

that he was still too much of a Barnsvillian to participate in the regular pleasures of a drummer's calling?

"Poker?" he asked, and afterwards it seemed to him that the word had provoked a smile.

"For us, yes," answered Bob. "But you look tired, old chap, and we don't want to drag you into it."

He gave them a bleary look of scorn and reached down into his traveling bag. Sweeping their cards from the table, he opened a deck of his own.

"I told you before that this was my party," he grinned. "I won't even let you use your own cards."

"Probably thinks they're marked," chuckled Bill, in an undertone.

"What's that?" said Ward.

"You must have been traveling with a hard bunch, Bo," explained Linny, "to suspect us of having marked cards."

He would not disillusion them: the charge was too complimentary to deny. But he assured them that he did not suspect them, and before he had finished speaking all his money was on the table and he had proved what a good fellow he was.

They put the cash back in his pockets and suggested a quiet chat, with prospects of a few little games later on in the week.

"It's agreed that we're going to run together, isn't it?" asked Peel.

Any other plan was now preposterous. The pledges of good-fellowship that passed from the Barnsville boy to his amused companions were too sincere to doubt.

Came the sentimental mood. They spoke of women. Nor would Ward be outclassed here. They started with village flirtations and ended at the stage-door of