr. Patton in dread of a premature disclosure, kept up a spirited conversation with Jasper Titewadd, now on crops and then on the county elections.

"Cally's been a little late chorin' round," explained the mother presently,

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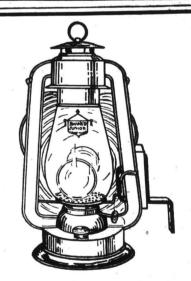


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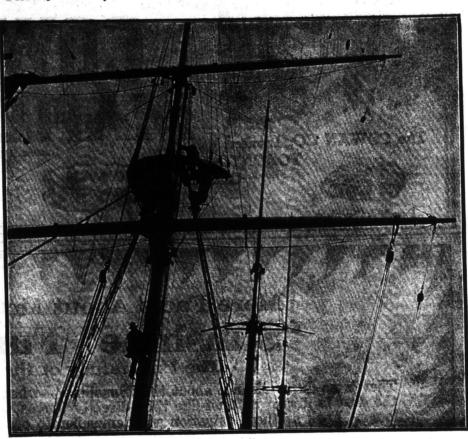
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Scraping the mast on a sailing vessel.

"And he had some long spiels, too. You'd have thought his voice was Cally's there; he had it pitched to just the right key. I think he'd make his mark in the drama.

"That's enough," interposed the ama-teur 'actress.' "You wil give me stage fright and I'll never face the footlights

again." The vision of the late Desdemona, however, persisted in haunting Alec's fertile brain so that it was his idea, coupled with "Blondy's" ingenuity and aided and abetted by Walter's enthusiasm that evolved a scheme for the amusement of the family the following evening. He made known to "Blondy" the outlines of the situation between his sister and Jasper.

"I appreciate your confidence, Alec," said "Blondy," "and I'll agree to the role, providing no one's feelings are hurt. Then you fellows mustn't laugh or give the thing away until the last."

"Leave that to us. I will be as grave as a stone image," replied Alec, "and if Walt here snorts out or bungles the scheme, I'll take it out of him next

day at the barn."
"Well, if it's all settled then," said
Walter, "I'll go into the city to-morrow and bring home the costume, wig and

all." "Don't forget the paint and stuff," said "Blondy," "and maybe your sister could loan me a lady's handkerchief

and a fan?" "Yes, we'll let her in on this—only nounced Alec who had taken it upon

after an interval of silence. "I'll call

"And Mrs. Wood, too," remarked Alec carelessly, as he rose to leave the

"Mrs. Wood?" echoed Jasper. "A distant cousin of ours, mother's side," said Alec gravely.

just arrived yesterday." Well, now-that's good. "That so? Strange, though; I don't think I ever

heard any of you mention her." "She's not closely related," said Mr. Patton, "out she is a jolly soul, lots of

fun, you know, Jasper." "A widow," added Walter, who was

shuffling a pack of cards.
"Well, well!" ejaculated Mr. Titewadd. "Is she going to remain long?" "Well-no-only a few days. likes Pattonville, but she wants to buy a farm and is looking about for a good large one, as she says she is tired of town life. She has considerable means." "She's a peach-cake, Jasper!" cried Walter. "Bet you'll be all stuck on

her in ten minutes." "I am all eagerness," said the goodhumored Jasper, with genuine interest.

And at this juncture there was a slight rustle at the door which made him turn quickly, and the vision that met his gaze was imprinted on his memory for a long time afterward. Ye gods! What picture stepped down from its frame was this!

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