

The Freshman Full-Back

By Ralph d. Paine

THE FRESHMAN FULL-BACK

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The boyish night city editor glanced along the copy-readers' table and petulantly exclaimed:

"Isn't that spread head ready yet, Mr. Seeley? It goes on the front page and we are holding open for it. Whew, but you are slow. You ought to be holding down a job on a quarterly review."

A portly man of middle age dropped his pencil and turned heavily in his chair to face the source of this public humiliation. An angry flush overspread his face and he chewed at a grayish mustache as if fighting down rebellion. His comrades at the long table had looked up from their work and were eyeing the oldest copy-reader with sympathetic uneasiness while they hoped that he would be able to hold himself in hand. The night city editor felt the tension of this brief tableau and awaited the threatened outbreak with a nervous smile. But Seeley jerked his green eyeshade so low that his face was partly in eclipse, and wheeled round to resume his task with a catch of the breath and a tone of surrender in his reply.

"The head will be ready in five minutes, sir. The last pages of the story are just coming in."

A much younger man, at the farther end of the table, whispered to his neighbor:

"That's cheap and nasty, to call down old man Seeley as if he were a cub reporter. He may have lost his grip, but he deserves decent treatment for what he has been. Managing editor of this very sheet, London correspondent before that, and the crack man of the staff when most of the rest of us were in short breeches. And now Henry Harding Seeley isn't any too sure of keeping his job on the copy-desk."

"That's what the New York newspaper game can do to you if you stick at it too long," murmured the other. "Back to the farm for mine."

It was long after midnight when these two put on their coats and bade the city editor's desk a perfunctory "Good-night."

They left Henry Harding Seeley still slumped in his chair, writing with dogged industry.

"He's dead tired, you can see that," commented one of the pair as they headed for Broadway, "but, as usual, he is grinding out stuff for the Sunday sheet after hours. He must need the extra coin mighty bad. I came back for my overcoat at four the other morning, after the poker game, and he was still pegging away just like that."

Other belated editors and reporters of the Chronicle staff drifted toward the elevator, until the gray-haired copy-reader was left alone in the city room as if marooned. Writing as steadily as if he were a machine warranted to turn out so many words an hour, Seeley urged his pencil until the last page was finished. Then he read and corrected the "story," slipped it through a slit in a door marked "Sunday Editor," and trudged out, while the tower clock was striking three.

Instead of seeking the chop-house, wherein the vivacious and tireless youth of the staff were wont to linger over supper, he turned into a side street and betook himself to a small cafe as yet unfrequented by the night-owls of journalism. Seeley was a beaten man, and he

preferred to nurse his wounds in a morbid isolation. His gait and aspect were those of one who was stolidly struggling on the defensive, as if hostile circumstances had driven him into a corner where he was making his last stand.

Through the years of his indomitable youth as a reporter of rare ability and resourcefulness, he had never spared himself. Burning the candle at both ends, with a vitality which had seemed inexhaustible, he had won step after step of promotion until, at forty, he was made managing editor of that huge and hard-driven organization, the New York Chronicle. For five years of racking responsibility, Henry Harding Seeley had been able to maintain the pace demanded of his position.

Then came an error of judgment--a midnight decision demanded of a fagged mind--and his O.K. was scrawled upon the first sheet of a story of embezzlement in Wall Street. By an incredible blunder the name of the fugitive cashier was coupled with that of the wrong bank. Publication of the Chronicle story started a terrific run on this innocent institution, which won its libel suit against the newspaper in the amount of one hundred thousand dollars.

The managing editor, two reporters, and the copy-reader who had handled the fatal manuscript, were swept out of the building by one cyclonic order from the owner thereof. Henry Seeley accepted his indirect responsibility for the disaster in grim, manly fashion, and straightway sought another berth befitting his journalistic station. But his one costly slip was more than a nine-days' scandal along Park Row, and other canny proprietors were afraid that he might hit them in the very vital regions of their pockets. Worse than this, his confidence in himself had suffered mortal damage. The wear and tear of his earlier years had left him with little reserve power, and he went to pieces in the face of adverse fortune.

"Worked out at forty-five," was the verdict of his friends, and they began to pity him.

The will to succeed had been broken, but Seeley might have rallied had not his wife died during the ebb-tide of his affairs. She had walked hand in hand with him since his early twenties, her faith in him had been his mainstay, and his happiness in her complete and beautiful. Bereft of her when he stood most in need of her, he seemed to have no more fight in him, and, drifting from one newspaper office to another, he finally eddied into his old "shop" as a drudging copy-reader and an object of sympathy to a younger generation.

There was one son, strong, bright, eager, and by dint of driving his eternally wearied brain overtime, the father had been able to send him to Yale, his own alma mater. More or less pious deception had led young Ernest Seeley to believe that his father had regained much of his old-time prestige with the Chronicle and that he had a hand in guiding its editorial destinies. The lad was a Freshman, tremendously absorbed in the activities of the autumn term, and his father was content that he should be so hedged about by the interests of the campus world as to have small time or thought for the grizzled, taciturn toiler in New York.

This was the kind of man that trudged heavily into the little German cafe of an early morning after his long night's slavery at the copy-desk. His mind, embittered and sensitive to slights like a raw nerve, was brooding over the open taunt of the night city editor, who had been an office boy under him in the years gone by. From force of habit he seated himself at a table in the rear of the room, shunning the chance of having to face an acquaintance. Unfolding a copy of the city edition, which had been laid on his desk damp from the press-room, Seeley scanned the front page with scowling uneasiness, as if fearing to find some blunder of his own handiwork. Then he turned to the sporting page and began to read the football news.

His son Ernest had been playing as a substitute with the university eleven, an achievement which stirred the father's pride without moving his enthusiasm. And the boy, chilled by his father's indifference, had said little about it during his infrequent visits to New York. But now the elder Seeley sat erect, and his stolid countenance was almost animated as he read, under a New Haven date line:

"The Yale confidence of winning the game with Princeton to-morrow has been shattered, and gloom enshrouds the camp of the Elis to-night. Collins, the great full-back, who has been the key-stone of Yale's offensive game, was taken to the infirmary late this afternoon. He complained of feeling ill after the signal practice yesterday; fever developed overnight, and the consulting physicians decided that he must be operated on for appendicitis without delay. His place in the Princeton game will be filled by Ernest Seeley, the Freshman, who has been playing a phenomenal game in the back-field, but who is so lacking in experience that the coaches are all at sea to-night. The loss of Collins has swung the betting around to even money instead of 5 to 3 on Yale."

The elder Seeley wiped his glasses as if not sure that he had read aright.

Ernest had seemed to him no more than a sturdy infant and here he was, on the eve of a championship football battle, picked to fight for the "old blue." The father's career at Yale had been a most honorable one. He, too, had played on the eleven and had helped to win two desperate contests against Princeton. But all this belonged to a part of his life which was dead and done for. He had not achieved in after years what Yale expected of him, and his record there was with his buried memories.

Supper was forgotten while Henry Seeley wondered whether he really wanted to go to New Haven to see his boy play. Many of his old

friends and classmates would be there and he did not wish to meet them.

And it stung him to the quick as he reflected:

"I should be very happy to see him win, but--but to see him whipped! I couldn't brace and comfort him. And supposing it breaks his heart to be whipped as it has broken mine? No, I won't let myself think that. I'm a poor Yale man and a worse father, but I couldn't stand going up there to-day."

Even more humiliating was the thought that he would shrink from asking leave of the city editor. Saturday was not his "day off," and he so greatly hated to ask favors at the office, that the possibility of being rebuffed was more than he was willing to face.

Into his unhappy meditations broke a boisterous hail:

"Diogenes Seeley, as I live. Why, you old rascal, I thought you were dead or something. Glad I didn't get foolish and go to bed. Here, waiter, get busy."

Seeley was startled, and he looked much more distressed than rejoiced as he lumbered from his table to grasp the outstretched hand of a classmate. The opera-hat of this Mr. Richard Giddings was cocked at a rakish angle, his blue eye twinkled good cheer and youthful hilarity, and his aspect was utterly care-free.

"How are you, Dick?" said Seeley, with an unusual smile which singularly brightened his face. "You don't look a day older than when I last saw you. Still cutting coupons for a living?"

"Oh, money is the least of my worries," gayly rattled Mr. Giddings. "Been doing the heavy society act to-night, and on my way home found I needed some sauerkraut and beer to tone up my jaded system."

By Jove, Harry, you're as gray as a badger. This newspaper game must be bad for the nerves. Lots of fellows have asked me about you. Never see you at the University Club, nobody sees you anywhere. Remarkable how a man can lose himself right here in New York. Still running the Chronicle, I suppose."

"I'm still in the old shop, Dick," replied Seeley, glad to be rid of this awkward question. "But I work nearly all night and sleep most of the day, and am like a cog in a big machine that never stops grinding."

"Shouldn't do it. Wears a man out," and Mr. Giddings sagely nodded his head. "Course you are going up to the game to-day. Come along with me. Special car with a big bunch of your old pals inside. They'll be tickled to death to find I've dug you out of your hole. Hello! Is that this morning's paper? Let me look at the sporting page. Great team at New Haven, they tell me. What's the latest odds? I put up a thousand at five to three last week and am looking for some more easy money."

The alert eye of the volatile Richard Giddings swept down the New Haven dispatch like lightning.

With a grievous outcry he smote the table and shouted:

"Collins out of the game? Great Scott, Harry, that's awful news. And a green Freshman going to fill his shoes at the last minute. I feel like weeping, honest I do. Who the deuce is this Seeley? Any kin of yours? I suppose not or you would have bellowed it at me before this."

"He is my only boy, Dick," and the father held up his head with a shadow of his old manner. "I didn't know he had the ghost of a show to make the team until I saw this dispatch."

"Then, of course, you are coming up with me," roared Mr. Giddings. "I hope he's a chip of the old block. If he has your sand they can't stop

him. Jumping Jupiter, they couldn't have stopped you with an axe when you were playing guard in our time, Harry. I feel better already to know that it is your kid going in at full-back to-day."

"No, I'm not going up, Dick," said Seeley slowly. "For one thing, it is too short notice for me to break away from the office, and I--I haven't the nerve to watch the boy go into the game. I'm not feeling very fit."

"Stuff and nonsense, you need a brain cure," vociferated Richard Giddings. "You, an old Yale guard, with a pup on the team, and he a Freshman at that! Throw out your chest, man; tell the office to go to the devil--where all newspapers belong--and meet me at the station at ten o'clock sharp. You talk and look like the oldest living grad with one foot in the grave."

Seeley flushed and bit his lip. His dulled realization of what Yale had been to him was quickened by this tormenting comrade of the brave days of old, but he could not be shaken from his attitude of morbid self-effacement.

"No, Dick, it's no use," he returned with a tremulous smile. "You can't budge me. But give my love to the crowd and tell them to cheer for that youngster of mine until they're blue in the face."

Mr. Richard Giddings eyed him quizzically, and surmised that something or other was gravely wrong with his grizzled classmate. But Seeley offered no more explanations and the vivacious intruder fell to his task of demolishing sauerkraut with great gusto, after which he nimbly vanished into a cruising hansom with a sense of having been rebuffed.

Seeley watched him depart at great speed and then plodded toward his up-town lodgings. His sleep was distressed with unhappy dreams, and during a wakeful interval he heard a knock at his sitting-room door.

An office boy from the Chronicle editorial rooms gave him a note and waited for an answer.

Seeley recognized the handwriting of the managing editor and was worried, for he was always expecting the worst to happen. He sighed with relieved surprise as he read:

"MY DEAR MR. SEELEY:

"Please go to New Haven as soon as possible and do a couple of columns of descriptive introduction of the Yale-Princeton game. The sporting department will cover the technical story, but a big steamboat collision has just happened in North River, two or three hundred drowned and so on, and I need every man in the shop. As an old Yale player I am sure I can depend on you for a good story, and I know you used to do this kind of stuff in fine style."

Seeley fished his watch from under a pillow. It was after ten o'clock and the game would begin at two. While he hurried into his clothes he was conscious of a distinct thrill of excited interest akin to his old-time joy in the day's work. Could he "do this kind of stuff in fine style"? Why, before his brain had begun to be always tired, when he was the star reporter of the Chronicle, his football introductions had been classics in Park Row. If there was a spark of the old fire left in him he would try to strike it out, and for the moment he forgot the burden of inertia which had so long crushed him.

"But I don't want to run into Dick Giddings and his crowd," he muttered as he sought his hat and overcoat. "And I'll be up in the press-box away from the mob of old grads. Perhaps my luck has turned."

When Henry Seeley reached the Yale field the eleven had gone to the dressing-rooms in the training house, and he hovered on the edge of the flooding crowds, fairly yearning for a glimpse of the Freshman

full-back and a farewell grasp of his hand. The habitual dread lest the son find cause to be ashamed of his father had been shoved into the background by a stronger, more natural emotion. But he well knew that he ought not to invade the training quarters in these last crucial moments. Ernest must not be distraught by a feather's weight of any other interest than the task in hand. The coaches would be delivering their final words of instruction and the old Yale guard could picture to himself the tense absorption of the scene. Like one coming out of a dream, the past was returning to him in vivid, heart-stirring glimpses. Reluctantly he sought his place in the press-box high above the vast amphitheatre.

The preliminary spectacle was movingly familiar: the rippling banks of color which rose on all sides to frame the long carpet of chalked turf; the clamorous outbursts of cheering when an eddy of Yale or Princeton undergraduates swirled and tossed at command of the dancing dervish of a leader at the edge of the field below; the bright, buoyant aspect of the multitude as viewed en masse. Seeley leaned against the railing of his lofty perch and gazed at this pageant until a sporting editor, long in harness, nudged his elbow and said:

"Hello! I haven't seen you at a game in a dozen years. Doing the story or just working the press-badge graft? That namesake of yours will be meat for the Tigers, I'm afraid. Glad he doesn't belong to you, aren't you?"

Seeley stared at him like a man in a trance and replied evasively:

"He may be good enough. It all depends on his sand and nerve. Yes, I am doing the story for a change. Have you the final line-up?"

"Princeton is playing all her regular men," said the sporting editor, giving Seeley his note-book. "The only Yale change is at full-back-- and that's a catastrophe."

Seeley copied the lists for reference and his pencil was not steady when he came to "Full-back, Ernest T. Seeley." But he pulled his thoughts away from the eleven and began to jot down notes of the passing incidents which might serve to weave into the fabric of his description. The unwonted stimulus aroused his talent as if it were not dead but dormant. The scene appealed to him with almost as much freshness and color as if he were observing it for the first time.

A roar of cheering rose from a far corner of the field and ran swiftly along the Yale side of the amphitheatre, which blossomed in tossing blue. The Yale eleven scampered into view like colts at pasture, the substitutes veering toward the benches behind the side-line. Without more ado the team scattered in formation for signal practice, paying no heed to the tumult which raged around and above them. Agile, clean-limbed, splendid in their disciplined young manhood, the dark blue of their stockings and the white "Y" gleaming on their sweaters fairly trumpeted their significance to Henry Seeley. And poised behind the rush-line, wearing his hard-won university blue, was the lithe figure of the Freshman full-back, Ernest Seeley.

The youngster, whose fate it was to be called a "forlorn hope," looked fragile beside his comrades of the eleven. Although tall and wiry he was like a greyhound in a company of mastiffs. His father, looking down at him from so great a height that he could not read his face, muttered to himself while he dug his nails into his palms:

"He is too light for this day's work. But he carries himself like a thoroughbred."

The boy and his fellows seemed singularly remote from the shouting thousands massed so near them. They had become the sole arbiters of their fate, and their impressive isolation struck Henry Seeley anew as the most dramatic feature of this magnificent picture. He must sit idly by and watch his only son battle through the most momentous hour of his young life, as if he were gazing down from another planet.

The staccato cheers of Princeton rocketed along the other side of the field, and the eleven from Old Nassau ran briskly over the turf and wheeled into line for a last rehearsal of their machine-like tactics. Henry Seeley was finding it hard to breathe, just as it had happened in other days when he was waiting for the "kick-off" and facing a straining Princeton line. The minutes were like hours while the officials consulted with the captains in the centre of the field. Then the two elevens ranged themselves across the brown turf, there was breathless silence, and a Princeton toe lifted the ball far down toward the Yale goal. It was the young full-back who waited to receive the opening kick, while his comrades thundered toward him to form a flying screen of interference. But the twisting ball bounded from his too eager arms, and another Yale back fell on it in time to save it from the clutches of a meteoric Princeton end.

"Nervous. Hasn't steadied down yet," exclaimed a reporter behind Henry Seeley. "But he can't afford to give Princeton any more chances like that. Her ends are faster than chain lightning."

The father groaned and wiped the sweat from his eyes. If the team were afraid of this untried full-back, such a beginning would not give them confidence. Then the two lines locked and heaved in the first scrimmage, and a stocky Yale half-back was pulled down in his tracks. Again the headlong Princeton defence held firm and the Yale captain gasped, "Second down and three yards to gain." The Yale interferers sped to circle one end of the line, but they were spilled this way and that and the runner went down a yard short of the needed distance.

The Yale full-back dropped back to punt. Far and true the ball soared into the Princeton field, and the lithe Freshman had somewhat redeemed himself. But now, for their own part, the sons of Old Nassau found themselves unable to make decisive gains against the Yale defence. Greek met Greek in these early clashes, and both teams

were forced to punt again and again. Trick-plays were spoiled by alert end-rushers for the blue or the orange and black, fiercely launched assaults at centre were torn asunder, and the longer the contest raged up and down the field the more clearly it was perceived that these ancient rivals were rarely well matched in point of strength and strategy.

The Yale coaches were dismayed at this turn of events. They had hoped to see the ball carried toward the Princeton goal by means of shrewdly devised teamwork, instead of which the burden of the game was shifted to one man, the weakest link in the chain, the Freshman at full-back. He was punting with splendid distance, getting the ball away when it seemed as if he must be overwhelmed by the hurtling Tigers. Once or twice, however, a hesitant nervousness almost wrought quick disaster, and the Yale partisans watched him with tormenting apprehension.

The first half of the game was fought into the last few minutes of play and neither eleven had been able to score. Then luck and skill combined to force the struggle far down into Yale territory. Only ten yards more of trampled turf to gain and Princeton would cross the last white line. The indomitable spirit which had placed upon the escutcheon of Yale football the figure of a bulldog rampant, rallied to meet this crisis, and the hard-pressed line held staunch and won possession of the ball on downs. Back to the very shadow of his own goal-posts the Yale full-back ran to punt the ball out of the danger zone. It shot fairly into his grasp from a faultless pass, but his fingers juggled the slippery leather as if it were bewitched. For a frantic, awful instant he fumbled with the ball and wildly dived after it as it caromed off to one side, bounded crazily, and rolled beyond his reach.

The Princeton quarter-back had darted through the line like a bullet. Without slackening speed or veering from his course, he scooped up the ball as he fled toward the Yale goal-line. It was done and over within a twinkling, and while the Yale team stampeded helplessly in

his wake the devastating hero was circling behind the goal-posts where he flopped to earth, the precious ball apparently embedded in his stomach. It was a Princeton touchdown fairly won, but made possible by the tragic blunder of one Yale man. While ten thousand Princeton throats were barking their jubilation, as many more loyal friends of Yale sat sad-eyed and sullen and glowered their unspeakable displeasure at the slim figure of the full-back as he limped into line to face the try for goal.

The goal was not scored, however, and the fateful tally stood five to nothing when the first half ended, with the blue banners drooping disconsolate.

Henry Seeley pulled his slouch hat over his eyes and sat with hunched shoulders staring at the Yale team as it left the field for the intermission. He had forgotten about his story of the game. The old spectre of failure obsessed him. It was already haunting the pathway of his boy. Was he also to be beaten by one colossal blunder? Henry Seeley felt that Ernest's whole career hung upon his behavior in the second half. How would the lad "take his medicine"? Would it break his heart or rouse him to fight more valiantly? As if the father had been thinking aloud, the sporting editor at his side observed:

"He may win the game yet. I like the looks of that boy. But he did make a hideous mess of it, didn't he? I hope he hasn't got a streak of yellow in him."

Henry Seeley turned on his neighbor with a savage scowl and could not hold back the quivering retort:

"He belongs to me, I want you to understand, and we'll say nothing about yellow streaks until he has a chance to make good next half."

"Whew-w-w, why did you hold it out on me, old man?" gasped the sporting editor. "No wonder you kicked me black and blue without

knowing it. I hope he is a chip of the old block. I saw you play here in your last game."

Seeley grunted something and resumed staring at the field. He was thinking of the present moment in the training quarters, of the muddy, weary players sprawled around the head coach, of his wise, bitter, stinging rebukes and admonitions. Perhaps he would take Ernest out of the game. But Seeley was confident that the coaches would give the boy a chance to redeem himself if they believed his heart was in the right place. Presently the two teams trotted on the field, not as nimbly as at their first appearance, but with dogged resolution in their demeanor. Henry Seeley saw his son glance up at the "cheering sections," as if wondering whether their welcome was meant to include him. One cheer, at least, was intended to greet him, for Henry Seeley stood on his chair, waved his hat, and thundered:

"Rah, 'rah, 'rah, for Yale, my boy. Eat 'em alive as your daddy used to do."

The men from Princeton had no intention of being devoured in this summary fashion. They resumed their tireless, whirlwind attack like giants refreshed, and so harried their Yale foemen that they were forced to their utmost to ward off another touchdown. This incessant battering dulled the edges of their offensive tactics, and they seemed unable to set in motion a consistent series of advances. But the joy of Princeton was tempered by the knowledge that this, her dearest enemy, was not beaten until the last play had been signalled.

And somehow the Yale machine of muscle, brains, and power began to find itself when the afternoon shadows were slanting athwart the arena. With the ball on Princeton's forty-yard line the chosen sons of Eli began a heroic advance down the field. It was as if some missing cog had been supplied. "Straight old-fashioned football" it was, eleven minds and bodies working as one and animated by a desperate

resolve, which carried the Yale team along for down after down into the heart of Princeton's ground.

Perhaps because he was fresher than the other backs, perhaps because the captain knew his man, the ball was given to the Yale full-back for one swift and battering assault after another. His slim figure pelted at the rush-line, was overwhelmed in an avalanche of striped arms and legs, but somehow twisted, wriggled, dragged itself ahead as if there was no stopping him. The multitude comprehended that this despised and disgraced Freshman was working out his own salvation along with that of his comrades. Once, when the scrimmage was untangled, he was dragged from beneath a heap of players, unable to regain his feet. He lay on the grass a huddled heap, blood smearing his forehead. A surgeon and the trainer doused and bandaged him, and presently he staggered to his feet and hobbled to his station, rubbing his hands across his eyes as if dazed.

When, at length, the stubbornly retreating Princeton line had been driven deep down into their end of the field, they, too, showed that they could hold fast in the last extremity. The Yale attack crumpled against them as if it had struck a stone wall. Young Seeley seemed to be so crippled and exhausted that he had been given a respite from the interlocked, hammering onslaught, but at the third down the panting quarter-back croaked out his signal. His comrades managed to rip a semblance of an opening for him, he plunged through, popped clear of the line, fell to his knees, recovered his footing by a miracle of agility, and lunged onward, to be brought down within five yards of the coveted goal-posts.

He had won the right to make the last momentous charge. Swaying in his tracks, the full-back awaited the summons. Then he dived in behind the interference for a circuit of the right end. Two Princeton men broke through as if they had been shot out of mortars, but the Yale full-back had turned and was ploughing straight ahead. Pulled down, dragging the tackler who clung to his waist, he floundered to

earth with most of the Princeton team piled above him. But the ball lay beyond the fateful chalk-line, the Yale touchdown was won, and the game was tied.

The captain clapped Seeley on the shoulder, nodded at the ball, and the full-back limped on to the field to kick the goal or lose a victory. There were no more signs of nervousness in his bearing. With grave deliberation he stood waiting for the ball to be placed in front of the goal-posts. The sun had dropped behind the lofty grand-stands. The field lay in a kind of wintry twilight. Thirty thousand men and women gazed in tensest silence at the mud-stained, battered youth who had become the crowning issue of this poignant moment. Up in the press-box a thick-set, grayish man dug his fists in his eyes and could not bear to look at the lonely, reliant figure down yonder on the quiet field. The father found courage to take his hands from his face only when a mighty roar of joy boomed along the Yale side of the amphitheatre, and he saw the ball drop in a long arc behind the goal-posts. The kick had won the game for Yale.

Once clear of the crowds, Henry Seeley hurried toward the training quarters. His head was up, his shoulders squared, and he walked with the free stride of an athlete. Mr. Richard Giddings danced madly across to him:

"Afraid to see him play were you, you silly old fool? He is a chip of the old block. He didn't know when he was licked. Wow, wow, wow, blood will tell! Come along with us, Harry."

"I must shake hands with the youngster, Dick. Glad I changed my mind and came to see him do it."

"All right, see you at Mory's to-night. Tell the boy we're all proud of him."

Seeley resumed his course, saying over and over again, as if he loved the sound of the words, "chip of the old block," "blood will tell."

This verdict was like the ringing call of bugles. It made him feel young, hopeful, resolute, that life were worth having for the sake of its strife. One thing at least was certain. His son could "take his punishment" and wrest victory from disaster, and he deserved something better than a coward and a quitter for a father.

The full-back was sitting on a bench when the elder Seeley entered the crowded, steaming room of the training house. The surgeon had removed the muddy, blood-stained bandage from around his tousled head and was cleansing an ugly, ragged gash. The boy scowled and winced but made no complaint, although his bruised face was very pale.

"Must have made you feel pretty foggy," said the surgeon. "I shall have to put in a few stitches. It was a deuce of a thump."

"I couldn't see very well and my legs went queer for a few minutes, but I'm all right now, thanks," replied the full-back, and then, glancing up, he espied his father standing near the door. The young hero of the game beckoned him with a grimy fist. Henry Seeley went over to him, took the fist in his two hands, and then patted the boy's cheek with awkward and unaccustomed tenderness.

"Sit still, Ernest. I won't interfere with the doctor's job. I just wanted to let you know that I saw your bully work. It made me think of--it made me think of--"

Henry Seeley's voice broke curiously and his lip quivered. He had not meant to show any emotion.

His son replied with a smile of affectionate admiration: "It made you think of your own teams, didn't it? And I was thinking of you in that

last half. It helped my nerve a whole lot to remember that my dad never knew when he was licked. Why, even the coaches told me that between the halves. It put more ginger into me than anything else. We've got to keep up the family record between us."

The father looked beyond the boy as if he were thinking of a bigger, sterner game than football. There was the light of a resurrected determination in his eyes, and a vibrant earnestness in his voice as he said:

"I'm not worrying about your keeping the family record bright, Ernest. And, however things may go with me, you will be able to hang fast to the doctrine which helped you to-day, that your father, too, doesn't know when he is whipped."