

## PENROD

By BOOTH TARKINGTON

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Reckless with despair, Duke jumped into the basket, landing in a disheveled posture, which he did not alter until he had been drawn up and poured out upon the floor of sawdust within the box. There, shuddering, he lay in doughnut shape and presently slumbered. It was dark in the box, a condition that might have been remedied by sliding back a small wooden panel on runners, which would have let in ample light from the alley, but Penrod Schofield had more interesting means of illumination. He knelt, and from a former soap box, in a corner, took a lantern without a chimney and a large oil can, the leak in the latter being so nearly imperceptible that its banishment from household use had seemed to Penrod as inexplicable as it was providential.

He checked the lantern near his ear; nothing splashed; there was no sign but a dry clicking. But there was plenty of kerosene in the can, and he filled the lantern, striking a match to flame the operation. Then he lit the lantern and hung it upon a nail against the wall. The sawdust floor was slightly impregnated with oil, and the open flame quivered in suggestive proximity to the side of the box; however, some rather deep charring of the plank against which the lantern hung offered evidence that the arrangement was by no means a new one and indicated at least a possibility of no fatality occurring this time.

Next Penrod turned up the surface of the sawdust in another corner of the box and drew forth a cigar box in which were half a dozen cigarettes made of hayseed and thick brown wrapping paper, a lead pencil, an eraser and a small notebook labeled: "English Grammar. Penrod Schofield. Room 6, Ward School Number Seventh."

The first page of this book was purely academic, but the study of English undisturbedly terminated with a slight jar at the top of the second: "Not must an advent be used to modify."

Immediately followed: "HAROLD RAMOREZ, THE ROAD-AGENT OR WILD LIFE AMONG THE ROCKY MTS."

And the subsequent entries in the book appeared to have little concern with Room 6, Ward School Number Seventh.

The author of "Harold Ramorez," etc., lit one of the hayseed cigarettes, seated himself comfortably, with his back against the wall and his right shoulder just under the lantern, elevated his knees to support the notebook, turned to a blank page and wrote, slowly and earnestly:

## CHAPTER THE SIXTH

He took a knife from his pocket, and, broodingly, his eyes upon the inward embryos of vision, sharpened his pen-knife. After that he extended a foot and meditatively rubbed Duke's back with the side of his shoe. Creation, with Penrod, did not leap, fall armed, from the brain, but finally he began to produce. He wrote very slowly at first, and then with increasing rapidity, faster and faster, gathering momentum and growing more and more fevered as he sped, till at last the true fire came, without which no lamp of real literature may be made to burn.

Mr. Wilson recoiled for his gun but his hero had been covered and soon said: "Well, I guess you don't come any of that on me now."

What makes you so sure about it, sneezed the blood ran. You are nothing but a common Road-agent any way and I do not propose to be baffled by such. Ramorez laughed at this and kept Mr. Wilson covered by his ottomakick. Soon the two men were struggling together in the darkness, but soon Mr. Wilson got the better and forced his mouth and went away for awhile leaving his hero, it was dark and he writhed at his bonds writhing on the floor while the rats came out to his heels and bit him and vermin got all over him from the floor of that helix spot but soon he managed to push the gear out of his mouth with the end of his tongue and got all his bonds off.

Soon Mr. Wilson came back to find him with his helpless condition flowed by his gang of detectives and they said Oh look at Ramorez sneezing at his plight and teased him with his helpless condition because Ramorez had put the bonds back on he would look the same but could not look at him now sneezing they. To hear him ask you would thought he was not stuff and they said Look at him now. It was going to do so much, Oh would not like to be his.

Soon Harold got going at this and jumped up with blazing eyes throw in his bonds like they were air Ha sneezed he I guess you better not talk so much now. Soon there followed another awful struggle and again his ottomakick back from Mr. Wilson he shot two of the detectives through the heart Bing Bing went the ottomakick and two more went to meet their Maker only two detectives left now and so he stabbed one and the second went to meet his Maker for now he was fighting for his very life. It was dark in there now for night had fallen and a terrible view met the eye Blood was just all over everything and the rats were eating the dead men.

Soon, Mr. Wilson managed to get back to the wall for he was fighting for his very life now and shot Mr. Wilson through the abdomen. Oh said Mr. Wilson Mr. Wilson staggered back with the salt in his eyes for he was in pain. Why you

CHAPTER II  
The Costume.

AFTER lunch his mother and his sister Margaret, a pretty girl of nineteen, dressed him for the sacrifice. They stood him near his mother's bedroom window and did what they would to him.

During the earlier anguish of the process he was mute, exceeding the pithos of the stricken calf in the shambles, but a student of eyes might have detected in his soul the premonitory symptoms of a sinister uprising. At a rehearsal in disguise clothes attended by mothers and grown-up sisters, Mrs. Lora Rewbush had announced that she wished the costume to be "as medieval and artistic as possible." Otherwise, and as to details, she said, she would leave the costumes to the good taste of the children's parents. Mrs. Schofield and Margaret were no archaeologists, but they knew that their taste was as good as that of other mothers and sisters concerned, so with perfect confidence they began to shroud his legs in a pair of silk stockings.



Then They Began by Shrouding His Legs in a Pair of Silk Stockings.

dence they had planned and executed a costume for Penrod, and the only misgiving they felt was connected with the tractability of the Child Sir Lancelot himself.

Stripped to his underwear, he had been made to wash himself vehemently; then they began by shrouding his legs in a pair of silk stockings, once blue, but now mostly whitish. Upon Penrod they visibly surpassed mere amplex, but they were long, and it required only a rather loose imagination to assume that they were tight.

The upper part of his body was next concealed from view by a garment so peculiar that its description becomes difficult. In 1886 Mrs. Schofield, then unmarried, had worn at her "coming out party" a dress of vivid salmon silk which had been remodeled after her marriage to accord with various epochs of fashion until a final unskillful campaign at a dye house had left it in a condition certain to attract much attention to the wearer. Mrs. Schofield had considered giving it to Della, the cook, but had decided not to do so, because you never could tell how Della was going to take things, and cooks were scarce.

It may have been the word "medieval" (in Mrs. Lora Rewbush's rich phrase) which had inspired the idea for a last and conspicuous usefulness. At all events the bodice of that once salmon dress, somewhat modified and moderated, now took a position for its farewell appearance in society upon the back, breast and arms of the Child Sir Lancelot.

The area thus costumed ceased at the waist, leaving a Jaeger-like and unmedieval gap thence to the tops of the stockings. The inventive genius of woman triumphantly bridged it, but in a manner which imposes upon history almost insuperable delicacies of narrative. Penrod's father was an old-fashioned man. The twentieth century had failed to shake his faith in the dandy for cold weather, and it was while Mrs. Schofield was putting away her husband's winter underwear that she perceived how hopelessly one of the elder specimens had dwindled, and simultaneously she received the inspiration which resulted in a pair of trunks for the Child Sir Lancelot and added an earnest bit of color, as well as a genuine touch of the middle ages, to his costume. Reversed, for to aft, with the greater part of the legs cut off and strips of silver braid covering the seams, this garment, she felt, was not traceable to its original source.

When it had been placed upon Penrod the stockings were attached to it by a system of safety pins, not very perceptible at a distance. Next, after being severely warned against stooping, Penrod got his feet into the slipper he wore to dancing school—"patent leather pumps," now decorated with large pink rosettes.

"If I can't stop," he began smolderingly, "I'd like to know how I'm going to kneel in the pews."

"You must manage!" This uttered through pins, was evidently thought to be sufficient.

They fastened some rushing about his slender neck, pinned ribbons at random all over him, and then Margaret thickly powdered his hair.

"Oh, yes; that's all right," she said, replying to a question put by her mother. "They always powdered their hair in colonial times."

"It doesn't seem right to me—exactly," objected Mrs. Schofield, gently. "Sir Lancelot must have been even so long before colonial times."

"That doesn't matter," Margaret reassured her. "Nobody'll know the difference. Mrs. Lora Rewbush least of all. I don't think she knows a thing about it, though, of course, she does write splendidly and the words of the pageant are just beautiful. Stand still, Penrod!" (The author of "Harold Ramorez" had moved convulsively.)

"Besides, powdered hair's always becoming. Look at him. You'd hardly know it was Penrod!"

The pride and admiration with which she pronounced this undeniable truth might have been thought factious, but Penrod, not analytical, found his spirit somewhat elevated. No mirror was in his range of vision, and though he had submitted to curious measurements of his person a week earlier, he had no previous acquaintance with the costume. He began to form a not unpleasant mental picture of his appearance, something somewhere between the portraits of George Washington and a vivid memory of Miss Julia Marlowe at a matinee of "Twelfth Night."

He was additionally cheered by a sword which had been borrowed from a neighbor who was a Knight of Pythias. Finally there was a mantle, an old golf cape of Margaret's. Fluffy polka dots of white cotton had been sewed to it generously; also it was ornamented with a large cross of red damask, suggested by the picture of a crusader in a newspaper advertisement. The mantle was fastened to Penrod's shoulder—that is, to the shoulder of Mrs. Schofield's ex-bodice—by means of large safety pins and arranged to hang down behind him, touching his heels, but obscuring no wise the glory of his facade. Then at last he was allowed to step before a mirror.

It was a full length glass and the worst immediately happened. It might have been a little less violent, perhaps, if Penrod's expectations had not been so richly and poetically idealized, but as things were the revolt was volcanic.

Victor Hugo's account of the fight with the devilish, in "Tollers of the Sea," encourages a belief that, had Hugo lived and increased in power, he might have been equal to a proper recital of the half hour which followed Penrod's first sight of himself as the Child Sir Lancelot. But Mr. Wilson himself, dastard but eloquent foe of Harold Ramorez, could not have expressed, with all the vile dashes at his command, the sentiments which animated Penrod's bosom when the instantaneous and unalterable conviction descended upon him that he was intended by his loved ones to make public spectacle of himself in his sister's stockings and part of an old dress of his mother's.

To him these familiar things were not disguised at all. There seemed no possibility that the whole world would not know them at a glance. The stockings were worse than the bodice. He had been assured that these could not be recognized, but, seeing them in the mirror, he was sure that no human eye could fall at first glance to detect the difference between himself and the former purposes of these stockings. Fold, wrinkle, and void shrieked their history with a hundred tongues, invoking earthquake, eclipse and blue ruin. The frantic youth's final submission was obtained only after a painful telephone conversation between himself and his father, the latter having been called up and upon by the exhausted Mrs. Schofield, to subjugate his offspring by wire.

The two ladies made all possible haste after this to deliver Penrod into the hands of Mrs. Lora Rewbush. Nevertheless, they found opportunity to exchange earnest congratulations upon his not having recognized the humble but serviceable paternal garment now brilliant about the Lancelotish middle. Altogether, they felt that the costume was a success. Penrod looked like nothing ever remotely imagined by Sir Thomas Malory or Alfred Tennyson—for that matter he looked like nothing ever before seen on earth—but as Mrs. Schofield and Margaret took their places in the audience at the Women's Arts and Guild ball, the anxiety they felt concerning Penrod's elocutionary and gesticular powers so soon to be put to public test was pleasantly tempered by their satisfaction that, owing to their efforts, his outward appearance would be a credit to the family.

The Child Sir Lancelot found himself in a large anteroom behind the stage—a room crowded with excited children, all about equally medieval and artistic. Penrod was less conspicuous than he thought himself, but he was so preoccupied with his own shame, stealing his nerves to meet the first inevitable taunting reference to his sister's stockings, that he failed to perceive there were others present in much of his own unarmored condition. Retiring to a corner immediately upon his entrance, he managed to unfasten the mantle at the shoulders and, drawing it round him, pinned it again at his throat so that it concealed the rest of his costume. This permitted a temporary relief, but increased his horror of the moment when, in pursuance of the action of the "pageant," the sheltering garment must be cast aside.

Some of the other child knights were also keeping their mantles close about them. A few of the envied potent swung brilliant fabrics from their shoulders, airily showing off their solidors from a professional costume stock, while one or two were in sultry examples of parental indignation.

gences, particularly little Maurice Levy, the Child Sir Galahad. This shrinking person went clamorously about, making it known everywhere that the best tailor in town had been dazzled by a great sum into constructing his costume. It consisted of blue velvet knickerbockers, a white satin waistcoat and a beautifully cut little swallow-tailed coat with pearl buttons. The medieval and artistic triumph was completed by a mantle of yellow velvet and little white boots sporting gold tassels.

All this radiance paused in a brilliant career and addressed the Child Sir Lancelot, gathering an immediate ly formed semicircular audience of little girls. Woman was ever the trailer of magnificence.

"What you got on?" inquired Mr. Levy after dispensing information.

"What you got on under that ole golf cape?"

Penrod looked upon him coldly. At other times his questioner would have approached him with deference, even with apprehension. But today the Child Sir Galahad was somewhat intoxicated with the power of his own beauty.

"What you got on?" he repeated. "Oh, nothing," said Penrod, with an indifference assumed at great cost to his nervous system.

The elate Maurice was inspired to set up as a wit. "Then you're naked!" he shouted exultantly. "Penrod Schofield says he hasn't got nothin' on under that ole golf cape! He's naked! He's naked!"

The audience of little girls giggled irritatingly, and a javelin pierced the inwards of Penrod when he saw that the Child Elaine, amber curled and beautiful Marjorie Jones, lifted golden laughter to the horrid jest.

Other boys and girls came flocking to the uproar. "He's naked, he's naked!" shrieked the Child Sir Galahad. "Penrod Schofield's naked! He's naked!"

"Hush, hush!" said Mrs. Lora Rewbush, pushing her way into the group. "Remember, we are all little knights and ladies today. Little knights and ladies of the Table Round would not make so much noise. Now, children, we must begin to take our places on the stage. Is everybody here?"

Penrod made his escape under cover of this diversion. He slid behind Mrs. Lora Rewbush and, being near a door, opened it unnoted and went out quickly, closing it behind him. He found himself in a narrow and vacant hallway which led to a door marked "Janitor's Room."

Burning with outrage, heartsick at the sweet, cold blooded laughter of Marjorie Jones, Penrod rested his elbows upon a window sill and speculated upon the effects of a leap from the second story. One of the reasons he gave it up was his desire to live on Maurice Levy's account; already he was forming educational plans for the Child Sir Galahad.

A stout man in blue overalls passed through the hallway, muttering to himself petulantly. "I reckon they'll find that hall hot enough now!" he said, conveying to Penrod an impression that some too feminine women had sent him upon an unreasonable errand to the furnace. He went into the janitor's room and, emerging a moment later minus the overalls, passed Penrod again with a bass rumble—"Derrr'em!" it seemed he said—and made a gloomy exit by the door at the upper end of the hallway.

The conglomerate and delicate rustle of a large, mannerly audience was heard as the janitor opened and closed the door, and stage fright seized the boy. The orchestra began an overture, and at that Penrod, trembling violently, tiptoed down the hall into the janitor's room. It was a cul-de-sac; there was no outlet save by the way he had come.

Despairingly he doffed his mantle and looked down upon himself for a last sickening assurance that the stockings were as obviously and disgracefully Margaret's as they had seemed in the mirror at home. For a moment he was encouraged; perhaps he was no worse than some of the other boys. Then he noticed that a safety pin had opened; one of those connecting the stockings with his trunks. He sat down to fasten it, and his eye fell for the first time with particular attention upon the trunks. Until this instant he had been preoccupied with the stockings.

Slowly recognition dawned in his eyes.

The Schofields' house stood on a corner at the intersection of two main traveled streets, the fence was low and the publicity obtained by the washable portion of the family apparel on Mondays had often been painful to Penrod, for boys have a peculiar sensitiveness in these matters. A plain matter of fact washerwoman, employed by Mrs. Schofield, never left anything to the imagination of the passerby, and of all her calm display the scarlet flaunting of his father's winter wear had most abashed Penrod. One day Marjorie Jones, all gold and starch, had passed when the dreadful things were on the line; Penrod had hidden himself, shuddering. The whole town, he was convinced, knew these garments intimate ly and derisively.

And now, as he sat in the janitor's chair, the horrible and paralyzing recognition came. He had not an instant's doubt that every fellow actor, as well as every soul in the audience, would recognize what his mother and sister had put upon him. For as the awful truth became plain to himself it seemed blazoned to the world, and far far louder than the stockings, the trunks did fairly hallow the grisly secret, whose they were and what they were.

Most people have suffered in a dream the experience of finding themselves very inadequately clad in the midst of a crowd of well-dressed people, and

such dreamers' sensations are comparable to Penrod's, though faintly, because Penrod was awake and in much too full possession of the most active capacities for anguish.

A human male whose dress has been damaged, or reveals some vital lack, suffers from a hideous and shameful loneliness, which makes every second absolutely unbearable until he is again as others of his sex and species, and there is no act or sin whatever too desperate for him in his struggle to attain that condition. Also, there is absolutely no embarrassment possible to a woman which is comparable to that of a man under corresponding circumstances, and in this a boy is a man. Gazing upon the ghastly drunks, the stricken Penrod felt that he was a degree worse than nude, and a great horror of himself filled his soul.

"Penrod Schofield!"

The door into the hallway opened, and a voice demanded him. He could not be seen from the hallway, but the hue and cry was up, and he knew he must be taken. It was only a question of seconds. He huddled in his chair.

"Penrod Schofield!" cried Mrs. Lora Rewbush angrily.

The distracted boy rose, and as he did so a long pin sank deep into his back. He extracted it frenziedly, which brought to his ears a protracted and sonorous ripping, too easily located by a final gesture of horror.

"Penrod Schofield!" Mrs. Lora Rewbush had come out into the hallway.

And how in this extremity, when all seemed lost, indeed, particularly including honor, the dilating eye of the outlaw fell upon the blue overalls which the janitor had left hanging upon a peg.

Inspiration and action were almost simultaneous.

## CHAPTER III

The Pageant of the Table Round.

"PENROD!" Mrs. Lora Rewbush stood in the doorway, indignantly gazing upon a Child Sir Lancelot mantled to the heels.

"Do you know that you have kept an audience of 500 people waiting ten minutes?" She also detained the white, she spoke further.

"Well," said Penrod contentedly, as he followed her toward the dressing stage, "I was just sitting there thinking."

Two minutes later the curtain rose on a medieval castle hall richly done in the new stage craft made in Germany and consisting of pink and blue cheseeleoth. The Child King Arthur and the Child Queen Guinevere were disclosed upon thrones, with the Child Elaine and many other celebrities in attendance, while about fifteen Child Knights were seated at a dining round Table Round, which was covered with a large oriental rug, and displayed (for the knights' refreshment) a banquet service of silver loving cups and trophies, borrowed from the Country Club and some local automobile manufacturers.

In addition to this splendor, potted plants and palms have seldom been more lavishly used in any castle on the stage or off. The footlights were aided by a "spot-light" from the rear of the hall, and the children were revealed in a blaze of glory.

A hushed, multitudinous "O-ah" of admiration came from the detestable and delighted audience. Then the children sang feebly:

"Children of the Table Round,

Little knights and ladies we,

Let our voices all resound

Faith and hope and charity!"

The Child King Arthur rose, extended his scepter with the decisive gesture of a semaphore and spoke:

"Each little knight and lady born

Has noble deeds to perform

In this child-world of shivaree,

No matter how small his share may be,

Let each advance and let him turn

What gain has each to knighthood earn."

This piece, rose in his place at the Table Round and pined the only lines ever written by Mrs. Lora Rewbush, which Penrod Schofield could have pronounced without laughing. George Bassett, a really uddle boy, had been selected for the role of Mordred. His perfect conduct had earned for him the nickname sobriquet "The Little Gentleman" among his boy acquaintances. (Naturally he had no friends.) Hence the other boys supposed that he had been selected for the wicked Mordred as a reward of virtue. He declaimed serenely:

"I fight Sir Mordred the Child, and I teach

Lessons of selfishness, evil, and reach

Out into darkness, thoughtless, unkind,

And ruthless is Mordred and unfeared."

The Child Mordred was properly rebuked and denied the accolade, though, like the others, he seemed to have assumed the title already. He made a plotter's exit, whereupon Maurice Levy rose, bowed, announced that he lighted the Child Sir Galahad and continued with perfect sang froid:

"I am the purest of the pure,

I have but kindest thoughts each day,

I give my riches to the poor,

And follow in the Master's way."

This elicited tokens of approval from the Child King Arthur, and he bade Maurice "stand forth" and come near the throne, a command obeyed with the easy grace of conscious merit.

(To be continued)

A Cure for  
Bad Breath

"Bad breath is a sign of decayed teeth, foul stomach or undigested food." If your teeth are good, look to your digestive organs at once. Get Seigel's Curative Syrup at druggists. 15 to 30 drops after meals, clean up your food passage and stop the bad breath odor. 50c and \$1.00 bottles. Do not buy substitutes. Get the genuine.