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Looking For A Hero

Mary Mastin was going to see the great football game between the home university and the Wisteria university. Her brother was a Wisteria alumnus of both the college of arts and the college of law. Being a romantic and ingenious young person of 18, Mary had informed Jim that she was sure going to fall in love with some football hero.

"The handsome Greek god, who, when all seems lost, saves the day for old Wisteria or the slender boy whom the rest thought too light for the game who gets around the end and scores for old Illigan, and when he doesn't rise where he fell in making the touchdown they find he has been playing the last quarter with a broken rib—oh, I shall fall in love with some one of them," said Mary, with dancing eyes.

"Boah," said Jim, stolidly. "There were no handsome Greek gods on any team I ever saw."

"Well, there'll be one hero, certainly, and when he's carried off the field, suffering terribly, but not a word of complaint escaping his lips, and I'll send him some flowers and he'll bury his face in them, tears starting from his eyes."

"As the girls do in those fierce yards purporting to be college stories. To my notion a football game affords about as much chance for a real story as a game of chess," declared Jim. "I never read a football story that wasn't punk. Hi, look at that now!"

The visiting contingent of Wisteria undergraduates, 1,100 strong, headed by their band, was progressing around the track that encircled the gridiron, in an astonishing choragic dance. It was at once a cake walk, a minuet and gigantic quadrille. With their steps in ordered rhythm, their hands brandished aloft in triumphant gestures in unison with the cadence of their high lifted feet, they wound in and out.

"Why, it's charming. No, it's awe inspiring!" exclaimed the girl, looking through her field glass. "Who's that leading them? Isn't he handsome?"

"That's Bill Howard, the hottest alumni rooter of them all."

"And look at those people in the box down there! How excited they are! Alumni and their wives, of course. Isn't it fine to see the alumni so enthusiastic and loyal!"

"Alumni nothing," growled Jim. "That's a bunch of brokers with big bets on the game, probably on the visiting team, for fellows like that would be likely to back a university outside their own state."

Suddenly there burst forth from the bleachers where Wisteria students were massed a huge roar of inarticulate, mindless sound. The Wisteria team had hulked out on the field. All possible comeliness of face and form was hidden by the ungainly garb, so Mary hardly looked at the players. Her glass swept the line of yellmasters, picturesque, well tailored slim youths, gay with ribbons, waving pennants in a frenzy.

"That one in the middle is such a dear," she said.

"That's Red Robertson," said Jim. "He roomed with me when he was a freshman and I a senior law. He's the head yellmaster."

"Does he ever play?"

"Play? He's too pretty to play. A man who ties a necktie the way he does wouldn't play. He hasn't the beef, anyway."

"He's awfully graceful, and so quick. I know he could play if he wanted to."

Illigan won. It didn't matter much to Mary, for Red Robertson at the close of the game had sought them out, anxious to see Jim, though he hardly noticed Jim after he had been presented to Mary. He steered her through the multitude. Some football men passed. They moved heavily, awkwardly. Quick enough on the field in action, they seemed out of their element now, like crabs on land.

"Hackaday is bowlegged in his arms as well as in his legs, isn't he?" said Jim. "Good player, though. Where'd they get him?"

"Bill Hands, '96, when he was up hunting two years ago, saw him poling logs in the river, and got him down here," explained Robertson. "Bill is the man who got Dike, too. Dike was driving a cab in Denver. A corking good alumnus, is Bill."

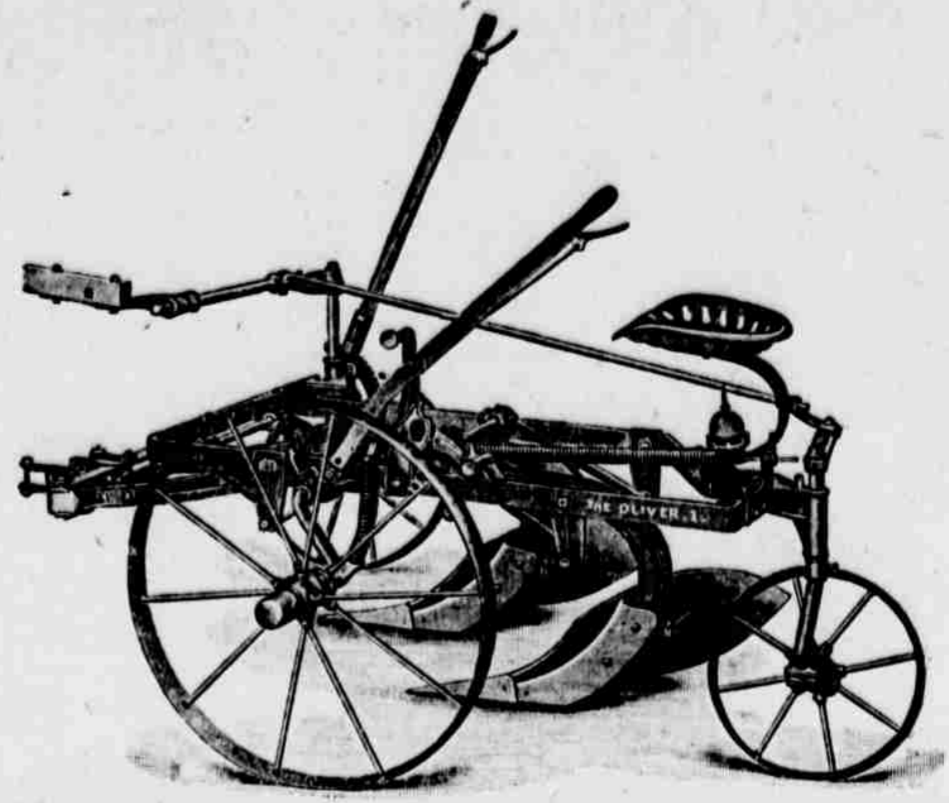
"What! Do colleges still hire professional players?" asked Mary.

"No. But there are still organizations called Alumni Students' Aid associations that loan money to men whom they want to see get a college education and the men they want to see do that are liable to be fine athletes."

"Are there no football heroes?" demanded Mary. "No boys who weep over the defeat of their team? Nobody for me to give my roses to for him to weep into?"

"Yes, there are some real students on every team and perhaps some day they'll all be real as they used to be in the old days. But the fellows who weep over defeat are mostly on the bleachers. I've lost a big bet and I'd like to weep. Won't you give me the roses?"

"It's a dreadful disillusionment," said Mary. "I meant them for—half back, not a yellmaster, but here are the roses."—Chicago Daily News.



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