



Jim lay over the cannon,
and fourteen sophomores
lined up behind him,
hefting their paddles

The Ringer

By CHARLES RICE McDOWELL

WHEN Min Deederick's hulking twenty-two-year-old, athletically-minded boy Jim began to turn into a professional prize-fighter, Min rebelled. She remembered what the ring had done to Jim's pa. Jim was a fireman's helper on the freights, and before the boxing notion had struck him, he had dreamed of becoming a first-line engineer.

With the help of the town's most influential citizen, Mr. Toleson, an alumnus of S.E.U., Min got Jim back into the high school that had given him up as hopeless several years before. Then, by adroit juggling of Jim's credits, he sent him to O.M.A., Southern's farmout prep school. All this Mr. Toleson did because he was genuinely fond of spitfire Min and because he knew how well S.E.U. could use a healthy grid-man like Jim.

At O.M.A. Jim roomed with slight, smart, cynical Ted Wendell. The boys became close

friends; patiently Wendell showed Jim how to learn things so he could both understand and remember them; cagily Jim goaded Wendell into becoming a promising track-man.

COACH NELSON and President Handiwell (pronounced Honeywool) of S.E.U. manage to wangle Jim the full scholarship, board and spending-money jobs that he will need. Nelson is delighted with Jim and allows him more say-so than the others. "In fact," he thinks, "that crazy goon might make a great coach out of me some day."

At a faculty meeting, Handiwell adroitly sidesteps the issue, raised by foxy, sour Dr. Pickens, of whether S.E.U.'s "Handiwell Plan" is not coming dangerously close to pure professionalism, and depriving more deserving students of the scholarships they should have. Just as adroitly, Handiwell talks four mutinous alumni out of bringing up the question of open subsidization at the banquet that night.

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Hunk Blevins, the freshman coach, has his problems too. He has given out the last of the jobs he controls to a mediocre grid-man, Bell; and at the last moment a far superior end, Ingerton, turns up. Blevins decides to get rid of Bell, who has already played in one S.E.U. freshman game and is thereby ineligible to play at any other college that fall.

At practice that afternoon, Blevins runs all his plays through Bell, half-killing him in the process. When Bell can't take it any more, Blevins labels him yellow, goading him into open insubordination.

"Turn in your uniform," he tells Bell coldly; and Bell is through with football . . . through with college.

Jim, having watched the whole thing, attempts to set the matter straight with Coach Nelson, who refuses to listen, and advises Jim not to be so free with his opinions.

That night, an angry and disappointed Jim hops the rods heading for home. . . .

CHAPTER XI

ROPE THE MAVERICK

SLICK NELSON told Millie after supper what Jim had said about Hunk's treatment of Sam Bell. "I can't believe Hunk would do a thing like that," he said, shaking his head.

"I think he'd knock you or anybody else in the head for twenty-five cents if he was sure he wouldn't be caught," his wife replied.

"Millie, don't you trust Hunk?"

"Not as far as I could throw a bull by the tail, and you don't either, but you think it's your duty to protect your coaches, right or wrong."

"Well, shouldn't I?"

"Not if they're wrong."

"But the whole morale would break down, Millie, if I admitted I ever thought—"

"Pshaw, I wish you were out of the whole rotten racket. The tyranny you coaches maintain over the lives of your players is the most complete that exists in the world today. It's positively horrible to think of it. You put them in games so they can't ever be eligible to play anywhere else. Then you bully them brutally. They have to take it because football is

their life. You make sycophants out of them before you allow them to display their great guts. You couldn't make one out of Deederick and that's what's hurting you."

Slick bit his lips. "Oh, Millie, I don't know what to do."

"I know what you'll do. You'll keep Deederick at any cost. You know he's worth the whole lot of them. You can't afford to lose him. If he were an ordinary player, you'd run him out of town; but he's a star. You'll give in."

Slick had stopped listening to Millie. She didn't understand anything about coaching. He went to the phone and rang the Athletic House and asked for Jim Deederick. Millie heard him say, "Gone? What? Gone where?" She heard him ask for Waller. After a moment's pause she heard him say desperately, "Gone home! You mean gone back to Oakdell? My God."

Slick ran down the cellar steps into the garage. Millie heard the car start. She felt sure Slick would come back with Deederick if he had to go to Oakdell. She laughed as she wondered how he could think it was so important, but she loved him because she felt so confident he would bring back Jim Deederick or anything else he went for.

AS THE *Royal Flier* pulled through Coal Mountain tunnel and started up the grade, Jim Deederick lay flat on his stomach on top of the baggage car, one hand warming in his coat while the other held on.

A hundred miles behind a big Buick roared down through the long, straight lines of pines at eighty miles an hour. Slick was at the wheel. Beside him sat a long-legged boy with a sharp nose and horn-rimmed glasses. On the rear seat, wrapped in a blanket, Frog Waller slept peacefully. The *Royal Flier* would be stopped at Carrollton, and Jim arrested and put in jail. It had been Ted's idea.

The cops pulled Jim off the blinds in Carrollton at ten thirty-five. Jim didn't

resist. He went to sleep with his clothes on in the Carroll County jail, wondering how long he was in for. Anyway, he wouldn't have to go back to S.E.U. He assumed it would be at least ninety days.

At daylight there came to Jim in his muddled dreams the sensation that someone was holding his hand and stroking his hair. "Min," he muttered, as he opened his eyes.

"I hate to wake you, Jim," the Frog said. "I hate to wake you when you're sleepin' so good here in this nice warm jail."

Jim grinned and slapped at the Frog affectionately. He sat up and looked around. Ted was standing by the cot grinning at him. He reached out with his left hand and gripped Ted's. "Hello, kid." He choked. He knew Ted wanted him back because he was Jim and not because he was a football player. Slick stood at the foot of the cot wearing a poker face.

Jim turned to Slick and looked at him with a cold eye. "You figured to make it pretty tough on me, didn't you, Mr. Nelson? Bringing these boys along."

Slick tried to turn it off. "Bring him along, men," he laughed, starting to go. He had everything fixed with the jailer. Buck Crawford was prosecuting attorney in Carrollton, and Buck had played at S.E.U. in 1914.

Jim asked Frog and Ted to wait in the car. He wanted to talk to Slick alone. They sat down together on the steps of the jail, and Jim wiped the cinders out of his eyes with the heel of his hand.

"Look-a-here, Mr. Nelson, I want to go back. You know that. But before I do, I got to be sure there's goner be straight shootin'. I ain't goner be mixed up in the kind of dirty stuff I saw pulled up there at S.E.U. yesterday. That guy Blevins is a louse."

Slick saw it was useless to try to defend Hunk. "Jim, I'm going to tell you something in confidence."

"Yes, sir."

"Can you keep it?"

"Sure, I can."

"Well, some of us don't trust Hunk any more than you do, see? But his contract has another year. I hope that will be his last. We've got to keep him this year, but I've decided what to do. I'm going to take him with me to help with the Varsity. He knows football and can help a lot, but I'm not going to leave him in charge of you freshmen when three or four of you have lost confidence in him. I'll send Chip Twineford over to take charge of you boys. You'll all like Chip. How's that—does that satisfy you?"

"Not quite, coach. What you gonna do about Sam Bell? He got an awful raw deal."

"I can take care of that. We're going to fix him up with Wible at Harding."

"Will he be eligible?"

"Sure. The game he played in wasn't a conference game. It won't count under their rules. That's where Bell went. He's down there now."

"All right, coach. I'm ready to go," Jim said.

CHAPTER XII

KITCHEN ARTIST

JIM had learned the art of dishwashing early in the kitchen of Min's depot restaurant in Oakdell. He had learned it before he remembered anything. So far as he knew he was a born dishwasher. Min always said that Jim never needed no rattler when he was a baby because she just gave him saucers and dish towels to work on when he was fretful.

When the brakemen used to get cups with nicks in them, they always told Min to bring a cup Jim hadn't been teething on. They swore Jim bit nicks out of the cups with his baby teeth.

By the time Jim was ten years old he had his own theories about dishwashing. The rudimentary idea was that you must never mix your plates. All plates of the same size had to be stacked together, all saucers together, all cups together. Even knives and forks and spoons had to be in separate piles.

Half-eaten buns were used to swipe gravy off the plates. After being swiped, the greasy plates went into boiling water to soak. Glasses and cups and saucers all went into separate pans. Forks went in one pan, knives into another, spoons into another. A pan for everything and everything in its pan; it was the unpardonable sin to mix 'em up.

Jim would keep records on himself for washing a day's dishes and mark it on the wall. He invented a special technique for drying knives.

He would pick up about thirty knives in a big towel, and using a down stroke on the blade with his right, he would pull the handle through the towel-covered fingers of his left hand as he threw the knife into the tray. He developed such skill that the knives poured out in a steady stream, the more noise the better. It sounded something like a machine gun firing when Jim was drying knives.

So many railroaders used to come back in the kitchen to watch him that Min would have to shoo them out.

As the years passed Jim had added to his show. By the time he was twelve he could juggle a fork, a spoon and a cup.

By the time he was fifteen he had added an egg and when he was sixteen he ended by catching the egg behind his back. He had had to practice with the egg beside a feather bed.

It had been several years since Jim had been professionally engaged in dishwashing when he entered the University.

He hadn't been anxious to display his talents, but it was simply in the cards. Most of the beanery bulls were willing enough to wait on tables. It gave them a chance to eat first and get the best of it, but they resented washing or drying dishes. The boys gave Miss Belle so much trouble that she was repeatedly in tears.

Frog Waller got out of helping with the dishes by pretending to be so awkward that he couldn't help dropping them. At the end of the first week, Frog had broken so many plates he had been assigned the job of sweeping under tables.

Of course Frog had dropped more plates than he had broken, for they were so thick they seldom broke. They'd never break if you dropped them on the linoleum, but there was one humpy place in the concrete over the drain where they broke nicely.

Frog soon learned to stand over that spot while wiping.

Others learned Frog's trick and the breakage became intolerable. Miss Belle having heard one too many crashes had fled to the office by the pantry, sobbing. Jim followed Miss Belle to her den. He brought her a glass of cold water and patted her just as he always did Min when she blew up. He assured her he would straighten things out.

HE hung up his coat and walked into the kitchen and banged his fist on the sink. "The next rat that breaks a dish is goner get his head broke, see? Get these dishes dry and get this place cleaned up. You're runnin' Miss Belle nuts." Jim took off his shirt, pushed the dishwasher out of the way and plunged elbow deep into the hot water.

Most of the bull necks were impressed; they stood staring at each other in amazement. Their hands gripped the plates a little harder as they saw the play of muscle in Jim's back.

A little rebellious rankle gnawed at Cowboy Ingerton's middle.

He knew Jim didn't like it about his getting Sam Bell's job. He didn't like the way Jim tried to run everything, anyway. He'd been used to running things himself where he came from, and he hadn't met the guy yet who could get him told.

Ingerton walked over to the drain and dropped a soup plate. Jim heard the crash and wheeled around. He stepped toward Ingerton, wiping the suds down his arms ominously. Ingerton let fly a heavy coffee cup. Jim's head moved slightly to the side and the cup shattered against the wall.

Jim came on.

Ingerton threw a haymaker, but missed. Jim grabbed him by the neck and shook him as a dog shakes a mole. He bent him

over the table and slapped his head with his open hand. The blow jarred Ingerton's spine and his resistance wilted. Jim lifted him to the table, sat him down and turned him loose.

"Look-a-here, Ingy, you're a good-looking boy. You've a good-looking face, see? Your nose is still straight and your teeth are good. You don't want your nose knocked down like mine, do you, son? If you ever make me hit you, you won't never look the same, see?"

The scowl left Jim's countenance and his big face grew sweet. "I won't never hit you, son, unless you make me, see? I ain't got nuthin' agin you. Me and you are goner get along. We're goner play on the same blame football team and we're goner stick together and win a lot of games. I'm sorry I slapped you, son."

Jim held out his hand and grinned. Ingy didn't like the son-stuff, but he did like the look on Jim's face. "Okay, pappy," he said, "shake."

"That's the stuff, boy. Come on, let's git finished up with these dishes. I wanter show you guys a trick or two when I'm through."

Jim finished the washing and dried his hands. He pitched up a teacup and caught it behind his back. He dropped the cup and caught it on his toe and flipped it over his head and caught it again behind him.

"A guy's got to be pretty awkward to ever break a dish," Jim said. "You-all don't wanter be as awkward as Frog."

"Is that the trick you promised to do?" Frog said. "It ain't much."

"Shucks, no. Bring me a fork and a spoon and an egg; I got a teacup."

Jim took them and put them on the table. First he sent the fork and spoon tumbling over and over each other in the air and then the teacup was introduced. A circle of admiring beanery bulls held their breath in admiration. Jim reached for the egg. As it went up and tumbled over and over with the cup and fork and spoon, breathing entirely ceased.

For a half minute the pieces of tableware and the egg went up from Jim's palms

and flowed over each other with the grace of a fountain. The spoon and the fork and the teacup came to rest in his left hand; the egg went high and came to rest softly in Jim's hand behind his back.

"Well, I'm a lowdown dog," the beanery chorused, as Jim put the egg in the teacup.

"Men," Jim said, "this all goes to show that kitchen work is reely a art."

Jim lectured his captivated audience on his theories of washing dishes. He said he planned to introduce his methods and everybody would get through twenty minutes earlier. The beanery boys were ready to believe that Jim knew his kitchen stuff.

Miss Belle had observed the *coup d' état* through the crack in the door. She sensed that there was going to be orderly government in the beanery for the first time in thirteen years. Maybe there was going to be an era of good feeling. She silently prayed for a continuance of the established order, and thanked the Lord for sending her Jim Deederick.

Jim left the beanery and walked over to the Co-op to perform his duties there. He hung up his coat and stepped behind the book counter. A student approached and asked for a Greencastle and Middleborough on Elements of Seventeenth Century Prose. Jim found the heavy, dark green book and handed it over.

"How much is it?" asked the boy.

Jim studied the price list a long time, finally he replied, "Five dollars and a quarter."

"Five dollars and a quarter! That's outrageous."

Jim shrugged.

"That's the price, son."

"How do you explain charging such a price as that?"

Jim thought about the matter carefully. There must be some reason. He looked at the two names on the cover, and light dawned.

He grinned and said:

"I tell you, son, how it is. When you go to buy a book wrote by two writers, it's just low down murder!"

CHAPTER XIII

A POLITICIAN IS BORN

"**T**ED, I ain't goner wear this silly freshman hat to town," Jim said, looking at himself in the glass.

"You better wear it. What are you going to town for, anyway? Do country boys always have to go to town?"

"I been doin' some buyin' for Miss Belle lately, since she found out I know my groceries. I'm goin' up to the A & P now and get her some green stuff."

"Why don't you want to wear your cap, Deedy?"

"My face is too old lookin'. I look so jeepsawful silly with it on."

"You don't look any worse than anybody else."

"I do, too. They look totable cute on the seventeen-year-olders, but I'm too big-faced and old lookin'."

"You're lettin' Ingy and Frog get your goat with that pappy stuff. You look all right with your cap on."

"Ted, I wouldn't look any simpler if I put on a low neck dress and a pearl necklace."

"Haven't you been wearing it all over the campus?"

"I don't care how silly I look over here around them kids on the campus, but I don't like to go up around the stores wearin' the looney thing. Everybody notices me and the clerks look at me like they're tryin' not to laugh. Nuts, I ain't goner wear it."

"Now, Deedy, don't be a fool. You'll get in trouble with the sophomore vigilance committee. They'll whip you on the canon."

"They wouldn't do that, Ted. They'd have sense enough to understand."

"That's just the point. They haven't got sense enough to understand anything."

"I'll bet you they wouldn't bother me."

"Yes, they would. They'd jump you quicker than anybody else and then you'd fight and knock the livers out of somebody and then there'd be a lot of trouble. Don't you go anywhere without it."

Jim picked up the cap and put it on. He looked at himself from every angle. He ended by throwing it down. "Holy cat, Ted, it won't do." He started toward the door.

Ted stood up and held the door shut. "Please, Deedy, don't be a damn fool. You're going to get in trouble and then you're going to fight when they try to whip you and then somebody'll get hurt and there'll be sin to pay. They'd be sure to jump you because they'd be afraid people would say they were afraid of a football player if they didn't."

"I never thought of that. Well, let 'em whip me. It wouldn't kill me. I wouldn't fight. I'd let 'em whip me."

"Say, Jim, did that little cash register girl up at the A & P laugh at you?"

"Yeah, a little." Jim blushed.

"Well, she's married. Go on and wear your cap."

"So she's married. Anyway, Ted, I ain't goner wear it. But I'll tell you what I'll do. I promise you on my honor I won't fight if they whup my britches off."

"All right, then, go ahead." Ted opened the door. "I hope they do. You're a great big baby that can't take it. You haven't got guts enough to stand a little red-headed married woman laughing at you."

Jim stopped. Haven't got guts enough—he started back for his cap. Then he stopped. "Anyway, I got guts enough to take my lickin' without fightin' if they ketch me."

"All right, go ahead, and hush. The whole damn town will be talking about how handsome you look without the freshman hat."

TED picked up the silly little cap that Jim had left on the dresser and turned it over. It looked like a little blue tea saucer with a short, willy brim and a white button. Ted admired Jim for not wearing it. He thought for a moment that he'd like to die for Jim's right not to wear it.

Then he laughed at himself. The big sap will probably talk 'em out of whipping him somehow, even if they catch him. Every-

thing awful always almost happens to Deedy, but nothing ever quite does.

When Jim came out of the A & P, four serious-looking young collegians were waiting for him. They always caught 'em. The Vigilance Committee didn't have much else to do.

"Aren't you Jim Deederick?"

"Yeah," Jim replied, hunching to balance the heavy bags under his arms.

"A freshman, aren't you?"

"Yeah."

"You mean yes, sir. My name's Villig. I'm chairman of the Sophomore Vigilance Committee."

"Yeah."

"Yes, sir. Why aren't you wearing your freshman cap?"

"I'm too big—" Jim was trying to say he was too big-faced and old lookin'.

"You're too what?" Villig interrupted violently. "You come with us."

"I ain't got time now, son. I gotta take this stuff to Miss Belle over to the beanery." Jim proceeded toward the beanery Ford and pushed his bags through the window and stepped into the front seat. Villig and his comrades rushed up beside the car.

"You are ordered to report to the Armory tonight at twelve o'clock in front of the cannon."

"Can't you make it a little earlier, son? I'm out for football, and I'm supposed to turn in before eleven."

"I said twelve o'clock."

"I wisht you'd make it earlier if it would be just as convenient for everybody. I'm supposed to hit the hay before eleven."

"I said twelve."

"You're goner beat me, ain't you?"

"We certainly are."

"You gotta whup any more freshmen?"

"That's none of your business."

"Well, I wisht you'd make mine first, son, 'cause I gotta git to bed."

Jim saw that one of the four members of the committee was a little amused. Jim winked at him in a friendly way without knowing why. Villig's rage overpowered him when he saw the wink.

"You'd better be there, and you'd better be on time, and it'll be fifteen licks—not ten—and you'd better not make any trouble."

"I won't make you no trouble, son. I promised I wouldn't. Don't you-all be late 'cause I gotta git to bed." Jim let in the clutch and the beanery Ford moved off, leaving Villig and his companions standing in the street.

WHEN Ted left the library at a quarter of twelve he wondered why Jim's light was on and went up to see. Frog and Ingy were asleep in the lower bunks and Jim was standing in his shorts with a pair of trousers in his hands.

"Going to bed, Jim?"

"Naw, I was just feelin' Frog's pants to see if they were any thicker than mine. They're goner whup me at twelve o'clock. You can come over and see it if you think you'd enjoy it."

"No, I don't care to see it. But you brought it on yourself."

"Min always told me it was bad manners to say I told you so when a feller got in bad by his own doin'."

"Well, good luck, Jim," Ted said. "Remember you promised not to fight."

"Don't worry, Ted. I won't. I know I brung it on myself."

At five minutes before twelve, Slick Nelson came down the steps in his bare feet to answer the phone. He mumbled oaths as he came. "Who in blazes's calling me this time of night. Hello—"

"Hello, Mr. Nelson, this is Ted Wendell. The Sophomore Vigilance Committee is going to whip Jim Deederick on the cannon in about five minutes for not wearing a freshman cap. They're gathering in front of the Armory now."

Slick banged up the phone and ran for his pants and shoes. Within two minutes the Buick would be tearing past stop lights in the direction of the Armory.

... Jim was leaning on the cannon when the Vigilance Committee arrived. Jim wondered why so many had to come.

"Hello, boys," he said huskily.

No one answered. They surrounded him as if they expected him to run. Jim began unbuttoning his belt.

"What are you doing," Villig asked.

"Don't I have to take down my pants?"

"No, of course not," Villig replied stiffly.

"Deederick, it is customary to allow the offender to say a few words in mitigation of the offense. Have you anything to say?"

"I'd like to ask a favor."

"What is it?"

"Will you ask whoever it is that's goner do the swingin' to sorta work high up? I'm a football player and I'd sorta hate to git my legs bruised this close to a game." A little titter went around the circle.

"Take your places, men," Villig said.

Fourteen sophomores with paddles rowed up behind him and Jim lay across the breach end of the cannon as directed and lifted his buttocks high. Villig brought down his paddle with a blow that hurt. The next two licks were easy. Jim knew they weren't meant to hurt. The fourth scared Jim; it seemed to tear into his leg. The next two were easy.

Just then the lights of an automobile struck across Jim's eyes. A big car was coming straight over the sidewalk toward the cannon. The siren was shrieking.

In an instant a big man had jumped out and was running toward the group, wearing street trousers and pajama shirt. The boys stepped back. They kept getting behind each other.

Slick jerked the paddle out of Villig's hand and began to brandish it wildly. "Get up and get in that car," he yelled at Jim. As the crowd melted away into the darkness, Villig tried to argue with Slick, but Slick roared at him that if he said any more he'd take him by the nape of the neck and drag him before the Dean.

Villig left, muttering sullenly.

Jim followed Slick to the car and Slick took him to the Athletic House and had him take off his pants. He examined Jim's legs and gave a sigh of relief. "How's a man going to give the fools a team when they haven't any more sense than to beat up his quarterback's legs?" he mumbled.

THE following morning most of the beanery boys came to breakfast without their caps out of loyalty to Jim and a few of the bumpy-faced boys from the dorm, future Phi Beta Kappas, who loved injustice as old women love sorrow, put their caps in their pockets. Sedition was in the air, the beginning of a rebellion. A young communist from Joisey City had already begun organizing a revolt when Ted arrived. Jim hadn't noticed anything, but Ted sensed the tension in the air. He called Jim into Miss Belle's office and explained that a wholesale fight between the freshmen and sophomores was being incubated there in the beanery.

"Shucks, I can't help it," Jim said.

"You're the only person who can stop it."

"What could I do?"

"You go out there and bang on the table and make 'em a speech and ask them not to leave off their caps."

"Ted, I can't make no sorta speech. But I'll try. What you want me to tell 'em?"

"Tell them you were wrong. Tell them that you are going to be proud to wear your cap. Tell them it's the symbol of the best class in S.E.U."

"Okay, Ted, okay. When do you want me to do it, Ted?"

"Right now, before some of those chokers guzzle their food and go."

Jim walked out in the middle of the beanery floor and banged a water pitcher with a knife.

"Boys," he began, "I want make you a little talk." Five hundred freshmen and a few upper classmen were silent.

"Maybe all you boys heard about me gittin' a whuppin' on the cannon last night. Well, I brung it all on myself. I ain't got nobody to blame but myself. I oughter of wore it. I know that now."

"I ain't got nuttin' again the cap. I think it looks damn cute on you boys, but I kinder got a idee that it looked sorter outer place on me. I thought I was too big-faced and old lookin' to be wearin' the simple little thing. I looked at myself in the glass and it put me in mind of an ole horse

mule poking his head over the door of a stall.

"I know now it wasn't no fault of the cap. It's a nice little cap and it don't reely make a feller look no different from the way Goddlemighty made him look. It just ain't big enough to hide nuthin' about a feller's looks. I may be wrong, but I kinder feel like the best thing for a newcomer to do is to let the folks on the ground run things to suit themselves till he's been around a while.

"I got to admit that I don't see a bit of sense in a feller havin' to wear a cap like that without no brim, but I ain't runnin' this college and I've decided to do as I'm told till I been around here a while. I'm goner wear my cap and I hope you guys will wear your'n. We don't wantar start off the year by fightin' and raisin' ructions.

"Then there was sump'n else I wanted to say. Le's see—aw, yeah—it was this. When I'm walkin' around the campus and see a guy that ain't got on a freshman cap, I don't know what class he's in, but when I see a feller with one of 'em on, I know he's in my class; he's just a pore ignorant freshman like me.

"I know he's goner be around S.E.U. for four years, same as me—if I pass my work—and I feel like gittin' acquainted with that guy. It's sorter like a lodge button; it means you're in the same boat. It means you're in the same outfit, see? It means you're on the same side. I'm for all of us wearin' our caps and stickin' together—"

Jim ran down and didn't know how to finish. Suddenly he remembered what the preacher's boy said in his valedictory at Oakdell High School.

"And—and we're goner make this class the best danged class that's ever been in S.E.U."

As Jim finished his sermon in tones that would have done his grandpa credit on any corner in Oakdell, it was greeted with wild applause. Frog Waller expressed his unrestrained admiration by hurling a hard roll at the speaker, and Jim bowed him-

self out in a shower of rolls and bread.

Not only was the cap rebellion ended, but Jim Deederick had suddenly become a political figure at S.E.U. He had emerged from the whipping incident the hero of a bloc that would be hard to beat—the bull-necks, the beanery boys and the bumpy-faced boys from the dorm who were destined to wear the keys.

CHAPTER XIV

THE MILLS OF THE GODS

THE beanery boys were supposed to report to the kitchen at seven o'clock, but Jim reported at six-thirty. Miss Belle gave Jim seven dollars a week for coming a half hour early and for going to the grocery for her once a day.

Jim often got to the beanery by six-fifteen. He wasn't in the habit of sleeping after five o'clock anyway. The seven-dollar income put him in pocket money.

Jim always bet all he had on the freshman games. Min had always said that a boy that wasn't willin' to bet on hisself never had no business in a game.

After the first game, Jim had fourteen dollars. He had made three touchdowns himself. This was the most money he'd had since he came to S.E.U., so he blew himself to a pup that cost three dollars. It was a friendly-looking pup and was real cute with a twine-string around its neck. Besides, he looked like he might grow up to be a good night dog.

Miss Belle let Jim keep him under the kitchen of the beanery. He forgot to name him, but called him puppoo, so Puppoo became his name.

By the time the freshmen played the Aggies, Jim had fifty dollars. He had gone over to Norton with Chip Twineford to see the Aggies play Dobbs, and while he was waiting for Chip in a drug store he heard some big-talking guys discussing the freshman game between S.E.U. and the Aggies. Jim listened to them intently for a while. They seemed to think this fellow Deederick was good, but that the Aggies would stop him.

Jim reached in his pocket and pulled out his fifty dollars. Jim never had kept money in banks; he always carried whatever he had. "Mister, I'll bet you this on the S.E.U. freshmen."

They took Jim up. "If you'll make it two to one, I'll bet you the fifty that Deederick makes more points than the Aggies." The guys liked that better. They left the money next door at Mannini's poolroom, and after the money was in the safe, one of the big-talking guys introduced himself. "My name's Smock; I travel for Belknap out of Louervul."

"My name's Deederick," Jim replied, shaking hands.

"Are you kin to Jim Deederick?" Smock asked.

"Unh-uh," Jim replied.

"Just like the name, eh?"

"No, I'm Jim Deederick."

"Well, you cocky son of a gun."

Jim laughed. "Tain't no harm in believin' in yourself, is it, friend?"

"Hell, naw. More power to you." Smock looked Jim over carefully and then went down to Silliman's poolroom, looking for a hundred dollars on S.E.U., much as he hated to hedge a bet.

Jim bet the hundred he won in the Aggie game at one to two in the final game with Durham U., and won again. He lost his scholarship at the end of the year on account of bad grades, but it didn't make any difference. He would have enough money to pay his own tuition for the first semester of the next year.

THE first week of June was the most nervewracking time of year for S.E.U. coaches. A sophomore player, to be eligible, had to get a D average for the freshman year. Jim had made three D's, one E and a C the first semester.

On the third of June the registrar's office showed that Jim had three D's and an E for the second semester, and one grade hadn't come in. It would have to be a C or Jim wouldn't be eligible. It was the English grade that hadn't been turned in yet.

Of course, grades were kept entirely secret until all grades were posted, but Miss Maude had some way of finding out grades of football players. She used to work in the registrar's office, and had friends over there.

Miss Maude told Slick that Deederick was out if he didn't get a C in English. Slick's face fell. He knew English was Jim's weakness. Although Jim's appearance and manners were getting better, his English hadn't improved a bit.

Miss Maude added, "His instructor in English is Carter Douglas."

Slick wheeled on her. "I don't want to know who his instructor is. I've got some decency left. I wouldn't try to influence a teacher to raise a grade."

Slick went in his office and slammed the door. He sat down and gripped his head with his fingers and pressed hard. He knew he had to have Deederick to win football games next fall. He knew he wouldn't get a renewal of his contract if he didn't win. He knew Millie was right. He ought to get out of the dirty racket.

He wondered if he shouldn't have stayed in the air service. He'd be a major now if he had, coming up for a lieutenant-colonelcy soon. He'd gotten out on account of Millie.

He didn't know anything about insurance or stocks. He didn't have any scruples against helping poor boys through college. The purity business was all rot and the petty crookedness was a result of official university hypocrisy. It wasn't his fault. But changing grades or putting pressure on teachers to pass dumb boys was too much. Slick had rather be fired than do that.

Shep opened Slick's door and started to speak to him. He saw Slick was in no mood to talk about equipment and he closed the door quietly and walked into Miss Maude's office.

"What's the matter with Coach?"

"It's Deederick. He's got to have a C in English to be eligible. It looks like he's out."

"Who is his instructor?"

"Carter Douglas."

SHEP went out on the gymnasium steps and sat down. He knew he'd have to act quick. He knew this information had to get to one man, and that man was F. Wadlington Handiwell. Over beyond the hedge by the president's house, a Negro in uniform was polishing the metal work on a Packard car.

Shep walked over that way.

"Hello, Mr. Shep," William said, dropping his rag on the fender. Shep and William conversed quietly a few minutes and Shep went on his way.

He was pretty sure now that something would happen quickly.

In a moment, the Packard moved out of the yard in the direction of the Administration Building. William was going after the president to bring him home for lunch.

On the return trip, William volunteered that it looked like Mist' Deederick wasn't goner be eligible on account of he already had three D's and an E. Dr. Handiwell didn't reply.

"'Course, if 'Fessor Douglas give him a C he'd be elergerble then," William continued.

"Professors can't *give* students anything, William. Students either make their grades at S.E.U. or they don't get them. Students aren't given anything at this University."

"Yassir, I know. I meant Mr. Deederick would be elergerble if he made a C without no hep."

Dr. Handiwell phoned Miss Macey to cancel his engagement to speak to the Washington Alumni Association. "Try to get in touch with Dean Quisenberry and see if he can go," he added.

Dr. Handiwell thought fast.

Douglas had repeatedly asked for a promotion from instructor to assistant professor, and Mrs. Douglas was going to have a baby. The pressure was available, but the approach was a little baffling. The third cup of coffee brought inspiration.

Dr. Handiwell omitted his nap.

When he arrived at his office, Instructor Douglas was waiting for him in the ante-room. Miss Macey had been efficient.

"Come in, Carter," the president said cordially. He put his big arm around the young man and led him through the holy of holies, back into the holiest of all holies, his own private office.

"It's about the matter of your promotion, Carter. I've been trying to work this matter out. I've wanted to promote you for a long time and I've wanted to relieve you of that evening work you've been doing with the debating sections. I think the married men wherever possible ought to be relieved of evening classroom work."

"If you'll pardon my mentioning such an intimate matter, Dr. Honeywool, we are expecting an addition to the family, and I should like to be at home in the evenings as much as possible."

"Well, congratulations. I am delighted to hear that. Now, I have talked with the head of your department, and he says that the only man he would be willing to have take over your debating sections is Thatcher."

"Yes, Thatcher would handle the work very well. He was on the debating team at the University of Chicago. He is very much interested in that kind of work."

"The only difficulty is that he is already teaching fifteen hours and he is acting as proctor in one of the freshman dormitories. If he could be relieved of this responsibility in the dormitory, I could relieve you of the debating sections, but I can't think who could be put in the Jefferson Davis dormitory."

Dr. Handiwell rang for Miss Macey and asked for a list of instructors.

After reading the list carefully, Dr. Handiwell shook his head disappointedly. "I'm afraid there isn't anyone on this list."

Carter Douglas' face grew tense, but he remained silent.

Dr. Handiwell seemed to think aloud. "Perhaps we could use some older student who would command the respect of the younger boys . . . Oh, I know, Carter, I might put James Deederick over there in the Jefferson Davis dormitory. He is a boy of exceptional character and is much older than the freshmen. He's as old as

some of our instructors. He has done a wonderful job in the dining hall; has brought order out of chaos over there, I understand. He's the only student I would want to trust."

"He's a very poor student, Dr. Honeywool."

"Oh, he's an underprivileged fellow, but he tries. I don't know what his grades are, but Dean Quisenberry informs me that he's lost his scholarship. His grades are not all posted, but if he gets any more D's I'm afraid he will be out of school. Too bad."

"Well, suppose we leave it this way—if Deederick comes through safely, I'll give him Thatcher's work as proctor and that will relieve Thatcher so he can take over your work. And I feel sure the executive council will approve your promotion. I'll let you know when Deederick's grades are in. Your freshman grades have already been posted, of course?"

"No, sir."

"Well, well, I shouldn't have mentioned Deederick's grades if I'd known that."

"No, of course not, Dr. Honeywool."

INSTRUCTOR CARTER DOUGLAS decided to reread Jim Deederick's long theme. Perhaps he had read it too hastily and hadn't been quite fair to Deederick. He opened the paper and read:

Raleroaders in Oakdell, Kentucky, all go down to the deepo to see the Dixie Palm go by. Peeple up at Somerset and Danville think they do it because they got nuthing else to do.

That is not so.

We got a good movie in Oakdell and have good Westerns the same as anybody else. They go down to watch her go by because they think she is grate. They are proud of her.

You can hear her go woo-woo way up the track four mile north as she heads out of the tunnel. She lites up the whole holler throwing her lites against the cut. Lord but she is pretty. We like to feel the ground shake under her as he goes by. The women folks all bring thier babies to see her. They name thier babies for Jim Lester. He is the engineer.

He is been more than thirty year with the rode. He is sixty now. He sets in the cabin cocky as a young one with his cap a little side ways on his head. He never missed a run in seven year.

Then he had the flu. Everybody had the flu. It was not his fault. It seems like all the kids in Oakdell is name Jim Lester something. Most folks think I was named for him. My mother says I am not. I wish I was name Jim Lester Deederick. He is the greatest old guy I ever seen. Min knows him personelly.

When I was thirteen I was a call boy for the road. My job was mainly to wake up firemen that stoke slop freights. It is not easy to wake up crew men when they never have enuf sleep. They hit at you a heap while they are waking up. I got a repertation for being hard to hit.

A feller has to get hard to hit when he has been dodging firemen since he was thirteen. I come pretty near going pro like my dad.

My mother did not want me to. Dad got punch drunk. He got hit and killed by number seven. It was because he was listless-like and was not watching out. Min never got no damages.

Min she skeemed up with Mister Coleson to send me to college to keep me from doing pro fiteing. That is how I happened to come to college. Cran says the Lord never ment me for a scholar but here I am trying to write a theme so as I can get elegeble . . ."

Carter Douglas, raised in Brookline, quivered every time his eye hit a misspelled word. "Awful—awful," he groaned aloud, but he kept on reading the story of old Jim Lester's life.

It was a life of smoke and steam and jolts, with a half dozen wrecks thrown in. Old Jim had shot one man over his wife and killed a train robber with a shovel in his early days with the Santa Fe.

Something happened on every page. It was the life of a man who had cooked his bacon in the shovel as his train drove on through the night; a man who slept when it suited and breathed coal dust for sixty healthy years; whose old age had been rewarded with the honor of crashing through the darkness for eight hours at seventy-five miles an hour, drawing a twelve-Pullman train.

Carter felt like wiping the cinders out of his eyes as he finished. He realized he had enjoyed reading it a second time. At least the damn thing is real, he thought.

Carter Douglas raised Jim's grade on the long theme from D to B and entered his final grade as a C. . . .

"You know, Dr. Honeywool, Mist' Jim Deederick is elergerble. Fesser Douglas give him a C," William volunteered as he drove the president home for dinner.

"Gave him—"

"Naw, sir, he made it hissef. Anyway, he's elergerble."

"Did you suppose a petty matter of that sort would interest me, William?"

"Naw, sir. I knowed you wouldn't keer. I knowed you ain't got time to be thinkin' about no sich stuff as that."

CHAPTER XV

WASHED UP

THERE was only one student at S.E.U. who was known to every single man on the campus. It was Gentleman Mike, the sandwich man.

Gentleman Mike carried sandwiches at night into all the dormitories and all the fraternity houses. His sheer ubiquity would have been enough to have made him well known. Half Irish and half Jew, Gentleman Mike was a happy combination of both races. Along with his mother's nose he had inherited her shrewdness, industry and persistent aggressiveness.

With his father's big Irish mouth had come as ingratiating a smile as could be seen on the campus. Out of it flowed constantly as amusing a stream of amiable billingsgate as had been heard at S.E.U. for many a year.

The flat-footed, corpulent figure lumbering about the campus in the deep hours of the night was as familiar as the buildings or the trees. Mike had been born fully introduced to all his fellow humans. It was impossible to pass him without speaking to him, and it was indeed an offish fellow who could pass him without being inveigled into a talk. The only method of closing a

conversation was to purchase a sandwich or at least a Hershey bar.

Mike had received the sobriquet "Gentleman" early in his freshman year as a result of his stopping a fist fight between two rather well-known upper classmen. A young man from Evanston, Illinois, with no malice intended, had committed the unpardonable sin. He had carelessly impugned the ancestry of a young gentleman from South Carolina during a poker game at the Sig house.

Although the Yankee had earnestly explained that he meant no reflection upon the character of the South Carolinian's mother, he had not officially unsaid the words by saying "I take it back." This, he stupidly felt, was unnecessary and could not be done without loss of face, once the gentleman from South Carolina had furred up at him.

The Southerner had challenged the Yankee to a duel with fists behind the Sig house. A circle had been formed and the duelists were squaring off when Mike arrived with his basket. He broke through the circle yelling "Chees, youse guys be gennamen!"

Flourishing around between the duelists with his basket, he rendered an interchange of blows impossible, and caused the duel to end in a farce. Thenceforth, he was known as "Gentleman Mike."

Having been shipped twice over the cannon during his freshman year for making impertinent remarks to members of the sophomore class, Gentleman Mike became a little resentful toward the activities of the Vigilance Committee.

At the beginning of their sophomore year, he decided to run Jim Deederick for Chairman of that committee. Through the assistance of Ted, who now wrote a column on the *News* called "As Seen Through Sophomoric Eyes," the campaign was successful.

Jim was thereby made a little political acorn which might grow into something big in student government. Mike got credit for being a political manager who might have to be dealt with some day by the

Big Clique, which up to this time had dished out all the political patronage.

Jim's first act as Chairman of the Vigilance Committee was to make a speech to the sophomore class in which he urged that it didn't do a bit of good to beat freshmen up. He likened whipping pore little homesick freshmen to healthy chickens pecking a pore, sick chicken to death. The cannon whippings were discontinued.

NEXT, Jim and Gentleman Mike launched an attack on "gauntlet night." It had been the custom on this night to have all the sophomores line up on each side of the diagonal road across the campus, with paddles and pieces of fishing poles.

Every freshman except members of the football squad had to run the gauntlet. Every year some of the freshmen were badly beaten up. It was bad enough to have all the sophomores take a cut at freshmen rears, but it had gotten to be the custom for upper classmen and alumni and even laymen to take part. Corn liquor had complicated the problem further.

Gauntlet night had broken up in a fight during Jim's freshman year. Frog Waller had been the cause of the fight. He would have been excused as a member of the freshman football team if he hadn't shot off his mouth and provoked the sophomores, and they put him in the line with the rest.

That was what Frog wanted them to do. He had planned a little practical joke that he felt sure would be some fun.

He had decided that he would run about thirty yards down the line and get up full speed and then break out of line by running over a couple of sophomores. He hadn't realized that a hundred and ninety pounds going at the speed of a sprinter might hurt somebody. His joke turned out successfully but with about as much fun to the victims as if he had run over them with a car.

The joke resulted in Asa Villig's arm being broken and Pete Lucas being sent to the hospital with a slight concussion

from his head striking the concrete curb.

It also resulted in a general fight between the two classes.

The gauntlet was omitted for the first time in thirty-seven years under Jim's régime, and for the first time in the history of the University, a ringer athlete's name was associated with reform in student government.

The general resentment to Jim's interference with University traditions was more or less allayed when Jim accounted for both of the touchdowns that beat the Aggies that year. Resentment of Frog's conduct was also mitigated when it was understood that the coaching staff had said that the Frog's cutting down Red Gentry, the Aggie fullback, had made the second touchdown possible.

Reformers were bad as a class, but reformers that could win football games were tolerated.

Baseball fans had looked forward to a great season with Jim Deederick pitching. He had had a wonderful year as a freshman. He had pitched two no-hit games and fanned out fourteen men in the Aggie game. He had so much steam that he had the cow-milkers' feet in the bucket all afternoon. The sportswriters said that all Deederick needed was a little change of pace to be ready for the big time.

It had looked like S.E.U. was in for three years of good times. The Ingerton-Waller-Deederick football combination would be too much for the cow-milkers. Cushaw McIntosh had laid in so many baskets against the Aggies that the conference heads were agitating changing the basketball rules to keep tall men out of the hole and to abolish the center jump. And now Lefty had a good team and a star pitcher in Deederick.

It was bitter medicine for the fans when Jim had to be taken out of his first game with Maryland Teachers'. His throwing arm was gone. He was wild, didn't have any stuff on the ball, and didn't even have any real steam. After one trial, Lefty and Jim both suspected that he was all washed up. It was the result of one blow that he

took in the last quarter of the Aggie football game that fall.

Slick had wanted to take Jim out after he had made the second touchdown, but Cap'n Eddie told Slick he mustn't do it. The crowd had come to see Deederick and the crowd had to have its money's worth if they were going to build up the gate and overflow the stands.

They couldn't hope to close the end and make a horseshoe of the stadium unless they could fill the stands they already had. Slick had left Deederick in the game, knowing very well the Aggies were gunning for him.

It was in the last five minutes of the game that the Aggies knocked Jim out.

It was an off-tackle play and Jim was carrying the ball. The tackle and the end set him up, and Red Gentry tackled through him with his two hundred and five pounds, while the end and tackle held him in a twist. Jim woke up in the showers, and an hour later a deep aching in his right shoulder had worried him. He wondered if they had done something to him that might permanently affect his throwing arm.

The night after he was taken out of the box in the game with Maryland Teachers', Jim knew his suspicion was a dreadful farce. He was *all* washed up. He would never pitch big league ball. He would never play baseball of any sort that amounted to very much.

Lefty had talked to Dr. Woodward at the State Hospital about the shoulder and he didn't give Lefty any hope. Jim said nothing at all when Lefty told him, but got Puppoo and went for a walk. He had always supposed that sooner or later he'd end up in the big leagues. He would never be able now to get any of the things for Min he had intended to buy with the proceeds of money ball.

It was the first heartbreaking disappointment that had ever come into his life.

The next afternoon he turned in his suit and reported for track. They might be able to use him on the relay team.

CHAPTER XVI

GLADIATORS' NIGHT

IT WAS the middle of Jim's junior year when Tony Colletti ran into him on the stairs as Jim was leaving basketball practice.

"Jeemie, I hear you done a bit of fighting when you was a youngster."

"Yeah, why?"

"I'd like to work wid you sometime. I hear you're hard to hit."

"Any of 'em can be hit, Tony."

"How come you quit, Jeemie?"

"My mother didn't want me to sign. That's why I'm in college, Tony. It was Min's scheme to keep me out of fightin'. See, dad was in the game and he took too much—was walkin' on his heels before he died."

"How good were you, Jeemie?"

"I was good enough to make the grade, I guess, Tony, but I don't know. I never fought a first-rater. I never had any trouble with street-fair fighters. The pros I've worked with were all a little old."

"Have you got the punch, Jeemie?"

"I know I can hit harder than the general run. I got that from my dad. He must have had a killer of a right hand, but I hear he didn't have much else except guts."

"When would it suit you, Jeemie, to work with me?"

"Sunday would be the only time."

"How about five o'clock?"

"Okay. Sunday at five."

... "Say, Cap'n Eddie, you oughta see this Jim Deederick work." Tony beamed as he came in Cap'n Eddie's office Monday morning.

"You mean with the gloves?" Cap'n Eddie asked, looking over his glasses.

"Sure. You ought to see him."

"When did you work with him?"

"Sunday."

"Has he really got the stuff?"

"Chees, yes. You can't hit the guy."

"Can't hit him?"

"I ain't hit him yet. He's lightnin'. First student I ever seen I couldn't hit."

"You're getting old, Tony."

"Yeah, I know."

"Has he got the punch, Tony? You remember his arm was hurt."

"His arm ain't hurt for fightin'. He was pullin' on me but even his short ones hurt. I'm glad he did pull 'em some. Hell of a thing, ain't it, when a student's gotta pull 'em for a coach. He says he can reely hit—I'm willin' to believe he can."

"Old age is gettin' you, Tony."

"Say, Cap'n, I got a idea. You get Rice Ellison to let me have Deederick for our return bout with Aggies. He ain't got but a couple more basketball games before the tournament and they've won enough games to git in the tournament. If I could have Jeemie just one night I could win from the Aggies and we ain't beat 'em for five years. Rice could spare Deederick just this one game."

"Yeah, Rice could spare him, but Deederick won't fight. He says Min don't like fightin'. Min's his mother and she objects."

"You mean that big bozo is still obeyin' his mammy?"

"Sure, he does. Everything we want him to do, it's Min this and Min that. He thinks Min knows it all. The only way you could get him to fight would be to ask Min. What weight would you use him in, Tony—the seventy-five class? Rice wouldn't want you to sweat him down to sixty-five. You might weaken him and get him out of shape before the tournament."

"I'd use him as a heavy—use him in the unlimited. That's where I'm weak. I got the sixty-five and seventy-five sewed up."

"Tony, you can't put Deederick in there against Red Gentry. He weighs two hundred pounds. You think Rice is going to let his high-scorer fight the Conference heavyweight champion a week before the basketball tournament? Suppose Gentry mauled the life out of him. Tony, you can't do that. That's nonsense."

"Cap'n, you don't understand. Gentry ain't nothin' but a good college heavy."

"Well, what's Deederick?"

"Jeemie would be a classy youngster

among pros. Gentry won't never hit him. I've worked with plenty of 'em like Gentry. I can still handle guys like that."

"You mean you're confident Deederick can whip Gentry?"

"I could still whip Gentry myself. He's just a big tough boy that's too much for these college heavies. Deederick wouldn't get his face dirty. He knows somethin'. He was started right."

"Tony, if I thought you were right, we might fix this thing up."

"Well, if he fights I'm gonna put up a month's salary on the fight."

"What's Deederick weighin'?"

"About eighty."

"Can a classy hundred-and-eighty pounder whip a good college heavy that weighs around two hundred?"

"Any time."

"I'll see what I can do, Tony, but I don't believe he'll fight."

"We could get him to wire his mammy and ask her."

"Tony, he hurt a kid over at Q.M.A. one time and he sorta soured on fightin'."

"Well, tell him Frog Waller's gonna get murdered if he don't fight. Gentry beat the tar outa Frog over there. Frog's willin' but he's green. If I hadn't throwed in the towel, Gentry would of murdered Frog."

"Say, Tony, that's an idea."

MIN rang up a dime and signed for the telegram nervously. She was afraid of telegrams. She bit open the envelope and read:

MIN IF YOU WILL LET ME FIGHT IN A COLLEGE
BOUT ONE WEEK FROM SATURDAY NIGHT I
PROMISE NEVER TO PUT ON THE GLOVES AGAIN
DEEDY.

Min phoned Western Union a telegram telling Jim to go ahead. She looked at the calendar to see what the date would be. Then she called the station and asked what the fare was from Oakdell to the junction near S.E.U. She told the agent to reserve her accommodations for the twenty-first, one week from Saturday night.

Then she called Murtie to the cash register and went off to the kitchen to sit

down. She wanted to think something out and the kitchen was the place Min thought everything out. She decided she wouldn't tell Jim she was coming, or anybody else but Gran. She wouldn't even tell Tim.

"The last time he'll ever have on the gloves." She had never seen Jim fight. Tears came in Min's eyes. The last time he'll ever fight—blast the savings account!

Jim had understood from Cap'n Eddie that there wasn't going to be anything said about his substituting for Frog in the heavyweight class. He was going to work out with Tony in the evenings when nobody was around and there wouldn't be any to-do about it. He'd save Frog getting the lights knocked out of him and it would be easy to outpoint a college fighter.

He was surprised, therefore, on the morning of the twentieth to see his picture in a football uniform featured in the newspapers, next to a picture of Red Gentry in trunks. Under the picture he read: "All-Southern quarterback challenges All-Southern heavyweight boxing champion." He read further: "Stellar football player turns fighter to settle a grudge. Red Gentry, great line backer for the Aggies, is the only man who ever knocked Jim Deederick out of a football game."

Jim couldn't believe that the S.E.U. publicity department had put this out. If he had known that sixty-five hundred people, rather than the usual fifteen hundred, would see the fight at a dollar fifty a head, he would have been foolish to believe anything else. Cap'n Eddie had known what would bring 'em out.

Rice Ellison was worried sick, but a basketball coach didn't rate enough to object. Slick Nelson wasn't worried; he had seen Jim work with Tony. Slick hoped Jim would give Red the works. Slick hated Gentry. It was dirty the way Gentry had knocked Jim out in last year's football game.

JIM sat in grim silence while Tony taped his hands. "Say, Tony," he said, "Send a manager upstairs to see if he can find Professor Tate."

A few minutes later Professor Tate came in, beaming with excitement. "Hello, Jim."

"Hello, Professor. Have you got Nub with you?"

Jim felt like he had raised little Nub Tate. He had often stayed with the boy while the Tates went out in the evenings. He got fifty cents an hour for doing it, and had a good light to study by after Nub went to bed. He had started this when Nub was three, and now Nub wouldn't let anybody else come.

"Of course Nub's up there—in a front seat. He wouldn't stay at home when he heard you were going to fight."

"I believe I'd get him home."

"Why, Jim?"

"Well, I think this party is goner be pretty rough. He's an awful little tad to be seeing this kind of thing."

Dr. Tate's face fell. He thought Jim meant he expected to be knocked out. "I see, I see. I'll get him home."

"That's up to you, Professor, but he's an awful little kid, and I'm afraid this is goner be a rough party before it's over. It may be pretty crude."

For two whole rounds the fight went fast. Gentry was trying for a knockout from the start. The silent crowd felt anxious for Jim Deederick. Gentry had barely missed at least twenty times. Only Tony Colletti and Jim were calm.

Tony saw that Jim kept coming back fast when Gentry missed and in the clinches he was catching Gentry with short jabs beneath the arms. Tony knew those short blows over the heart were going home and that it wouldn't be long until Gentry tired and Jim would throw his lightning right.

When he was ready for Jim to drop him, Tony would take his hand off his chin and scratch his head. Jim was already cutting his eyes toward Tony as the referee pushed the boys apart.

Twenty seconds before the bell at the end of the second round, Tony casually scratched his head. Jim feinted with his left and without further warning he shot his right to Gentry's head.

The crowd heard the impact as far as the rear bleacher seats. Gentry's arms fell to his side; he toppled forward and staggered stiff-legged across the ring, his arms groping in grotesque gestures. He walked in half circles, reaching out like an old man in the dark. He reached for the ropes and wilted to the canvas.

Jim stood in his corner looking the other way as the referee counted to five. His big, hawklike face twitched nervously. He was wondering if he had fixed another youngster up for life when Gentry was saved by the bell.

When they sent Gentry out again for the third, Jim saw his eyes were glassy. Why doesn't the ref stop it? Jim wondered.

He jabbed him with his left and Gentry's guard fell and he stood shiny-eyed and helpless. Jim turned to the referee to ask, "Do I have to hit him again?" He was remembering the kid over at S.M.A. But Jim didn't finish the sentence. Like a wounded animal, half-conscious Red Gentry had lashed out with his right and hit Jim while his head was turned.

Jim was down. A shriek of indignation went up from the S.E.U. rooters, but Tony knew Red was out on his feet, that he didn't know where he was or whom he had hit. Tony didn't blame Red Gentry.

Jim was getting up. At the count of eight he was on his feet. Two dazed fighters staggered toward each other; both were out on their feet now. Jim was bleeding at the nose and Gentry was bleeding at the mouth.

"Stop it," the crowd yelled, "stop it!" Gentry swung at Jim again and missed. He fell forward; his head struck Jim's head and they both fell together.

In a moment they were both up again, standing face to face with their arms hanging helplessly. As a blurred half consciousness returned to Jim he made queer motions with his arms.

Through the shrieking and the din he could hear the sharp crack of Tony Colletti's voice. "Hit him, Jim—you're fighting, Jim—hit him—he's straight in front." Faintly Jim remembered he was fighting

somebody somewhere and that he was right in front.

Jim hit whomever or whatever it was. It fell, and the shock of the blow brought Jim back to consciousness.

They were counting Red Gentry out.

AS THE crowd sifted out of the gymnasium, loiterers wondered who the good-looking woman was who met Deederick in the aisle and put her arms around his sweaty body and help him toward the room where the boxers dressed.

When Jim pulled his head from between the folds of a cold towel and blinked his eyes he realized he wasn't dreaming. "Hello, Min," he said.

"Hello, you big palooka," Min laughed, trying to squeeze his hands through the eight-ounce gloves.

"Was Gentry much hurt, coach?" Jim asked.

"I don't think so, Jim," Tony replied.

"That's what they always say."

"Anyway, Deedy, you won't ever have to ask that any more," Min said. "Are you okay now?"

"Sure, I'm okay, Min. My head's clearing. Say, what are you doing here?"

Min grinned proudly. "I came to see you fight—to see your last fight."

"Well, I'll be danged. Say, where'd you get the hat—where'd you get the suit—turn around—what have you done to your hair? Have you got a—a permanent?"

"Hush, Deedy, you'll have Mr. Colletti thinking I don't look this good all the time."

Tony was down on his knees untaping Jim's hands. "Talk about lookin' good. You look plenty good, Mrs. Deederick, but this boy looks like candy to me. I had a hundred on him at two to one."

"So you won fifty, Mr. Colletti."

"No, two hundred."

"Two hundred? Who in the dickens was fool enough to bet odds against Deedy? I wish I'd a known there was that kind of money floatin' around. I won enough to pay for this trip bettin' even."

"What did you win, Min?"

"I won a hundred dollars."

"Who'd you bet with?"

"Some bozo down at the Florolina Hotel that was shootin' off his mouth."

"Hadn't you ever seen him?"

"Lord, no."

"What did you do? Did you just walk up to some strange guy, Min?"

"Sure, why not? I'm used to men. I guess I'd have felt skittish if it had been a woman. I was settin' there in the hotel havin' myself a good dinner and I hear this bozo soundin' off at the table next to me about what Red Gentry is gonna do to Deederick."

"He offered to bet the guy with him a hundred, and I just patted my handbag and spoke up and says I'd like to have some of that, and he says what's your name, and I says that ain't none of your affair, my friend—my money'll spend just as good as yours, and he taken me up."

"Where's the money?"

"The clerk at the Florolina Hotel has it. Just like pickin' it up, wasn't it, Deedy? Say, Deedy, they must have taken in ten thousand dollars here tonight. Do you get any of it—you and Gentry?"

"No, the University gets it."

"How come? Is the University in the fight game?"

"No, Min, you don't understand."

"The devil I don't. I think you're the one that's short on the savvy. Don't you think so, Tony?"

Tony winked and looked very wise and Tony and Min laughed with a depth of understanding that irritated Jim.

"You go ahead, Jim," said Tony, "and get your shower. I'll take Min in Cap'n Eddie's office to meet the gang. They're all waiting for you in there."

A GOOD bath made Jim feel better. He put on his socks and shoes and underpants and went down to the visiting team locker room, looking for Red Gentry.

As he came in, the manager and coach were holding Red Gentry's shirt for him as though it were an overcoat.

"Hello, Red," Jim said.

Red turned his shoulders all the way around. His neck was too stiff to turn his head. "Hello, Jim," he said, forcing a grin as he extended his hand.

The two boys looked at each other with a friendliness born of deep respect.

"I hear the party was a little rough," Red said.

"That's what I hear," Jim replied. "How you feelin' now?"

"Oh, I feel sorta like a steam shovel had fell on me. But I'm okay."

"Say, Red, I wanted to tell you I never had nothin' to do with that grudge fight stuff."

"Forget it, Jim. I know that. I knew it all the time. Whoever done it knew how to get the crowd. I was thinkin' when I was waitin' for our fight to start that half that crowd never seen a college. Rough lookin' bunch to have in a college gym, wasn't it?"

"I noticed that myself, Red. I was thinkin' as I come through the crowd I'd be lucky if I didn't get spit on. They was chewin' and spittin' without even lookin'. It reminded me of home. You're lucky to get by a whole day at a carnival or the county fair down home if you don't get spit on a couple of times."

"On purpose, Jim?"

"No. The folks just spit careless when they're havin' a good time."

"Say, Jim, they tell me I hit you when you wasn't lookin'. I swear I was out."

"I know that, Red. Forget it."

"Okay, boy. I appreciate you not lettin' me have it when I was out."

"Okay, Red."

"You gonna fight in the tournament, Jim?"

"Naw. I'm through. This was my last one."

"I'm glad to hear that."

"Well, so long, Red. Drop over to the beanery and see me sometime when you're up here. I'm over there most of the time."

"Okay, Jim, I'd like to do that."

"So long, Red."

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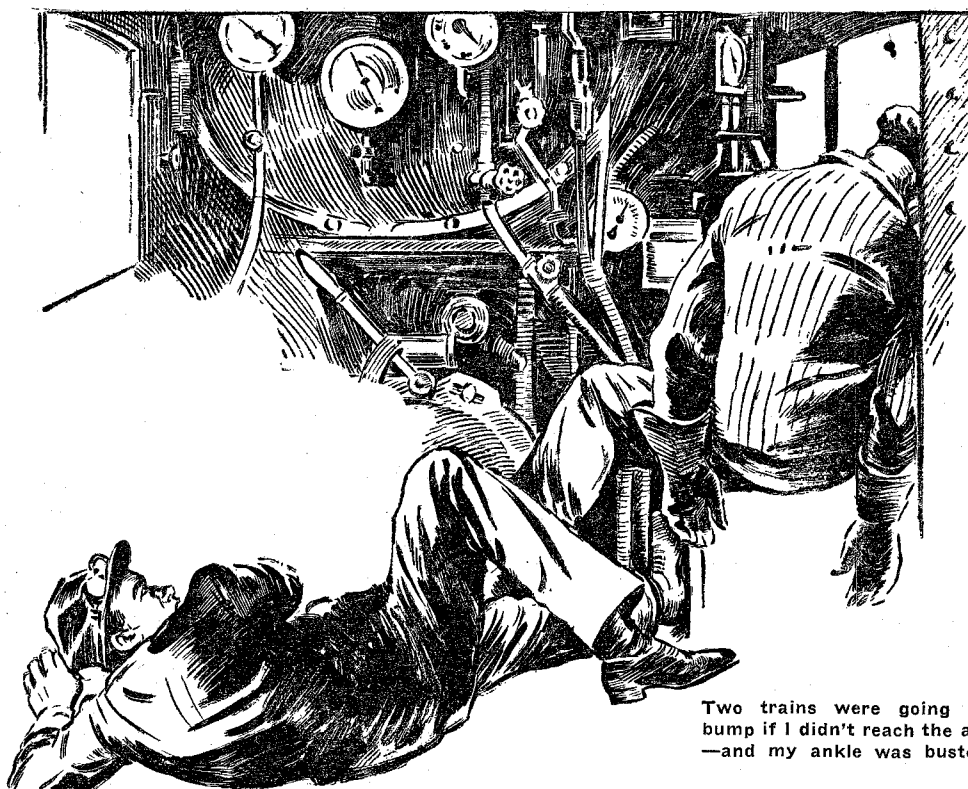
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Hear Them Whistles Blowing!

The ghost of Casey Jones makes a hero out of one railroader, when lives hang by a shoelace

By RICHARD SALE

Author of "Fish Ain't Got No Brains",
"I Want to Be Like Lefty", etc.

IT WAS back in the days before a hog had a dead man's control. There wasn't no control except the man at the throttle. He gave her the steam and he gave her the air, and if he upped and walked away from his seat at the window, there was no dead man's control to stop that red ball.

I was firing for Wallaby Joe Wheeler in those days on the Denver-Frisco run. We rolled the drivers of Number 460 which was a six-coupled Consolidation of the

first water. She was the lady with the sixty-one inch drivers and Walschert gear and on the high iron, she'd pull her heart out, and she didn't need no double-heading when we crossed the Reno hump.

Wallaby Joe, he was a fine engine man. He could break her out without a jerk. Back in the gondolas, even to the swaying crummy, they wouldn't feel a breath. Wallaby would give her the throttle, opening up on the quadrant with the kind of ease which made 460 take a long breath and start rolling. They didn't need draft gear in the couplings of the freight cars we hauled. He pushed her off so nice and quiet, they could have used the old pin and never hurt a train.