I SAY we leave him alone after this. A fellow that will do such tricky things doesn't deserve to have a good time. Just give him to understand that we don't approve of his ways, and he'll soon learn that it doesn't pay. What good could it do him, anyway, to put her to all that trouble?"

Mont Earl did not wait for a reply to this question, but bounding over the fence, led the way across a field toward the wood where the little party was going gunning.

Not only he, but his companions considered the matter settled, and further discussion was deemed unnecessary.

The weather being hot and sultry, and the streets of the small town dusty and disagreeable in general, the coming pleasure of a day in the shade of the old forest trees was altogether too inviting to allow their thoughts to wander back to the comrade left behind. And little would it have disturbed the peace of their minds had they known that this same young lad was at that moment pouring his troubles into the ear of his sympathetic mother.

"I know it's all Mont Earl's work. He leads the other fellows, and if he said for me not to go, there isn't a boy who'd dare to ask me. I'd like to know what business it is to him, anyway?"

"Why don't you get up something yourself, Lon, and ask all the other boys but Mont?" remarked his sister Sadie. "That would pay him back."

Lon's face lighted up at this proposition; but the brightness vanished as he recalled the incident, which he half suspected was at the bottom of his not being invited to join the hunting party.

"Probably Mont would tell the rest not to come, and they wouldn't dare to. Everything goes just as he says. All the fellows give in."

"Why don't you try to get John Holland on your side?" asked Mrs. Wentworth. "Isn't he the richest boy in the school?"

"Boys don't care for that," returned Lon, contemptuously. "What difference does that make?"

"It's who's the most popular," put in Sadie. "That means the fellow who can kick a football the highest, and shoot at a mark the straightest, and touch the goal the soonest, and ride a horse the fastest, and—"

"No, it doesn't," broke in Lon. "Maybe Mont can kick a ball the highest and ride a horse the best; but he can't beat any of the boys in running or shooting. I can hit the bull's eye twice to his once."

"What does make him such a favorite, then?" asked Mrs. Wentworth.

"I'm sure I don't know. But I do know they all give in to him. It was so when we came here. I noticed it the first day I went to school. I suppose there's some reason."

Of course there was, and any other boy in the place could have told him had Lon chosen to ask. It was simply that Mont was a straight-forward, high-minded boy, with plenty of spirit and true courage, both physical and moral. He was never at a loss if called upon to suggest a game or provide amusement upon the rainy days.

Then, too, he had such a happy way of putting others forward in their games. If they were playing foot-ball, he was sure to kick it toward some unlucky chap whose chances were small.

All the younger ones came to him to be helped out of their difficulties, and the older ones to be helped on in their efforts. The great deference paid his opinion might have made the boy conceited had it not been balanced by the excellent sense of his mother.

"We're going to leave Lon Wentworth out in the cold after this," Mont said to his mother, that evening. "We wouldn't ask him to go gunning today, because he cut poor Mrs. Price's clothesline yesterday, and let all the clean clothes down on the wet ground. The line was just filled with white dresses and things. She washes for that New York family boarding at Mrs. Long's. Doing tricky thinks like that is what Lon calls having a good time."

"What a shame, when the poor woman works so hard! Did she know who did it?"

"No, she thought the line broke. You ought to have heard the poor soul. Burt and I were just passing, and we helped her mend the line. We found out afterward that Lon cut it, and the little rascal was hiding in the bushes when she came out. He thought it was too good a joke to keep, so he told Jack Barnes. He's done ever so many sneaky things since he came here. He goes around ringing door-bells, and then running off before any one can open the door. We fellows are just going to give him the go-by, without telling our reason. Probably his conscience will tell him what that is. If he finds no decent boys will play with him, perhaps he'll have to mend his ways. There'll be only two things left for him. Either he must go with that set over by the mills, or play by himself."

"Supposing he should choose his companions from among those boys by the mills?" and Mrs. Earl looked kindly over at Mont, as she waited for his reply.

"Why, they're just about as good," Mont said, "only they've never been taught any better. The whole settlement over there is made up of people who don't pretend to be good. I don't mean those who work in the mills. They don't associate with what is called the gang, and most of the mill hands live this side. There are those Appleby boys. Lon might go with them. They're up to all kinds of such tricks. They'd be first-rate companions. Very likely he'll fall back upon them when we drop him."

"Mont," began Mrs. Earl, quietly, "I think there is a better way for you to do. Go and tell Lon what you have resolved to do, and give him his choice—to drop his unfortunate ways, or be dropped by the rest of you. I don't know, Mont," she went on, "that you are just the one to do this, because you do not know him so well as the others."

"I'll tell you what we'll do. We'll form a committee to wait upon him," cried Mont.

"That might touch the wrong side of him, and thus do harm at the start."

"Well, then, we'll draw up some resolutions, and sign in Round Robin fashion, and send the document through the post office. How will that do?"

"Perhaps that might answer. It would depend very much upon how you worded it."

"Will you help us?"

And Mont looked up eagerly.

"I will gladly make any suggestions, but a boy's way of wording it will be better."

"May I invite the boys here?"

"Certainly! You may ask them to tea tomorrow evening, and I will see that they are put in an amiable frame of mind by the best peach shortcake Betsey can make."

"Swimming in cream?"

And Mont's lips met, making a sound suggestive of the coming enjoyment.

"Swimming in cream!" acquiesced his mother.

"That ought to make any fellow charitable," aid Mont. "You know about boys' appetites, of course," he went on. "It would spoil our plan if it really proved to be a short cake."

"I've not sat at the table so many years with a growing boy, and been blind to his necessities," said Mrs. Earl, pleasantly. "I'll see that Betsey understands the case."

Mont found no difficulty in enlisting the boys in his plan, albeit he did not mention the short-cake

At his mother's suggestion, he had chosen only the older boys, ten in number, and a manly-looking set they were, as they placed themselves at the table.

Mont's eyes brightened as the bountiful shortcake was placed before his mother. Then he fell to calculating its dimensions.

"At least twelve by eight," was his silent estimate, "and full four inches thick! Eight times twelve, ninety-six; four times ninety-six, three hundred and eighty-four! Thirty-two cubic inches to each one! That ought to be enough!"

And so every boy present would have said. But not so their generous hostess.

"Betsey makes such light shortcakes," she had reasoned, "and the peaches are in perfection. I'm sure it will not harm the boys to eat as much as they feel inclined to; and, of course, that will be a good deal," she added, as she made known her generous thought to Betsey.

"This is the most delicious shortcake I ever tasted," said Howard Duncan, looking affectionately down at the vanishing piece on his plate. "Worlds ahead of strawberry! Somehow, the cream seems to help melt it right down."

"Now, boys," began Mont, when, with his mother, they all seated themselves in the library, "who shall be appointed president?"

"Mrs. Earl!" came from several voices.

But Mrs. Earl respectfully declined the honor, and proposed, instead, Mark Worth.

Mark was at once voted in. Then an appeal for advice was made to Mrs. Earl.

"Of course, your prime object is the reforming of Lon," she began, accepting without demur the position of counselor.

"To-be-sure!" came quickly.

"Then I suggest that each boy puts on his thinking cap, and in ten minutes is ready to present his view as to the best method of bringing this about. Let the question be, 'How can we do him the greatest good?'"

Ten minutes is a long period for eleven boys to sit in quiet thought. Only half that time had passed when Howard Duncan arose.

"Mr. President," began he, "it seems to me that Lon will take this thing more kindly—and thus better results be reached—if he is not the only boy singled out for reform. I move that we send a like paper to each one of the younger boys."

"What! When they've never done any mean and sneaky things?" broke in John Holland.

"Yes," returned Howard, quite ignoring his former ceremony. "We need not accuse them of having done anything; but put it in this way: Say that we have formed ourselves into a society to encourage good and—"

"And root out evil," interrupted Del Preston.

"Yes, and root out evil," accepted Howard, "and that we are resolved to receive into our games only such boys as will help the thing on."

The president cleared his throat and coughed, but to no purpose. The boys had already grown too carnest to remember the respect due a superior officer, and the discussion went on.

"I say if we start a thing like this that we live up to the rules," cried Jim Slater. "The first fellow who kicks must be left out. I don't believe in threats."

"Let's draw up our rules," said Mont. "Who shall be secretary, Mr. President?"

"I will appoint Mont Earl as secretary," replied the president.

"That won't do," laughed Mont. "All the Round Robins in the world wouldn't shield me. Every one knows my handwriting. Take Pelham. He never writes twice alike."

Pelham being appointed, the work of drawing up a form was begun. When completed, it stood thus:

"Whereas: We, the undersigned, do earnestly desire to promote the growth of high moral principles among the boys of this village, and to root out and destroy everything tending to ncurish evil in any shape, we have formed ourselves into a society and adopted the following resolutions:

"Resolved, That, as a body, we refuse to receive into our games any boy whom we know to be guilty of lying, stealing or committing underhanded or unprincipled acts.

"Resolved, That we will receive into our society anl boy desirous of aiding in this work.

"Application may be made to any member of the society whose name is here appended."

"There," said Pelham, reading it through aloud. "It's not often Round Robin signatures are affixed to documents of this nature. Now we'll send them out to all the boys, and let it be noised abroad that any one receiving a paper will be admitted upon application."

Of all the boys who received a copy of the resolutions, not one hesitated over applying for admission so long as did Lon Wentworth.

"We mean business," said John Holland, when at last Lon brought himself to speak of the matter. "Any fellow who joins this society may understand, at the beginning that we mean what we say. We don't want any member whom we need be ashamed of. If your name goes down, it means that you are going to stand on your honor, and help us on. Whatever you may have done in the past will be overlooked, but after this there's no getting off. That's what your name will stand for."

And, underneath the Round Bobin, Lon wrote, in his best copy-book hand, "Alonzo Q. Wentworth."

"Good for you!" came in John's hearty tones. "Now, sir, you won't go back on us, I know."

"I don't mean to," and Lon gave a tender look at his bold signature as he handed the paper to John, adding, "No one ever tried for me before."