

The Training of Jenks.

By ALLAN P. AMES.

FULLY two-thirds of the sophomore class, including Stuffy Myers, Hefty Stevens, Bones Palmer, Red Kimball, and myself, were out on the athletic field watching Jenks run the hundred in nine seconds and three-fifths. When his ungainly form stumbled over the finish, a wild cheer went up, and a crowd surrounded the runner to congratulate him upon his performance.

Wrapped in a bathrobe whose colors rivaled the rainbow, the astonished freshman leaned upon the shoulders of two admirers and accepted our praise with smiling modesty. But nine and three-fifths for the hundred-yard dash, you say, beats the college record. Certainly; we understood that, so did Jenks; but something else that we knew and he didn't was that none of the timers started their stop-watches until a couple of seconds after he had left the mark!

Marcus Aurelius Jenks was the latest star in our athletic firmament, a luminary whose magnitude was limited only by his own unbounded credulity. In college, as elsewhere, we are prone to despise what we have and seek for what we have not. Behind Jenk's high, white forehead Greek and Latin roots were piled like cordwood. He had led his classes so long that he sighed for glory of a new kind, on which account it was not strange that his changed ambitions led him to try athletics.

At the time of which I speak our track athletics were on the top wave of prosperity. Half the freshmen class talked of going into training, and the coaches were actually embarrassed by the wealth of material. Owing to our comparatively small numbers, our football and baseball teams and crews were seldom a match for the large universities, but that did not prevent us from developing track men whose victories carried our name across the continent and over the water.

This year Springler, the best sprinter we ever had, was at the height of his form, and nothing in college was too good for him. For him underclassmen fetched and carried, swollen with pride if he permitted them to help him dress or assist the rubbers in massaging his wonderful muscles. With Springler's example before them, it is not surprising that the majority of aspirants went in for dashes, regardless of physical fitness. But Jenks was the last man of whom one would have suspected such a leaning. Over six feet tall, and angular as a hay rick, he had the stoop and face of a typical student. There was absolutely nothing about him to suggest the crack sprinter.

If Jenks had confided his ambitions to any one besides Stuffy Myers there is little doubt that they would have been promptly but mercifully smothered, and this story would never have been told. But practical jokes, particularly on freshmen, were Stuffy's daily food, and Jenk's request tempted him beyond endurance. Had he realized the lanky youth's earnestness, he might have hesitated; but regarding him only as any other freshman, and therefore fair game, when Jenks came to him for advice he went to work without foreboding and the skill of long experience.

The first intimation the class had of anything doing was the following notice posted next morning in all the sophomore recitation rooms:

Marcus Aurelius Jenks will begin training for the hundred yard dash on the athletic field at half-past three

this afternoon. A large attendance is requested. Suggestions thankfully received.

Wilson Myers, Trainer.

Myer's signature was a guarantee of superior entertainment, and at the appointed time only those members of the class who had recitations they could not cut were absent. Jenks and his trainer arrived promptly. The former's appearance, as he marched proudly onto the track, was enough to make a hen laugh; but, so universal is the instinct that nurses a practical joke, not a man among us betrayed the slightest amusement.

Marcus Aurelius was a sight for the gods. Stuffy had rigged him out in a scarlet jersey, so small that it was stretched to the bursting point, missing connections with the top of his running drawers by a good two inches. At first sight the upper garment seemed sprinkled with white polka dots; but this proved to be an illusion, caused by holes cut at regular intervals to show his tender skin. Jenks explained that they were for ventilation, but it was not hard to trace the origin of the idea to his ingenious trainer.

"gang" to draw upon, and what Hefty Stevens and Red Kimball and Bones Palmer could not hatch up in the way of freshman baiting wasn't worth considering. The only systematic feature of that boy's "training" was its unvarying absurdity.

The fun did not end when Jenks left the track. Stuffy's word to stop work, was the signal for a small riot, the object being to decide which of Jenk's ardent admirers should bear him back to the dressing-room. This point being settled, Jenk's was lifted in the arms of those who gained the privilege and carried triumphantly indoors. Here another squad of volunteers snaked off his running togs, and turned him over to a third group in appropriate attire, who put him under the shower, rubbed him down with strange and fearful mixtures, lugged him back to the shower again, and soused him in the plunge. Finally they passed him along to the fourth bunch of Sophomores, who dressed him in his street clothes, each individual garment being presided over by a separate admirer. During the whole process the smiling and delighted athlete was not permitted

continued training as faithfully as ever, and soon began to talk of his chances in the approaching intercollegiate meet. Believing that he had done the sprints in less than record time, he saw no cause to doubt that he would be the star performer in the team that would represent the college.

The originators and abettors of the great hoax found themselves confronted with the problem of making Jenks understand that he had about as much chance of winning one of the intercollegiate races as a man with a wheelbarrow. "The boy was in such deadly earnest that we feared lest a brutal statement of the facts might break his heart. To hints and suggestions he was impervious; nothing but the plain truth from some one like Springler or the trainer, whose authority he could not doubt, would disillusionize him; and these two, not being responsible for his condition, refused to assume the unpleasant task.

In short, it began to look as if, rather than tell the freshman how things stood, they were going to let him enter the meet and become the laughing stock of several thousand spectators. This, of course, would be the most undesirable result possible. The realization that he had made a fool of himself before a lot of "rooters" from rival colleges, not to speak of several hundred girls, would be enough to humiliate any man for life.

Finally, having discussed and rejected a dozen schemes, Stuffy and Hefty and Bones and Red and I concluded to appeal to Pop O'Brien. Pop was the professional trainer—not one of those modern physical directors with "M. D." and "Ph. D." after their names, but an old professional runner who had learned what makes and unmakes an athlete by personal experience. A better-natured, more tender-hearted Irishman never lived, and if he had caught the gang at work on Jenks the great joke would have had an untimely finish. But, as it happened, during the week that Marcus was treating us to those amusing stunts, Pop was away. He had learned of the affair after his return, of course, and the indignation we had heard him express made us both eager and reluctant to seek his assistance; eager, because we knew he would be anxious to save our victim further suffering, and reluctant because we knew he would embrace the opportunity to tell what he thought of us.

In the end an honest liking and solicitude for Jenks won the day. We found Pop at the end of the straight-away, putting half a dozen dash men through a course of starts.

"Faith, an' I'm plaised to learn that ye sophomores have a little ordinary human kindness in yez," he replied, after Stuffy had explained the object of our visit. "There's the poor lad out there now, chasin' round and round the track as if he was wound up. He'd never run the hundred under eleven if he trained all his life. But if a bye ever had grit, it's him. I've had me eye on the poor, innocent freshie ever since I heard of the mane thrick ye played him. It's a cryin' shame, that's what! I'll do what I can for yez; not because ye deserve help, but on his account."

"Pop, you're a brick," cried Stuffy. "You see, I'm the most worried over this because I'm principally to blame. But when I started the joke I never dreamed it would go so far. He was such a soft mark. Why, a fellow doesn't run across material like him once in a century!"

"Thru' enough," assented O'Brien heartily, with a strange twinkle in his eye. "Well, I'll see what can be done. Fact is, I've had that freshie on me



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Thus attired, Jenks skipped out on the cinders and began to "train." Here Stuffy's monopoly ended, for the mob of volunteer coaches that lined the path showered him with suggestions:

"Kick your feet up more behind!"
"Throw your knees out sideways!"
"Swing your arms more; your hands ought to go above your head!"
"Let your tongue hang out; it makes you cooler!"

And so it went, each piece of advice more absurd than its forerunner, until Myers was obliged to stop them for fear that, guileless as he was, the victim's suspicions might be aroused. "That'll do, fellows," called Stuffy, raising his hand. "Mr. Jenks and I are extremely grateful for your goodwill, but we are working on a system that must not be disturbed. We have concluded that the Iliowitz method is best suited to Mr. Jenk's style, and you will oblige by not interfering."

Knowing Stuffy, we obeyed, and the "Iliowitz method" proved satisfactory beyond our rosiest dreams. When Stuffy's originality exhausted itself he had the fertile brains of the

to help himself by so much as lifting a finger.

Those who didn't know Jenks must wonder how any man with sufficient intelligence to get into college would submit to such a mauling and consider it honor; but Marcus was unique in more ways than one.

Of course the awakening of his suspicions was only a question of time; but thanks to his singular guilelessness, his persecutors actually tired of the sport before that time arrived. Indeed, I am not so sure that we deserved the name of "persecutors;" for while the game was on its victim basked in what he took to be genuine hero-worship, and was the happiest fellow in college.

The really serious side of the affair occurred to nobody until a couple of weeks after different interests had almost blotted out the remembrance of Jenks and his ridiculous performances. For although the hair-brained Stuffy turned his attention to other sources of amusement, and the mob of volunteer coaches, dressers, and rubbers dwindled and disappeared, that amazing freshman