

PENROD By BOOTH TARKINGTON

The Greatest Stories Ever Written of a Real Boy and His Escapades VII.—TWELVE

To be 12 is an attainment worth the struggle. A boy just 12 is like a Frenchman just elected to the academy.

Distinction and honor wait upon him. Younger boys show deference to a person of 12—his experience is guaranteed, his judgment, therefore, mellow; consequently his influence is profound. Eleven is not quite satisfactory; it is only an approach. Eleven has the disadvantages of 8, of 10, of 14 and of 63. Thirteen is embarrassed by the beginnings of a new colthood; the child becomes a youth. But 12 is the very top of boyhood.

Dressing, that morning, Penrod felt that the world was changed from the world of yesterday. For one thing, he seemed to own more of it; this day was his day. And it was a day worth owning. The midsummer sunshine, pouring gold through his window, came from a cool sky and a breeze moved pleasantly in his hair as he leaned from the sill to watch the tribe of chattering blackbirds take wing following their leader from the trees in the yard to the day's work in the open country. Pride suffused him; he was 12!

His father and his mother and Margaret seemed to understand the difference between today and yesterday. They were at the table when he descended and they gave him a greeting which, of itself, marked the milestone. Habitually his entrance into a room where his elders sat brought a cloud of apprehension. But this morning they laughed; his mother rose and kissed him 12 times; so did Margaret, and his father shouted: "Well, well! How's the man?"

Then his mother gave him a Bible and "The Vicar of Wakefield"; Margaret gave him a pair of silver-mounted hair brushes and his father gave him a "Pocket Atlas" and a small compass. "And now, Penrod," said his mother, after breakfast, "I'm going to take you out in the country to pay your birthday respects to Aunt Sarah Crim."

Aunt Sarah Crim, Penrod's great-aunt, was his oldest living relative. She was 90, and when Mrs. Schofield and Penrod alighted from a carriage at her gate they found her digging with a spade in the garden.

"I'm glad you brought him," she said, delecting from labor. "Jenny's baking a cake I'm going to send for his birthday party. Bring him in the house; I've got something for him."

She led the way to her sitting-room, and opening the drawer of a shining old what-not, took therefrom a boy's slingshot, made of a forked stick, two strips of rubber and a bit of leather.

"This isn't for you," she said, placing it in Penrod's eager hand. "No. It would break all to pieces the first time you tried to shoot it, because it is 35 years old. I want to send it back to your father. I think it's time. You give it to him for me and tell him I say I believe I could trust him with it now. I took it away from him 35 years ago, one day after he'd killed my best hen with it accidentally, and broken a glass pitcher on the back porch with it—accidentally. He doesn't look like a person who's ever done things of that sort, and I suppose he's forgotten it so well that he believes he never did; but if you give it to him from me I think he'll remember. You look like him, Penrod. He was anything but a handsome boy."

After this final bit of reminiscence she disappeared in the direction of the kitchen and returned with a pitcher of lemonade and a blue china dish sweetly freighted with flat ginger cookies of a composition that was her own secret. Then, having set this light collation before her guests, she presented Penrod with a superb, intricate and very modern machine of destruction.

capacities almost limitless. She called it a pocketknife.

"I suppose you'll do something horrible with it," she said composedly. "I hear you do that with everything, anyhow, so you might as well do it with this and have more fun out of it. They tell me you're the worst boy in town."

"Oh, Aunt Sarah!" Mrs. Schofield lifted a protesting hand.

"Penrod, aren't you the worst boy in town?"

Penrod, gazing fondly upon his knife and eating cookies rapidly, answered, as a matter of course and absently, "Yes'm."

"Certainly," said Mrs. Crim. "Once you accept a thing about yourself as established and settled, it's all right. Nobody minds. Boys are just like people, really."

"No, no!" Mrs. Schofield cried involuntarily.

"Yes they are," Aunt Sarah persisted. "I suppose Penrod is regarded as the neighborhood cur?"

"Oh, no!" cried Mrs. Schofield. "He—"

"I dare say the neighbors are right," continued the old lady placidly. "He's had to repeat the history of the race and go through all the stages from the primordial to barbarism. You don't expect boys to be civilized, do you?"

"Well, I—"

"You might as well expect eggs to crow. No; you've got to take boys as they are and learn to know them as they are."

"Naturally, Aunt Sarah," said Mrs. Schofield. "I know Penrod."

"Penrod," said Aunt Sarah solemnly, "does your father understand you?"

"Ma'am"

"About as much as he'd understand Sitting Bull," she laughed. "And I'll tell you what your mother thinks you are, Penrod. Her real belief is that you're a novice in a convent."

"Ma'am"

"Aunt Sarah"

"I know she thinks that, because whenever you don't behave like a novice she's disappointed in you. And your father really believes that you're a decorous, well-trained young business man, and whenever you don't live up to that standard you get on his nerves and he thinks you need a whipping. Does whipping do you any good, Penrod?"

"Ma'am"

"Go on and finish the lemonade; fill yourself up uncomfortably," said the old lady. "You're 12 years old and you ought to be happy—if you aren't anything else. It's taken over 1900 years of Christianity and some hundreds of thousands of years of other things to produce you, and there you sit!"

"Ma'am"

"I'll be your turn to think and struggle and mope things up for the betterment of posterity soon enough," said Aunt Sarah Crim. "Drink your lemonade!"

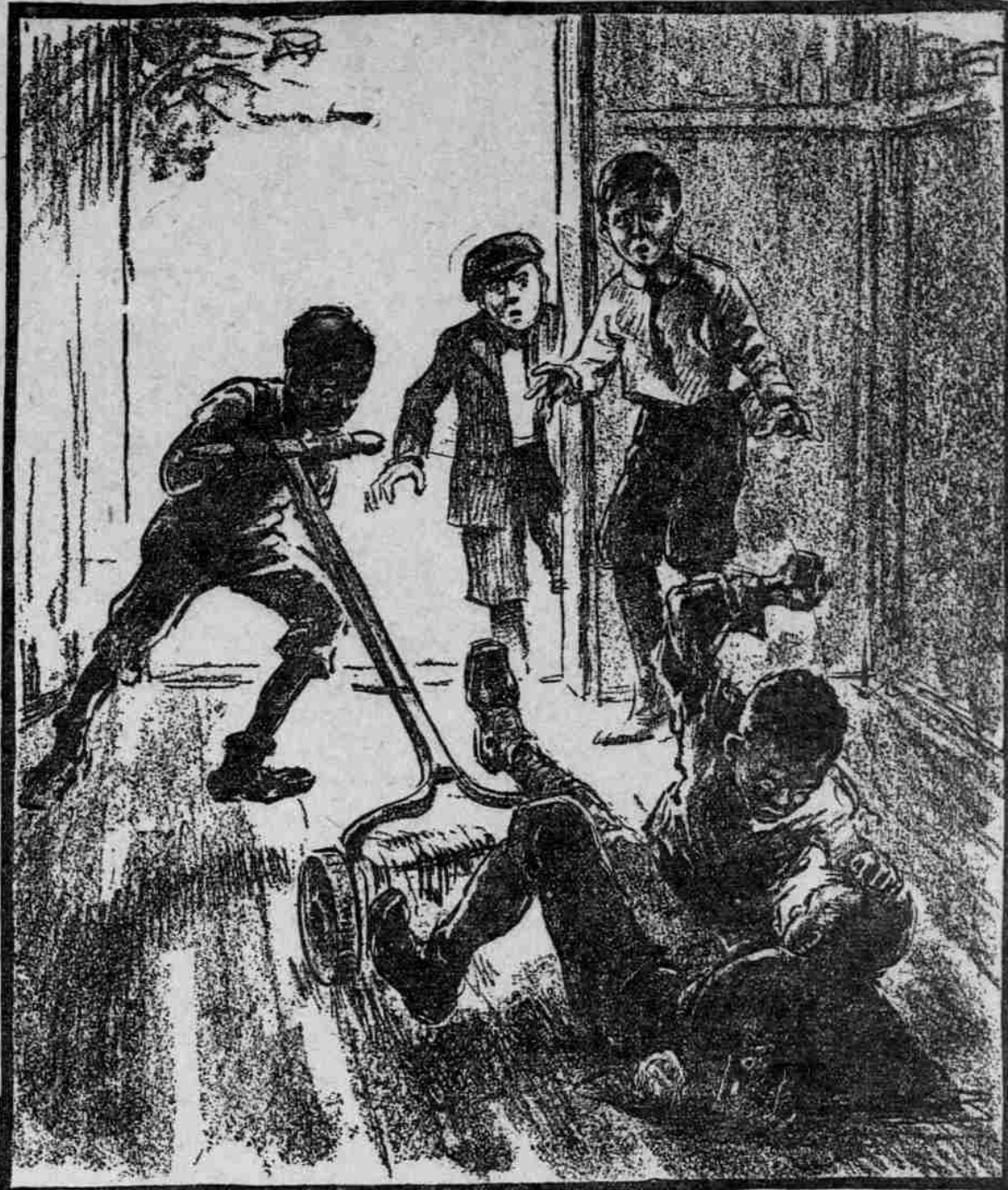
II.

"Aunt Sarah's funny old lady," Penrod observed, on the way back to the town. "What's she want me to give papa this old sling for? Last thing she said was to be sure not forget to give it to him. He don't want it; and she said herself it ain't any good. She's older than you or papa, isn't she?"

"About fifty years older," answered Mrs. Schofield, turning upon him the stare of perplexity. "Don't cut into the leather with your new knife, dear; the livery man might ask us to pay if—No, I wouldn't scrape the paint off, either—or whittle your shoe with it. Couldn't you put it up until we get home?"

"We goin' straight home?"

"No. We're going to stop at Mrs. Gelbraith's and ask a strange little girl



SHRILLING A WORDLESS WAR CRY, HE CHARGED, PROPELLING THE WHIRLING, DEAFENING KNIVES STRAIGHT UPON THE PRONE LEGS OF RUPE COLLINS.

to come to your party this afternoon."

"Who?"

"Her name is Fanchon. She's Mrs. Gelbraith's little niece. She lives in New York and has come to visit here. You must be very nice to her, Penrod; she doesn't know the children here, and you must help to keep her from feeling lonely at your party."

When they reached Mrs. Gelbraith's, Penrod sat humped upon a gilt chair during the lengthy exchange of greetings between his mother and Mrs. Gelbraith. Penrod twisted his legs, his cap and his nose.

"Here she is!" Mrs. Gelbraith cried unexpectedly, and a dark-haired demure person entered the room wearing an air of gracious social expectancy. In years she was 11, in manner about 65, and evidently had lived much at court. She performed a curtsy in acknowledgment of Mrs. Schofield's greeting, and bestowed her hand upon Penrod, who had entertained no hope of such an honor, showed his surprise that it should come to him, and was plainly unable to decide what to do about it.

"Fanchon, dear," said Mrs. Gelbraith, "take Penrod out in the yard for a while and play."

"Let go the little girl's hand, Penrod," Mrs. Schofield laughed, as the children turned toward the door.

Penrod hastily dropped the small hand, and exclaiming with simple honesty, "Why, I don't want it!" followed Fanchon out into the sunshiny yard, where they came to a halt and surveyed each other.

Penrod stared awkwardly at Fanchon, while Fanchon, with the utmost cool-

ness, made a thorough visual examination of Penrod. Finally she spoke.

"Where do you buy your ties?" she asked.

"What?"

"Where do you buy your neckties? Papa gets his at Skoone's. You ought to get yours there. I'm sure the one you're wearing isn't from Skoone's."

"Skoone's?" Penrod repeated.

"On Fifth Avenue," said Fanchon. "It's a very smart shop, the men say."

"Men?" echoed Penrod.

"Where do you people go in summer?" inquired the lady. "We go to Long Shore, but so many middle-class people have begun coming there, mamma thinks of leaving. The middle classes are simply awful, don't you think?"

"What?"

"They're so boorjaw. You speak French, of course?"

"Me?"

"We ran over to Paris last year. Don't you love the Rue de la Paix?"

Penrod wandered in a labyrinth. It was his first meeting with one of those grown-up little girls, wonderful product of the Winter apartment and Summer hotel; and Fanchon, an only child, was a star of the brand. He began to feel resentful.

"I suppose," she went on, "I'll find everything here fearful Western. Some nice people called yesterday, though. Do you know the Magaworth Bittes? Will Roddy be at your party?"

"I guess he will," returned Penrod, finding this intelligible. "The mutt!"

This bit of ruffianism had a curious effect. Fanchon looked upon him with sudden favor.

"I like you, Penrod!" she said, in an

odd way, and whatever else there may have been in her manner, there certainly was no shyness.

Penrod was shaken.

"Yes, I do!" She stepped closer to him, smiling. "Your hair is ever so pretty."

Penrod was even more confused than he had been by her previous mysteries; but his confusion was of a distinctly alluring nature—he wanted more of it. Looking intentionally into another person's eyes is an act unknown to childhood, and Penrod's discovery that it could be done was sensational. He had never thought of looking into the eyes of Marjorie Jones.

For a long time, despite all anguish, contentedly and Maurice Levy, he had secretly thought of Marjorie, with pathetic constancy, as his "beau"—though that is not how he would have spelled it. Marjorie was beautiful; her curls were long and the color of amber; her nose was straight, and her freckles were honest; she was much prettier than this accomplished visitor. But beauty is not all.

"I do!" breathed Fanchon softly.

She seemed to him, then, a fairy creature from some rozier world than this. Penrod was enlashed. He swallowed, coughed and said disjunctively:

"Well—I don't care if you want to, I just as soon."

"We'll dance together," said Fanchon, "at your party."

"I guess so. I just as soon."

III.

A dancing-floor had been laid upon a platform in the yard, when Mrs. Schofield and her son arrived at their own abode; and a white-and-scarlet striped canopy was in process of erection over-

head to shelter the dancers from the sun. Workmen were busy everywhere under the direction of Margaret, and the smitten heart of Penrod began to beat rapidly. All this was for him; he was twelve!

After lunch, he underwent an elaborate toilet and murmured not. For the first time in his life he knew the wish to be sandpapered, waxed and polished to the highest possible degree. And when the operation was over he stood before the mirror in new bloom, feeling encouraged to hope that his resemblance to Aunt Sarah seemed to think.

Then came from the yard a sound of tuning instruments—squeak of fiddle, croon of cello, a falling triangle ringing and tinkling to the floor; and he turned pale.

Chosen guests began to arrive, while Penrod, suffering from stage fright and perspiration, stood beside his mother in the drawing-room to receive them. He greeted unfamiliar acquaintances and intimate fellow criminals with the same frigidity, murmuring, "I'm glad to see you" to all alike, largely increasing the embarrassment which always prevails at the beginning of children's festivities.

His unnatural pomp and circumstance had so thoroughly upset him, in truth, that Marjorie Jones received a distinct shock now to be related. Dr. Thorpe, the kind old clergyman who had baptized Penrod, came in for a moment to congratulate the boy, and had just moved away when it was Marjorie's turn, in the line of children, to speak to Penrod. She gave him what she considered a forgiving look and, because of the occasion, addressed him in a perfectly courteous manner.

"I wish you many happy returns of the day, Penrod."

"Thank you, sir," he returned, following Doctor Thorpe with a glassy stare, in which there was absolutely no recognition of Marjorie. Then he greeted Maurice Levy. "I'm glad to see you," Dumfounded, Marjorie turned aside, and stood near, observing Penrod with gravity. It was the first great surprise of her life. Customarily, she had seemed to place his character somewhere between that of the professional rioter and that of the orang-outang; nevertheless, at times, just hinted, a consciousness of a distinctly alluring nature—he wanted more of it. Looking intentionally into another person's eyes is an act unknown to childhood, and Penrod's discovery that it could be done was sensational. He had never thought of looking into the eyes of Marjorie Jones.

Marjorie glanced up, a little consciously—though she was used to it—naturally curious to ascertain what was speaking of her. It was Sam Williams' mother who spoke, addressing Mrs. Bassett, both being present to help Mrs. Schofield make the festivities festive.

"Equisalite!"

Here was a second heavy surprise for Marjorie: They were not looking at her. They were looking, with beating approval, at a girl she had never seen, a dark and mediah stranger of singularly composed and yet modest aspect. Hed downcast eyes, becoming in one thus entering a crowded room, were all that produced the effect of modesty, counteracting somewhat about her which might have seemed too absurd. She was very slender, very dainty, and her apparel was of a knowing picturesqueness wholly unfamiliar to them.

Marjorie's lovely eyes dilated; she learned the meaning of hatred at first sight.

Fanchon leaned close to Penrod and whispered in his ear, "Don't you forget!"

Penrod blushed.

Marjorie saw that blush. Her lovely eyes opened even wider, and in them there began to grow a light. It was the light of indignation; at least, people whose eyes glow with that light always call it indignation.

Roderick Magaworth Bittis, Junior, approached Fanchon when she had made her courtesy to Mrs. Schofield. Fanchon whispered in Roderick's ear, also.

"Your hair is pretty, Roddy. Don't forget what you said yesterday!"

Roderick likewise blushed. Maurice Levy, captivated by the newcomer's appearance, pressed close to Roderick.

"Give us an introduction, Roddy."

Roddy, being either reluctant or unable to perform the rite, Fanchon took matters into her own hands, and was presently very favorably impressed with Maurice, receiving the information that his tie had been brought by his papa from Skoone's; whereupon she privately informed him that she liked wavy hair, and arranged to dance with him. Fanchon also thought sandy hair attractive. Sam Williams discovered a few minutes later, and so catholico was her taste that a ring of boys eddied encircled her before the musicians in the yard struck up their thrilling march, and Mrs. Schofield brought Penrod to escort the lady from out of town to the dancing pavilion.

Headed by this pair, the children sought partners and paraded solemnly out of the front door and round a corner of the house. There they found the gay marquee, with the small orchestra, seated on the lawn at one side of it, and a punchbowl of lemonade inviting attention under a tree. Decorously the small couples stepped upon the platform, one after another, and began to dance.

"It's not much like a children's party in our day," Mrs. Williams said to Penrod's mother. "We'd have been playing Quaker meeting, clap in, clap out, or going to Jerusalem, I suppose."

"Things change so quickly," said Mrs. Schofield. "Imagine asking that little Fanchon Gelbraith to play London Bridge." Penrod seems to be having a difficult time with her, poor boy; he wasn't a shining light in the dancing class."

However, Penrod's difficulty was not precisely of the kind his mother supposed. Fanchon was showing him a new step, which she taught her next partner, in turn, continuing instructions during the dancing. The children crowded the floor, and in the kaleidoscopic jumble of bobbing heads and intermingling figures, her extremely different style of motion was unobscured by the older people, who looked on, nodding time benevolently.

Fanchon fascinated girls, as well as boys. Many of the former eagerly sought her acquaintance and thronged about her between the dances, when, accepting the deference due a coquette, she gave demonstrations of the new step to succeeding groups, presiding with an air of authority.

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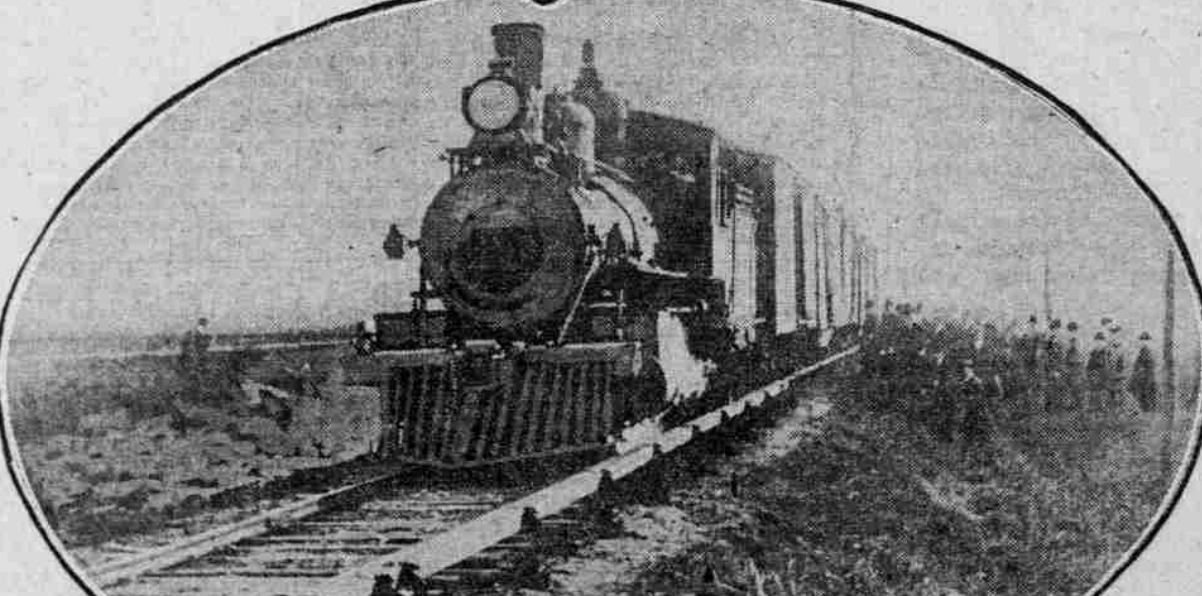
New Device May End Perils of the Rails



Anatol Gollos. BY ROBERT H. MULLTON.

AS A result of 20 years' effort, automatic control of railroad trains is a fact. For a decade railroad operators, engineers and inventors have studied, stewed and dreamed over some device or system that would control the movements of trains independently of human agency. It was realized that there must be some exterior mechanical hand to say yes or no or lives of innocent people, people who paid to be safely transported, would continue to be sacrificed.

From the crude semi-methods of railroading of 25 years ago the system has changed until now transportation is a science and in many ways practically perfect. Formerly the men between the cars turned hand brakes to stop trains. A big brain assembled air in rubber pipes and called it an air-brake. This marked an era, a new deal under which trains operating at any speed would be stopped in a com-



Testing the Gollos Device on the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy R.R.