

TIP TOP WEEKLY

"AN IDEAL PUBLICATION FOR THE AMERICAN YOUTH"

Street Weekly—By Subscription \$2.50 per year. Entered as Second Class Matter at the N. Y. Post Office by STREET & SMITH.

No. 110

NEW YORK, MAY 21, 1898.

Price 5 Cents.

FRANK MERRIWELL'S CATCH

OR THE CANOE BOYS OF LAKE SEBASTICOOK



By the Author of
"FRANK MERRIWELL"

"STOP!" SHOUTED FRANK. "COME BACK, OR I WILL SHOOT!"

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Frank Merriwell's Catch

OR,

The Canoe Boys of Lake Sebasticook.

By the Author of "FRANK MERRIWELL."

CHAPTER I.

FISHING.

The morning sunshine lay like shining silver on the placid bosom of beautiful Lake Sebasticook. Not a cloud hung in the blue sky, and it was a perfect summer morning, for the sun was not yet high enough to make the air uncomfortably warm.

Near the mouth of a stream that empties into the northern end of the lake floated a canoe that contained two persons who were fishing. The occupants of the canoe were Frank Merriwell and Bart Hodge. In the bottom of the canoe lay more than a dozen large white perch, glittering in the sunlight. That they

were a fresh catch was evident, for they had not lost their silvery lustre, and occasionally some of them flopped about in a frantic endeavor to get back into the water.

"Well, they are beauties!" cried Hodge, as he gazed at them in admiration; "and we did rope them in fast for a few minutes."

"That's what we did," nodded Frank. "I wonder why they stopped biting so suddenly."

"Don't know. What are those splashes on the water over that way?"

"I know!" exclaimed Frank, suddenly beginning to reel in his line with great swiftness. "Pull in, Hodge—pull in!"

"What for?"

"Don't ask questions! Pull in!"

"Trolley" the Japanese naval cadet will amuse you in The Half-Holiday.

Bart obeyed, and the boys quickly reeled their lines.

"Now," said Frank, catching a paddle, "to get on the further side of those splashes."

"All right," came from Hodge, as he got into position for using his paddle, kneeling in the canoe. "Here we go!"

The thin blades dipped and rose from the water, flashing in the sunshine. They plied the paddles with regularity and skill, making not the least splashing.

Frank steered, and he set a course that surprised Bart, who asked:

"Where are we going?"

"Round that splashing," was the answer. "We want to get on the further side."

"Why are we going round?"

"To get ahead of those fish."

"Why not go straight through?"

"We might divide the school, or cause the fish to sink. Those are the perch we struck a short time ago. A few of them were jumping then, and now the whole school is near the surface. Those fish are making for a feeding ground."

In a short time they passed round the school and lay before them.

With great haste, Frank unreeled his line, baited his hook and flung it far from him. Hodge followed his example, but did not let the hook sink far before, seeing a great splashing in another direction, he began to pull in. He had not drawn the hook far before something took it with a jerk and darted away.

"Great Scott!" cried Hodge, excitedly.

"What a bite!"

"Pull him in!" said Frank.

Hodge obeyed, and the fish darted from side to side, the line cutting into Bart's fingers with the fierce plunges of the funny fellow.

Up to the side of the canoe Hodge pulled the fish. The bright sunshine

showed something white that darted and plunged in a mad endeavor to break away, and then, at the last moment, seemed to give up exhausted.

Then, being able to see the fish plainly, Hodge stopped, uttering a gasp of astonishment.

"What is it, Merry?" he asked, in a flutter. "It can't be a white perch, for it's too big."

"Pull it in, and then we'll see."

But Bart had slackened at the wrong time, and now the great fish gave a flop and escaped from the hook. There was a flash of silver plunging downward, and the fish was gone.

Bart was exasperated.

"What a stupid fellow I am!" he growled. "But that fish was so big! He was too large for a perch, and——"

Frank was drawing in his line to give it another throw. All at once, it gave a jerk and slipped through his fingers, then he began to pull away hand over hand, while the line cut here and there through the water.

"You have one!" cried Bart, excitedly.

"Don't let him get away as I did, Merry! Jingos! but he is doing some fancy dodging!"

Up to the surface darted the fish and up into the air he leaped like a flash of light out of the water.

"Oh!" shouted Hodge, starting to rise in his excitement. "What a dandy!"

"Get down!" commanded Frank, quickly. "You will have this canoe bottom up if you do that again! It's a wonder you didn't turn her over then!"

"That's so," agreed Bart, who was familiar with the cranky tricks of canoes; "but I couldn't keep still."

Into the canoe Frank pulled his catch, and both lads stared at the fish, for it was larger than four of the large ones of their first lot.

Have you read about Grace Fuller the "Angel of West Point" in The Half-Holiday

"Can that be a white perch?" gurgled Hodge, amazed. "It doesn't look just like the others."

"Whatever it is, there are more out there," said Frank. "Get after them, Bart. We'll daze the fellows when we bring in a mess of these dandies."

Hodge had arranged a tempting bait on his hook, and now he made a fancy throw that carried the whole length of the line out of the boat. The hook struck far away on the water and sank, while the fish Frank had caught flopped in the bottom of the canoe, stirring up the others to a merry pattering dance.

"Pull in by the time your hook sinks three or four feet," said Frank, looking after his own bait. "These big fellows are on the surface."

Bart obeyed, and he had not drawn his hook a third of the way to the canoe before it was snapped up, bringing a little cry of satisfaction from his lips.

"Oh, this is sport!" he exclaimed. "I thought we had fun with those little fellows."

"Those little fellows!" laughed Frank. "A short time ago you were calling them beauties."

"They seemed so then, but these are so much larger. (No you don't, old chap!) And they are so much whiter! I hope we can get a big mess of them."

Then Bart snapped into the boat a fish quite as large as the one Merriwell had caught. He held the shining beauty up and feasted his eyes on the spectacle a moment. Then the hook was removed, and the fish was tossed down to help stir up his gasping comrades.

By this time Frank had hooked another, and for fifteen minutes the fun was fast and furious. Once they were forced to pick up the paddles and get ahead of the school again; but finally,

with amazing suddenness, the fish ceased biting.

"Where have they gone?" asked Bart. "I can't see them jumping anywhere."

"Nor I," said Frank. "They have sunk. Let your line drop deeper before starting to pull in."

But, although they tried various methods of fishing, they caught but two or three more, and those were not large ones.

"They are gone," said Frank, regretfully; "but we have made a fine haul, Hodge. Won't Browning kick himself to think he did not get up and come with me when I awoke him this morning!"

"He won't get over it all day, for he'd rather fish than do anything else—unless it's sleep. It's wonderful how lazy that fellow is."

"But he can fight. He's got so he wants to fight my battles now. Why, he was going to dip in over at Camp Benson last night when that fellow Welch, from Newport, took a fancy to punch me for dancing with his girl."

"He told me about it, and he said Welch was backed by a big bewhiskered ruffian who was all ready to hit you from behind. That was why he got into the game. It was a plain case of a crooked attempt to do you up, but Browning spoiled the trick."

"I saw the man, and I was on guard for him. Welch swore he'd do me, and he's just the kind of fellow who will try to keep his word. He is a ruffian, but is cowardly. I do not believe he would hesitate to kill a man if he was in a rage and thought he might escape punishment for——"

The report of a gun reached their ears, and, at the same moment, something came rattling against the side of the canoe.

Hodge uttered a cry of pain.
 "I'm shot!" he exclaimed.

CHAPTER II.

INTO THE LAKE.

A curl of white smoke was rising above some water reeds, plainly showing where the gun had been fired.

Hodge held up his hand, and there was blood on his wrist. He wiped it away, and then picked a shot from under the skin.

Frank had felt several shot strike his clothes, but evidently they were too far spent to penetrate far.

"Of all infernal carelessness!" grated Hodge, his face dark with anger. "I never heard of anything like it."

"It could not have been carelessness!" cried Frank. "Here we are in plain view out in the open water. The person who fired that shot must have seen us. If it was carelessness, it was criminal."

"Are you hit, Merry?"

"Some of the shot struck my clothes, but none of them reached my body, I think. How much are you hurt, Bart?"

"Not much, but I'm mad enough to thump the chump who fired that shot! I'd like the job!"

Merriwell had reeled in his line, and now he swiftly drew in Bart's. Then he caught up his paddle and sent the head of the canoe round toward the point where the puff of smoke had been seen rising above the water reeds.

"We'll soon find out who did the shooting," came grimly from his lips, as he sent the light craft shooting forward.

Bart caught up his paddle, and soon the canoe was literally skimming along the silvery surface of the lake.

As they approached the rushes there were signs of commotion behind them. A head bobbed up and disappeared from

view, and then a boat was thrust slowly out. It contained two persons who seemed inclined to row away, but changed their minds when they beheld how close upon them the canoe was. They turned about and desperately faced the boys.

One was a man of middle age, roughly dressed, with a wide-brimmed hat set upon one side of his head and long-legged rubber boots on his feet. He wore a full beard, and his hair was long enough to fall on the collar of his coat. The face was that of a hard-drinking man, and his manner indicated that he was a reckless ruffian.

The other was a youth of eighteen or nineteen, with square shoulders and a sullen face. He, also, looked like a desperado, and yet there was something about him that might prove attractive and fascinating for a thoughtless, romantic girl. He was dressed in a careless manner in plain clothes, but somehow those clothes seemed to set upon him in a way that showed him to advantage. In fact, they actually made him look more attractive than better and more fashionable garments could.

As soon as Merriwell saw these two persons, he softly exclaimed:

"Hello! So those are the chaps!"

"Do you know them?" asked Hodge, quickly.

"I should guess yes!"

"Who are they?"

"Welch and his backer."

"What—the fellow who wanted to thrash you over at Camp Benson?"

"Yes. And the man is the one who was looking for a chance to dip into the row. Now I am beginning to think this shooting was not accidental."

The man and the boy glared at Frank and Bart, but said not a word.

"Who fired that shot?" demanded Mer-

riwell, holding his paddle in the water so that it would slacken the forward motion of the canoe.

"Who are you talkin' to?" demanded Welch, surlily.

"I am talking to you, sir! Who fired that shot?"

"What shot?"

"The one a few moments ago."

"Oh, what are you drivin' at? We don't know nothin' about no shot. You make me tired!"

"That kind of bluff will not go. One of you fired a shot from behind these reeds a few minutes ago. Who did it?"

The man regarded the boys with the utmost contempt, seemingly quite indifferent, but Welch grew red with anger.

"Say!" he cried; "you're too fresh, Mr. Frank Merriwell! I know you! Because you are a college chap and have had your name printed in the papers, you think you can come down here into Maine and run over the countrymen you find here. Well, you will find out the countrymen won't be run over. I don't believe you are such a much, anyway. What you really need is a good thumping, and I'd like the job to give it to you. I'd done it yesterday if it hadn't been for that big lummuxing chum of yours who meddled in. I'll do it yet when I get the chance! I promise you that I will thump you, and Jim Welch always keeps his promises. Now, you chaps had better git!"

Frank laughed outright.

"You are very amusing, Mr. Jim Welch," he declared. "It is evident that you think yourself a dangerous sort of individual, but you are dangerous only when you have a shotgun in your hands and are hidden behind some reeds. It would be just like you to try to shoot somebody in the back. Your face shows that."

"B'gee" Dewey is still at West Point.

"I didn't shoot at all, and you don't want to say I did."

"Then your friend did!" creid Hodge, who was fairly quivering for trouble. "His face shows he wouldn't hesitate to——"

"Look here, confound you!" growled the man, scowling at Hodge; "you want to go slow! Neither of us did any shooting, for we ain't got anything to shoot with."

"No guns?"

"Of course not."

"I don't believe it!"

"Well, it don't make a bit of difference whether you believe it or not. You're nothing but kids, and we can't fool with you. Come, Welch, if we're going to get any fishing this morning we must get started. Come on."

He placed the oars in the row-locks and got into position for rowing.

"What were you doing in there behind those reeds?" asked Frank.

"That is none of your business!" shouted Welch. "Now you chaps want to get out of the way, or you'll get into trouble, for we won't fool with ye!"

He lifted an oar threateningly, but the canoe was beyond his reach, and so he sat down, after half rising to his feet.

"Take your paddle out of the water, Bart," whispered Frank. "I'm going to have a look into their boat."

Hodge obeyed, and then, with a single long, quick stroke, Merriwell whirled the canoe up beside the boat.

"What are you doing?" growled the startled man.

"We want to see your guns," said Hodge.

"To blazes with you! I told you we had no guns, and you can see for yourselves. Do you see any guns?"

To Bart's surprise, not a gun was to be seen in the boat. In the bottom at one

Read about him in The Half-Holiday.

end, however, lay a pile of rushes, such as are sometimes bound on the front end of a boat when it creeps upon water-birds for the occupants of the boat to obtain a shot. Of a sudden, Frank leaned over and gave those reeds a yank.

Two shotguns were exposed to view!

Hodge gave a cry of triumph and anger, and Frank, with another sudden twist of his paddle, tried to back the canoe away from the boat.

The man uttered a cry of anger, and Welch leaped to his feet, catching up an oar.

"Oh, I'll fix you!" he shouted, swinging the oar over his head and striking straight at Frank's head.

Merry saw he could not get out of reach, and so, in a moment, he swung his paddle out of water and used it to divert the oar.

Crack!—the oar struck the paddle and was turned aside. Frank had saved his skull from being cracked by his swift move.

With a great splash, the oar struck in the water, and Welch was given a yank that set him toppling in a frantic effort not to plunge headlong out of the boat. He let go of the oar and flung up his hands, waving them wildly, and then, finding he must go over, he dropped and caught at the side of the boat, overturning that in a twinkling.

CHAPTER III.

SAVING AN ENEMY.

It happened in a moment. Both Welch and his companion were precipitated into the water. The man disappeared a few seconds, and then came up and grasped the end of the boat.

Welch went down, came to the surface, thrust his hands up into the air, cried out gurglingly, splashed a moment, and went down again.

The commotion in the water caused the canoe to rock, but Bart Hodge laughed shortly. His face showed triumph and satisfaction at the misfortune that had befallen the man and boy. With his paddle, he moved the canoe yet further away.

Merriwell looked somewhat anxious and waited for Welch to come to the surface again.

The man, clinging to the overturned boat, poured forth a torrent of angry abuse at the boys in the canoe, neither of whom paid any attention to him. Had they done so, they would have observed that he felt of his beard and hair in a singular manner as if doubtful about something.

Welch came up again, splashed about, strangled, coughed, cried out and sunk.

Immediately Frank began to take off some of his clothing. He flung his cap into the bottom of the canoe, his coat followed it, and then he pulled off his shoes, keeping low down so that he would not overturn the birch bark craft.

"What are you going to do, Frank?" asked Bart, surprised.

"Save that fellow from drowning, if I can. He can't swim."

"But what is the use to jump into the water and get wet. We can get near him as he comes up, and one of us can catch hold of him."

"It won't do."

"Why?"

"Don't you see he is drowning! He would clutch the canoe—try to drag himself out of the water—overturn it instantly! We'd both get a wetting, when one can— There he is!"

Welch came up again. His struggles were feebler, and he gasped for breath with a painful sound.

Merriwell half lifted himself. The

canoe began to rock, and Bart exclaimed:

"You can't dive over without upsetting me!"

Taking hold of the frail craft in a certain manner, Merry lifted himself with both hands, and swung himself fairly over the stern end. Had he gone over the side, he must have overturned the canoe, but he dropped into the water with a splash, and the light craft remained upright. It was a skilful trick, and it astonished Hodge, who was more than half expecting to be capsized.

As Frank struck the water, Welch sank again.

"He's gone down, Merry!" cried Bart.

Frank struck out with powerful strokes, reached the spot where Welch had disappeared, and then dived beneath the surface.

The man who was clinging to the overturned boat had begun to swim, pushing it toward the shore some distance below the mass of water reeds behind which they had been concealed.

Hodge paid no attention to boat or man, but he waited with the greatest anxiety for Frank to come to the surface. With the paddle, he moved the canoe somewhat nearer the spot where Merry had dived beneath the water.

Frank came up directly, and he had a hold upon the drowning lad, but Welch had twisted his legs about Frank with a grip that hampered Frank's movements. In vain Merry tried to break away. It seemed that Welch had fastened upon him with a death grip.

"Can I help you?" asked Hodge, anxiously, as he saw Merry struggling in the water, sometimes sinking beneath the surface. "What's the matter?"

"This fellow—has—his legs—twisted

about mine!" panted Frank. "Confound him! He wants to drown us both!"

Bart worked nearer with the canoe.

"Hit him on the head, Frank!" he cried. "Hit him quick and hard! Don't let him pull you under like that!"

But Merry fought till he broke away from the half-unconscious Welch, which caused him to utter an exclamation of satisfaction.

"I'm all right now," he said.

"Can you get him ashore?"

"Yes."

"Well, I will keep close, so that I can give you some help, if you need it. Don't drown yourself trying to save him."

"We must save him, Hodge," said Frank, as he swam toward the distant beach, supporting Welch. "It would not do for us to let him drown after——"

"After he tried to shoot us!" grated Bart. "Oh, that is like you, Merriwell! You are ready to risk your own life for an enemy who has done you any kind of injury! I'm not built that way! My enemies can look out for themselves!"

Frank said nothing, for he was thoroughly occupied in the task of reaching the shore, and he could make but slow progress, burdened as he was.

Hodge paddled along, watching Frank anxiously.

"Let me hold the fellow's head above the surface a few momets while you rest, Frank," he urged.

"No," said Merry. "Can't take chances of his overturning you. I'm all right. Keep on."

The man with the boat was now so close to the shore that he could touch bottom. He stood up and waded out, pushing the boat along and dragging it up on the beach.

• Having done this, the fellow turned and looked at the approaching lads. He seemed undecided for a moment, but

suddenly wheeled about and plunged into the swampy woods, vanishing from view.

Hodge saw this movement and wondered at it, but said nothing to Merriwell, feeling that Frank needed to give his entire attention to the task of getting ashore with Welch.

Nearer and nearer to the shore Merriwell struggled. He moved slower and slower, and it was plain that the task was a heavy drain upon his energy and endurance. Bart feared that Frank would give out, but this did not happen. Finally Hodge said:

"I think you can stand up here, Merry. Try it—see if your feet will touch bottom."

Frank did so, and found he could touch the bottom and have his head out of the water, which enabled him to walk ashore.

Bart got out upon the beach and helped Frank drag Welch upon the sand. Merriwell was panting, but he regarded with the greatest anxiety the lad he had brought to land.

"He's drowned!" cried Hodge. "He is done for, Frank!"

"Off with your coat!" exclaimed Merriwell, panting. "Give me my coat and shoes from the canoe. Quick! We must hustle if we bring him round!"

Taking the shoes, Frank wrapped the coats about them, making a hard roll or bundle. Then he placed the bundle on the beach and, aided by Bart, lay Welch face down upon it so it pressed upon his stomach. Having placed the unconscious lad in this position, with the collar of his shirt ripped open, Merriwell began pressing upon his back just below his shoulder blades, and with each pressure water spurted from the lad's mouth.

"If we can get him to breathing after we get this water out of him, he'll come round," said Frank, anxiously.

They did not work more than a min-

ute before Welch choked and groaned, causing Frank to express relief.

"He's coming round so quick," said Merry. "We'll have him all right in short order."

Now Welch groaned and choked in a most distressing manner. The boys knew he was suffering fearful tortures, but they kept at work till he ceased to expel water. Then Frank placed him in a position to breathe easily, and they saw him staring up at them with wide-open eyes.

"You are all right," said Merry; "but it was a close shave."

"Oh!" groaned Welch; "I'd rather die than go through that again! How did I get here?"

"You got here by being brought by Frank Merriwell," said Hodge, scowling at Welch. "He risked his life to save you from drowning, and you didn't deserve it."

Welch said nothing for some moments, but seemed trying to collect his scattered wits. At last he asked:

"Where is Bunker?"

"The man you were with?"

"Yes."

"He skipped into the swamp somewhere."

"And left me?"

"Yes. He got ashore first, and he——"

"That will do!" growled a hoarse voice, and there was a grating step on the sand. "Bunker is here. He don't run away from kids like you."

The man approached, carrying a heavy club in his hand. He looked ugly enough at that moment, and it was plain he was not in a pleasant mood.

"Look out for him, Frank!" whispered Hodge. "He is up to something."

CHAPTER IV.

HELD AT BAY.

Bunker halted and glared at the boys. His clothes were dripping wet, and his long hair clung about his neck. At that moment he was an ugly-looking individual.

"You youngsters have had lots of sport this morning, haven't you!" he snarled. "Well, you shall pay for it, and pay dearly, too!"

"You or your friend here started the ball rolling," said Frank, quietly. "You filled the side of our canoe with shot, and wounded Mr. Hodge in the wrist. It was fortunate for us that you did not do greater damage. And it is fortunate for you that, after what you did do, you have got off so easily."

Hodge was not saying a word, but he was watching the man closely. The look on Bart's face told that he thoroughly despised Bunker.

"Oh, you crow pretty loud for kids!" grated the fellow. "What you need is to have some of the conceit taken out of you. Welch says you have had your name in print so often and been talked about so much that you've got the swelled head. You think yourself the smartest chap alive."

"No matter what I think, that is no excuse for your criminal carelessness in shooting toward us."

"It wasn't carelessness, Merry!" exclaimed Bart, unable to keep still longer. "It was criminal design!"

"If one of us shot toward you, it was an accident," growled the man. "But now you have an account to settle with us."

"Well, what is it?" asked Frank, quietly.

"You upset us."

"That's not true."

"And you caused us to lose our guns."

"Arthur Sewall, author of the "Gay Dashleigh" series writes exclusively for The Half-Holiday.

"You denied that you had any guns in the boat."

"That makes no difference. Now I want you to pay for those guns."

"Oh, you do?"

"You bet I do!"

"Well, that is nerve!" laughed Merry, his eyes flashing. "After you overturned your own boat in the attempt to break my head, you expect us to pay for the guns you lost."

"You are responsible, and you'll have to pay."

"There is another opinion about that. You and Mr. Welch are responsible for everything that has occurred between us. Had not Welch tried to break my head with an oar, you would not have capsized and lost your guns. That being the case you cannot expect us to pay for them."

To the men, Frank seemed very mild and quiet, and this encouraged Bunker, who fancied it would not be difficult to scare him.

"We do expect you to pay for them!" shouted the man, fiercely; "and you will, too!"

"No, we will not."

Still Merriwell was not in the least excited. He even smiled serenely into the face of the water-soaked, angry man. As he did so, he unbuttoned the sleeves of his shirt and began to roll them back. Two round, white arms, shining with dampness, were exposed.

Bunker gave a snarl of anger.

"Why, you fool!" he cried. "Do you think you can scare me by rolling up your sleeves? I'll take you over my knee and spank you!"

This caused Merriwell's smile to broaden and break into a ringing laugh.

"Just toss aside that club," he said, "and I'll soon show you who will be spanked."

"Don't do it, Bill!" came from Welch,

who had recovered in a remarkable manner. "He is the greatest athlete in Yale College, if what the papers say about him is true."

"I ain't going to fool with him," declared Bunker, advancing a step and half-lifting the club. "Pay for those guns, Mr. Frank Merriwell, or I'll thump the life out of you!"

Frank stood his ground, looking the man straight in the eyes; but Hodge retreated to the canoe, the prow of which had been drawn up on the sand.

"Keep back!" commanded Merriwell. "We are not going to fool with you any longer."

"And I am not going to fool with you, either!"

"You have tried to fill us with shot and break out heads this morning. That you have received the worst of it so far is simple retribution. Welch would have drowned if I hadn't saved him, for you made no move to help him. You owe me something for that."

"Bah! You saved him because you were afraid."

"Of what?"

"That, if he died, you would be held responsible. It was cowardice not bravery, that led you to get him out of the water."

"You are at liberty to think that, if you like; it makes no difference to me."

"I know it."

"All right. I pulled him out, just the same, and we pumped the water out of him after getting him ashore. You were not on hand to help, and he would be dead past resuscitation at this moment had he depended on you."

Bunker advanced another step.

"It makes no difference," he grated; "you'll pay for the guns, just the same—and for the oars, too. I want twenty dollars for my gun, and Jim's was worth

fifteen. The oars bring it up to—well, you can cough up fifty dollars, and we'll call it square."

"How kind!" laughed Merriwell. "My dear sir, we could not think of accommodating you."

"You'll have to, or I'll crack your skull sure this time!"

Now the club was flourished threateningly, and the face of the man showed he really meant it. Frank grew grave, but did not take his eyes from the ruffian.

"Look here, Mr. Bunker," he said, swiftly, "you are getting yourself into a bad scrape. If you don't drop it, I'll take the trouble to swear out a warrant for you at the earliest opportunity and place an officer on your track. It will not be difficult to put you behind iron bars."

"Bah!" again cried the man. "You can't save yourself that way. Cough up."

"Not a cent!"

"Then you get it!"

"Come on!"

Frank fell into a defensive attitude, and Bunker swung the club aloft, starting to make a spring.

"Stop!"

The word rang out like a shot. It came from the lips of Bart Hodge, who was standing just behind Frank, having picked a small rifle out of the canoe. The weapon was at Bart's shoulder, and its muzzle covered Bunker.

"Stop!" repeated Hodge. "If you make another move, I'll send a twenty-two into your head! It won't make a large hole, but it will do some damage, even to a wooden-head, like yours."

Bunker halted, for he saw that Hodge was in deadly earnest, and the rifle, small though it was, was not exactly pleasant to look upon just then.

"You fool!" panted the man. "You wouldn't dare!"

"Oh, yes, I would!" grated Hodge.

PRIZE CONTESTS FORM A PERMANENT FEATURE IN THE HALF-HOLIDAY.

"I'd like to do it! It would give me great satisfaction, but I thought it best to give you fair warning first. Drop that club!"

Bunker hesitated.

"Drop it!" flashed Bart. "Drop it, or I'll drop you!"

The man let the club fall on the sand, and then he laughed.

"Well, you chaps have more sand than I thought," he said. "I was trying you—that's all. Of course, I didn't mean to do you any harm."

"Oh, of course not," said Merriwell, with sarcasm. "You are one of the most harmless chaps in the world."

"Don't think we're fools," snapped Hodge. "We stopped your little game, that's all. Now git."

"Yes, go," cried Frank.

"Where?"

"Anywhere."

"But the boat—Welch——"

"The boat is all right. Take a walk along the shore—lively. Don't turn round till you are out of range of this rifle, for you may encounter a bullet if you do. That's all. Go on!"

"But—but——"

"There are no buts about it. Go this instant, or Hodge will salt you. Get a move on!"

The man turned about and walked away.

"Now," said Frank, speaking to Welch, "I advise you to have nothing more to do with that chap. He'll get you into some bad scrape if you do. You are lucky to get off this time so easily. I have no particular grudge against you, even though you did want to thump me for dancing with a certain young lady at Camp Benson yesterday. But don't monkey round me in the future, for I don't always overlook things this way. That's all."

Hodge had pushed the canoe into the water, and now they entered it and pushed off from the shore.

"It's lucky I brought this rifle along," said Hodge, as he placed it in the bow and picked up his paddle.

"I had forgotten you had it," confessed Frank. "It did come in handy, that is a fact."

By the time Bunker knew what had happened behind him, they were a long distance from the shore, skimming swiftly away.

CHAPTER V.

WAKING UP HANS.

A column of blue smoke was rising above the trees on Sandy Point as the canoe containing Merriwell and Hodge drew up to the wide beach, on which lay three more inverted canoes.

Just as the canoe touched the sand there was a whoop from the woods, and Hans Dunnerwust, stripped of the last rag of clothing, came bursting into view, made a wild run for the water, as if he were to plunge in headlong, stopped short when his toes were wet, and backed off, lifting his feet into the air and shaking them.

"Shimminy Gristmas!" he gurgled. "Dot peen a narrow escapes. Dot vawter peen too vet vor you to took a path indo, ain'd id? Vot peen der use to took a path, anyvay? Id gits a veller all ofer vet, und id vos drouple to vipe yourseluf. Yaw. I dook a path ven I vos ad Vardale, for der horneds shased me der prook indo. Dot peen goot enough to last you till next summer. Oxcuse me."

And then, with great gravity, not even looking at Frank and Bart, he turned about, walked up the beach and disappeared into the bushes.

"Well," laughed Merry, "Hans cer-

tainly came very near taking a voluntary bath that time. He stopped just in time."

"Browning has been guying him again," said Bart. "I heard him ask Hans yesterday if this was not his year to take a bath."

Frank cut some forked branches from the bushes near, and soon the white perch were stung upon them. The large fish were arranged on the outside of the strings, so they made a handsome showing. Taking care of the canoe and dipping the fish in the water, so they again glistened like silver, the boys started toward the cottage which they were occupying on the point.

There was a path to the cottage, and this they followed. As they approached, the wide door of the cottage was seen standing wide open, and Bruce Browning was heard laughing heartily within. Diamond was carrying in an armful of wood.

"Ha! ha! ha!" roared Bruce. "You are in danger, Hans, for you say you got your-toes wet. You'll be ill, sure. Just think what a horrible thing it is to put wet water right onto a person's skin."

"Vot's der madder mit you!" squawked the voice of Hans. "You und Shack peen oud und done dot a liddle vile ago, don'd id? You kept bokin' vun ad me till I got me my glothing outd und vent outd to took a path, but I vound der vawter too vet this mornings."

"Oh, yes; the water is wet. I never saw a Dutchman who wasn't afraid of real wet water. They don't even want to drink it."

"Vale, dot vasn't no skin off you somevere, vos id? Vot peen der madder?"

Then Frank and Bart mounted the steps and walked into the cottage, carrying the handsome fish they had caught.

There were cries of astonishment and surprise from the three lads.

"Ye gods!" burst from Browning. "What have you been doing, fellows?"

"Catching fish," laughed Frank.

"Veesh?" squawked Hans, who was putting on his shirt. "Vale, I should said so! Vere vos dose veesh caught you?"

"By Jove!" exclaimed Diamond, his eyes shining. "Those are beauties! I didn't suppose there were such fish in this lake."

"Nor I," groaned Browning. "If I had, I'd turned out when Merriwell called me this morning. What sport you must have had!"

"We caught them," said Merry; "now, if you want some for breakfast, clean them and cook them."

"I don't know much about cleaning fish," said the big Yale man. "I'd rather catch them."

"So had I," nodded Diamond; "but I didn't catch them, so I am willing to clean my share."

"Und I vill cook them," said Hans. "I pet more as eight or nine uf dose veesh can ead me this morning. I vos awful hongry since I took dot path."

Some of the fish were taken from the string and laid out to be admired.

"There is a fellow that will weigh more than two pounds," said Jack, pointing out a handsome perch.

"And here is one larger than that," said Merry.

"It's simply wonderful!" grunted Bruce. "Look at the difference between that big fellow and this one."

He picked up one of the smallest fish.

Hans could not keep his eyes off the perch, although he was hastening to dress. He crowded in with the others as he drew on his trousers and drew his suspenders up over his shoulders.

"Oh, I do lofe peautiful veesh!" he

Make the acquaintance of "Texas," the "Wild and Woolley" West Point plebe in The Half-Holiday.

gurgled. "They vos goot food to ead your prain vor. I always ead veesh ven I can got them."

"That explains why you have such a remarkable brain," observed Browning as he dropped the small perch down the Dutch lad's back, thrusting it inside the collar of his shirt, which was not buttoned.

As the cold clammy fish slipped down his back Hans gave a wild howl and leaped into the air, giving a twist of his body and making a frantic effort to reach over his shoulder and catch hold of the perch.

"Wow!" he whooped. "Vot id vos, aind id? Hellup. Vos I struck lightnin's py? Ye-e-e-ow! Got dot out uf my pack off! Kvick! Shimtniny Gristmas! I pet zwi tollars dot vos a snake grawlin' your pack down! Take it away!"

He nearly turned himself wrongside out in his convulsive efforts. The fish slipped still further down his back and finally got into the left leg of his trousers.

"Ye-e-e-eh!" squealed the fat Dutch lad, dancing around the room on his right foot and kicking out with the other. "Dot snake peen comin' down your drowsers legs! Got a club und kill me kvick! Don'd let me got away!"

The boys had seen Browning's act, and they were convulsed with laughter at the antics of the frightened Dutch lad.

"Keep still, Hans," said Frank. "If it is a snake, you will make him bite you all the quicker by hopping around that way."

"You can't kept still!" shouted Hans. "Dot snake is grawling der leg uf my drowsers town alretty! I vos so coldt efry dime I touch myseluf to him dot it gives you deer shifers! Oh! Wow! Ye-ow!"

Then Hans gave a great wiggle and kick and out dropped the little fish onto

the floor. The Dutch lad gasped in astonishment and stared at the fish.

"Vos dot der snake?" he muttered, huskily, his face very pale, despite his exertions. "Vale, dot peen der vunniest snake you efer seen!"

"It must be a water snake," said Merriwell, laughing.

"Vot you vant to knew is how dot veesh got down der pack uf my neck. I don'd seen some vings on heem."

"He was trying to hide, so you wouldn't cook him," said Browning. "That's all, Hans. Don't blame the poor fish."

"Vale, he don'd blay dot me onto again. He near acat uf me der life out. Yaw!"

Diamond took some of the finest perch outside, and finding a board, carried them down to the water, where he cleaned them. In a short time they were frying in the pan, giving out a delicious odor.

CHAPTER VI.

OFFICERS OF THE LAW.

It was a jolly party that gathered about the breakfast table in that little cottage on Sandy Point. The fish were cooked brown and crisp, the coffee was delicious, and everything tasted good. They laughed and joked as they ate.

Merriwell and Hodge had told all about their encounter with Bunker and Welch.

"We must look out for those fellows," said Diamond.

"I don't believe they will trouble us again," declared Browning. "Welch would have no sense of gratitude if he did after Merriwell saved him from drowning."

"I don't think he is a fellow who has any sense of gratitude," came from Hodge; "and his face shows he is a hard drinker. I believe the man can lead him into anything."

"Oh, I don't know about that," said Frank. "He did not take any part in Bunker's attempted attack on us after I got him out of the water. That shows——"

"Nothing," cut in Bart. "He was pretty well used up, and he did not have the nerve to take any part in that little affair. I think that fellow is thoroughly bad."

"Don't be too hard on him, old man," said Frank.

"Well, see if I am not right. You're always trying to discover good qualities in everybody. You do not seem to believe any person can be thoroughly bad."

"That is right," nodded Frank; "I do not believe anybody can be entirely bad. I am firmly convinced that even the worst ruffian has some redeeming qualities."

"That's all right, but it makes me tired when you put so much confidence in rascals who are doing everything possible to injure you. Some time you will get done up for keeps by some ruffian you are trying to befriend."

"Perhaps so. I'll chance it."

Breakfast over, Browning threw himself down on one of the beds and lighted a cigarette.

"There," he said, with a sigh of satisfaction, "now I could go to sleep again, and I wouldn't need any rocking."

"Gif me a shiggerette, Pruce," said Hans. "Id makes you vant to smoke ven I haf von."

"Confound your cigarettes!" cried Diamond. "I wish you wouldn't smoke them! When a fellow had such a hard time to leave off as I did it's a big temptation to see others smoking and to smell them."

"You're not obliged to see me," grunted Bruce. "You can go outside.

There's nobody round to bother you out——"

There was a sound of feet on the steps and two men entered the cottage. They were large, determined looking fellows, plainly dressed. They stopped just inside the door and looked the party over, without speaking a word.

"How do you do, gentlemen," said Merriwell. "This visit is something of a surprise. You're a little late for breakfast."

The larger of the two men nodded shortly, then he turned to the other and said something in a low tone. Their actions aroused Bart's suspicions, and he took a step toward the corner where two shot-guns stood.

"Is this the whole of your party?" asked the large man.

"It is," answered Frank. "What can we do for you?"

The man did not answer at once, but he was heard to say to the other:

"He ain't here."

"Perhaps they're lyin'," muttered the other.

"Look here," came grimly from the big man; "we're looking for a certain person, and we have been told he was camping out over this way with a lot of boys."

Frank flushed a bit and stepped forward promptly.

"There is no person camping here besides the ones you see," came rather sharply from his lips.

More words passed between the two men, and then the larger one said aloud:

"If you're lyin', you'll get yourselves inter trouble. I am Ben Bowers, the sheriff from Newport. This is John Nason, one of my deputies. We are here looking after a certain chap who has been passing in this section under the name of Joe Tweed."

"We know nothing of Mr. Joe Tweed. We never heard of him, sir."

"That's all right. You look as if you was honest, but perhaps you don't know what this Tweed has done."

"We do not."

"Well, he's robbed an old miser over in North Newport of thirty thousand dollars and hit the old man a crack on the head that may kill him. Now if you've seen Tweed, or know anything about him, the best thing you can do is to tell everything. You'll git in a bad scrape if you don't, that's all."

By this time Frank was thoroughly angry, but he held himself in check, seeming perfectly cool, although he spoke firmly.

"We are not robbers, Mr. Sheriff, and we do not associate with robbers. Such an insinuation is decidedly unpleasant."

"Perhaps they've seen him," said the deputy.

Bart strode to Frank's side and said, in a low tone:

"Who knows—this chap who calls himself Bunker may be the fellow they are looking after."

Frank gave a start. Then he asked:

"What does this Joe Tweed look like, Mr. Bowers? Will you describe him, please."

"He's a large man, dresses pretty well, smooth-faced, looks like an actor. He is a very smooth talker. Has a small blue scar under his left ear."

Bart was disappointed.

"Bunker's not the man, he said, regretfully.

"We have seen no such man as you describe," declared Merriwell. "He has not been here."

"Its strange," declared the sheriff. "Proctor said he saw him around here yesterday afternoon. Proctor was coming over from Turner's about the middle of

the afternoon, and, as he was running past this point, he said he saw Tweed come out of the woods. When Tweed saw Proctor's boat, he turned round and made into the bushes in a hurry. That looks as if he had some sort of hiding place round here."

"With the exception of Hans, we were all over to Camp Benson yesterday afternoon. Hans was here alone. Did you see anybody prowling around here yesterday, Hans?"

"Shimminy Gristmas!" gurgled Hans, turning pale. "You pet I didn'd seen no-podys! Uf I knew nopodys vos browling around here I would been so scat dot you would had heart-vailure! Und id vos a roppers? Py Chorch! you don'd got me to staid here some more all alone myseluf by!"

The Dutch lad's fear and excitement was genuine, and it impressed the men more than anything Merriwell had said.

"Well," observed the sheriff, "if you know nothing about him, you will not be able to help us in any way. We thought it possible he had managed to get you to take him in with you some way, even if he was not one of your party originally. Keep your eyes open for him. There is a reward of five hundred dollars offered for his capture already. If you could help us nab him, it would be worth your while. That's all. Sorry to have disturbed you. Must be going. Good-morning."

Then he turned and, followed by the deputy, left the cottage.

Merriwell was interested now, and he followed the officers out, asking them several questions about Joe Tweed and the robber. He learned that Tweed had been hanging around Newport for some time, but had not been seen there for several days. He had made many acquaintances in the village at the foot of

the lake, and had found out all about Peter Small, the miser. It was thought in Newport that Tweed had been assisted by some person who lived in that vicinity, for the manner in which he had entered Small's house and found the old man's hidden hoard of money, after half killing the miser, showed he was well informed.

Frank, Bart and Jack accompanied the officers down to the shore, where a small sail-boat lay. With the boat they had run over from Turner's, and they said they were going on to Proctor's, the wind being favorable.

The boys saw them depart, and then returned to the cottage, discussing the events of the morning.

They found Hans savagely at work cleaning the guns. He was sweating and hurrying as if his life depended on what he was doing. Browning was snoring on the bed.

"Here, here, what are you doing?" asked Frank.

"Gitting retty to met dot roppers!" shouted the Dutch lad, fiercely ramming a swab-stick down the barrel of a gun. "You shust let dot roppers come fooling around here some more und seen how kvick he vill shoot me. Oh, I peen goin' to gatch heem und got der fife hundret tollars!"

CHAPTER VII.

THE CANOE RACE.

It was the week of the annual muster of the Grand Army at Camp Benson, on Lake Sebasticook. Every cottage was occupied and a large number of tents were pitched. Grayheaded veterans, heroes of the war, had gathered there from all over the State of Maine. Every day there were parades, a band concert, and a dance in the large hall that had been built for that purpose. The cottages

and tents were decorated with bunting and flags. Yellow-eyed beans, baked in a "bean hole," were on every bill of fare. Excursion trains stopped at the little platform station, bringing large numbers of visitors from Pittsfield, Newport, Corinna, Dexter and other towns. The lake steamer was making regular trips between the camp and Newport, and crowds came to the grounds in teams, on foot and on bicycles.

Each day in the afternoon there was a ball game and other sports of a nature to interest all. The band played "The Star Spangled Banner," "Marching Through Georgia," "Yankee Doodle," and other patriotic airs. The old vets got together and fought over the battles of long ago.

Hundreds of young people flocked to the ground and enjoyed the pleasures of the occasion. The country girls were red-cheeked and pretty, and the country lads were sturdy, manly-looking young fellows, such as make the best soldiers when in time of trouble the country calls her loyal sons to arms.

Not a few fashionable people visited Camp Benson and enjoyed themselves thoroughly.

They were not all countrymen there.

Merriwell and his friends had heard there was "fun" at Camp Benson, and that was one reason why they stopped at Lake Sebasticook on their way to the Moosehead country. They had not been able to hire a cottage anywhere near the camp, and so they took the one on Sandy Point, although it was several miles away. Hearing there were to be canoe races at the camp, Frank looked about to obtain some canoes, and he was fortunate enough to secure four, although he was forced to pay an exorbitant price for the use of them that week. Three of them were single canoes for racing purposes.

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The fourth was the birch in which Merry and Hodge had gone out fishing.

On the afternoon following the opening of this story, Frank's entire party was at Camp Benson, for this afternoon the canoe races were to take place. Merry, Hodge and Diamond had resolved to enter the races.

First, however, there was a sailing race, and this they did not enter. They took pains to get into the following race.

There were nine starters, of which our friends made three. Two were from Newport, one from Pittsfield, one from Corinna, one from Foxcroft, and one from Greenville, on Moosehead Lake. It was generally believed that the Greenville man would win, although it was said that Jim Welch, of Newport, would give him a hot pull.

The race was set to take place at three o'clock in the afternoon, but it was twenty minutes later when all the contestants lined up at the starting point.

The shore of the lake was thronged with spectators, and the band was playing a lively air near the dance hall, the music floating over the water on the gentle breeze.

In the line-up Merriwell and his friends had formed together. They were stripped to trousers, shirts and caps. Frank was laughing and joking, but Hodge and Diamond looked grim and determined.

The man from Greenville was a long-haired, weather-tanned chap, with a hard, knotty arm and broad shoulders. Certainly he did look like a formidable antagonist.

Some of the contestants were inclined to guy Merry and his friends. They cautioned them not to capsize, asked them if they could swim, told them they might do better to get out and push their canoes, and tried to have sport with them generally.

Diamond did not relish this sort of chaffing, and the hot flush on his cheeks showed he was irritated. Hodge held his anger down, while Frank seemed to regard it as part of the fun.

"One of us must win this race!" grated the Virginian, sullenly. "They take us

for a lot of flubs. I paddled a canoe almost as soon as I learned to walk."

"Keep cool," cautioned Merry. "It won't do any good to get angry, and it may cause you to lose the race."

"How can a fellow keep cool when these chumps are blowing their wind at him! I feel like punching a few of them!"

"Never mind. If you win, it will make them feel cheap enough."

"Welch is in the line," said Hodge, in a low tone.

"I see him."

"Wonder if he is any good?"

"Somebody said he'd be the one to give the Greenville chap a hard pull."

"Then look out for him, Merriwell."

"How?"

"You are bound to be in the van at the finish. He may try some kind of a trick."

"Oh, I guess not. He won't have a chance."

"Fellows like him make chances."

"You are expecting too much from him. I think he'll keep his place. He recovered pretty quick from his ducking this morning."

"Get ready!" exclaimed Diamond, poising his paddle; "the starter is going to give the signal."

There was some further delay about getting all the canoes in line, and then the starter stood up in his boat and lifted his pistol in the air.

"Ready!" he cried.

The paddles were poised.

Crack!

When the pistol spoke they were off in a bunch.

Almost immediately, however, Jack Diamond began to forge ahead, fairly sending his canoe flying over the surface of the lake. He handled his paddle with strength and skill, and he proved a surprise at the very start.

There was a cheer from shore and the fluttering of handkerchiefs and waving of hats. The band played its liveliest air.

Merriwell paddled steadily and easily from the start, keeping well up with the body of the contestants, but not making any great effort to gain thus early in the race.

Hodge worked steadily, but was not

Read about boy actors and how they acquired fame, in No. 15 The Half-Holiday.

particularly graceful in his movements. He was a stout, sturdy fellow, but no one had picked him out as a possible winner.

The Greenville man paddled in a style that was the poetry of motion, and sent his canoe darting along without any apparent trouble. There seemed every reason why he should be regarded as an almost certain victor.

Welch showed his skill, and he did not let the man from Greenville gain an inch on him. Early in the race he regarded that man as his only dangerous rival; but there was to come a time before long when he would see there were others in the race.

Frank saw at the very outset that Diamond had allowed his anger to get the better of his judgment, and he felt that the Virginian could not hold out as he had started.

When half of the course had been covered three of the contestants were falling behind. Diamond still held the lead, but now Welch began to press him, with the Greenville man hot after Welch. Merriwell was fourth, although but slightly in advance of Hodge.

Suddenly Frank was surprised to discover that Bart was at his side—was passing him. Hodge was putting in his best work at that point, and the way he forged ahead brought faint cheers from the shore. He overtook the Greenville man, passed him, and then he and Welch raced for the lead.

Diamond began to fail. He had started out too hard, and the strain was beginning to tell on him. He held the lead as long as possible, but Welch and Hodge finally passed him. Then he dropped behind the man from Greenville.

Jack found Merriwell at his side.

"Get into it, Frank!" he panted. "I'm out! Can't keep it up! Push them, Merry!"

"It's time," were the only words that came from Frank.

Steadily and surely he crept up on those in advance. He passed the man from the Lake region, and then the only ones ahead of him were Hodge and Welch.

The end of the race was near, and Welch was leading Bart by nearly half a

length. It looked as if he was a sure winner.

But now Merriwell came up with amazing speed. Soon he was pressing those in advance, and still he continued to gain, although both Welch and Hodge seemed straining every nerve.

For one moment Welch glanced over his shoulder. He saw Merriwell coming, with the Greenville man working like a Trojan to hold close to him.

At that moment Jim Welch began to realize that Merriwell stood a good chance of winning. Welch knew that he was doing his level best, and yet Frank was gaining.

Anger flamed in the fellow's heart.

"He shan't win!" he grated.

He made a final spurt that carried him ahead of Hodge, but still Merriwell came on. Welch saw that Frank must pass him just before the end of the course was reached. A determination seized upon him. He would foul Merriwell. Hodge was behind and would be stopped by them. That would give the race to the man from Greenville.

Having decided on this treacherous course, Welch was not long in putting the plan into operation. Frank was passing when, with a sharp swoop of the paddle, Welch whirled his canoe to cut Merriwell off.

But Bart Hodge was watching for that trick, and he had reserved a certain amount of strength for the critical moment. Now he seemed to cause his canoe to leap forward, and its sharp prow struck the side of the one Welch occupied, smashing it like an egg-shell. A second later Jim Welch was in the water, and Merriwell sped on to victory, a sure winner at the last moment!

CHAPTER VIII.

AFTER THE RACE.

There was a faint cheer from the shore. Merriwell had won the race, and the man from Greenville was second. Welch had received a merited ducking, but was rescued from the water without much trouble.

Welch was furious. Over and over he declared he would have won the race had

not Hodge fouled him, but the judges decided it was his own fault, as he was seen to deliberately get in Bart's way.

This silenced him, but he looked sullen and revengeful and continued to mutter to himself.

The canoe occupied by Hodge had not been injured by the collision, and Bart slowly paddled toward shore at Merriwell's side when the race was over.

"Well, what do you think about it now?" he asked.

"I think I had the pull of my life to win," admitted Frank. "I came near waiting too long before getting down to business."

"Oh, I felt that one of us stood a good show to win," said Bart; "but that was not what I meant."

"Eh? Then what did you mean?"

"What do you think about Mr. Jim Welch?"

"I think he tried to foul me."

"Sure."

"And you prevented it, although I don't know how you did it, for you were on the other side of him a few moments before. I was paying attention strictly to business, and supposed I was passing with Welch between us. How did you get in there?"

"I will tell you," said Hodge, in a low tone. "I saw you were coming up at wonderful speed, for I took the chance of looking round. I realized that you would be a winner if not interfered with, and that you were going to pass on the other side of Welch. The moment I realized that into my mind flashed the conviction that he would try to keep you from winning. The man from Greenville was hanging close to you, and there was a chance that he would beat all of us, unless you had a free course to the finish. I felt that I had a slim show of winning, so I permitted my canoe to drop back till I could cross behind Welch just when you were forging alongside of him. I reserved a certain amount of strength for a great spurt, and I needed it the moment I got into position. When I saw him try to foul you, I used every ounce of energy and drove my canoe into his. That's all."

"Well, you did a good job, old man;

but I don't know what the judges will say about it."

"I don't care what they say about it. What I want to know is what you say about Mr. Jim Welch now. Yesterday he tried to hammer you, to-day he tried to shoot you, and now, although you saved him from drowning this morning, he did his best to knock you out of this race. Is he thoroughly bad or not?"

"He is a rascal, that I will admit, but I do not believe him thoroughly bad, Bart."

"Well, you are hard to convince!" cried Hodge, in disgust. "I think you are stubborn—you will not give up when you know you are wrong."

"You do not think that, Hodge," said Merry, reproachfully; "you must know better."

Not another word would Bart say about it. He paddled along in sulky silence, not even giving heed when Frank thanked him for his act in preventing Welch from fouling.

From their boat the judges announced that Frank Merriwell was the winner. When Welch protested, they told him he deliberately turned his canoe in front of Hodge. The fellow could have claimed that Bart was off his course, but he was cautioned to let it drop, being told that it would be better to do that, as his attempt at crooked play would be shown up if he made a fuss about it. So the report went out that the collision came about because Welch got in Hodge's course; but those who saw everything plainly knew this was not the real cause.

For two days Frank Merriwell had kept his identity secret as far as possible, being led to do so because of his experiences in Camden, Rockland and Belfast. Now, however, everybody was asking the name of the winner, and it passed from one to another that it was the great Yale athlete, Frank Merriwell.

Two baseball teams had watched the race from the shore. They were the Newports and the M. C. I.'s, of Pittsfield, and the most of them had heard of Merriwell. When they knew he was there at Camp Benson they were eager to get a close look at him. Hundreds of others experienced the same eagerness, and thus

"An Alaskan Trail; or, How Two Boys discovered a new Road to Yukon," is now running in *The Half-Holiday*.

it came about that there was a rush of people toward that point of shore that Frank approached.

Some one proposed a cheer for Frank Merriwell, and it was given with a hearty will. Then a man cried:

"Why, he's one of them Sandy Point dudes that everybody said wouldn't cut no ice in the race."

"Mebbe he didn't cut no ice," cried another, "but he cut water enough to win first purse."

This caused a laugh.

There were scores of pretty girls in the throng, and they regarded the handsome victor admiringly. Merriwell could have flirted with almost any of them had he chosen, although he would have needed a proper introduction to not a few before they would have recognized him.

At Camp Benson, however, there seemed to be an unusual freedom, and it was not difficult to get acquainted with almost any one. Young ladies who would not have thought of such impropriety elsewhere often ventured to flirt mildly with strangers.

Bruce Browning was lounging in the shade beneath a tree, with Dunnerwust at his side, awaiting Frank.

"Well, Merry," he called, "you did the trick, but I had begun to think you were not in it."

"Yaw," nodded Hans, "you hat pegun to think I vos nod in id, but ven you got der sdart der odder veller on I seen how der peesness peen goin' to end. You vos a lulu, Vrankie!"

Hans dialect caused those in his vicinity to smile or laugh outright.

Frank came ashore, and immediately he was surrounded by the ball players.

"Mr. Merriwell," said the captain of the Newport team, "we would like to have you umpire the game for us this afternoon. It begins right away."

"It will be a great favor, Mr. Merriwell," declared the captain of the M. C. I.'s, with more politeness. "I assure you we shall regard it as a great favor."

"The position is not a pleasant one," said Frank. "I'd much rather look on and see the game."

"We will pay you if you——" began the Newport captain.

Frank stopped him.

"You cannot hire me for money to umpire," he said, promptly. "If I did so——"

"Will you?" cried several.

"Go ahead, Merry," said Hodge.

"Well," laughed Frank, "I'll do it."

One minute later criers were running over the ground announcing that the ball game that afternoon would be umpired by the great Yale pitcher, Frank Merriwell.

Frank was given time to change his clothes, and then, still accompanied by Hodge, he went onto the ball ground.

The ground was not fenced, and it was completely surrounded by a throng of spectators. The M. C. I.'s were practicing.

As Frank appeared, somebody shouted: "Here comes Merriwell!"

There was a great clapping of hands.

Frank was dressed in a spotless white flannel suit, and he made a handsome appearance.

The captains of the two teams approached him, and he asked them about ground rules. They gave him the desired information, and then he was provided with a fresh Spaulding in an unbroken box.

The Newports had practiced already, and the time for the game to begin was past, so Merriwell stepped out behind the plate and called:

"Play ball!"

CHAPTER IX.

NEWPORT WINS.

It had been decided that the M. C. I.'s should take the field, so they remained in their positions, and the game began with a sharp two-bagger from Newport's first batter. To the astonishment of everybody, although he had been behind the plate when the ball was hit, Frank was down to second ahead of the runner, standing in just the proper position to see the play perfectly, and he pronounced the man safe on a close play, a decision that might have been disputed had he remained near the plate. In fact, the second baseman opened his mouth to dispute the ruling, but closed up immediately on seeing that Frank was not more than ten feet away.

Have you heard about "Parson" Stanard? See The Half-Holiday.

Then followed an exhibition of umpiring such as no one present had ever witnessed before. Frank was all over the diamond, and he always seemed on exactly the best spot to see any play to advantage. How he covered so much ground was a mystery, but he did it without seeming to exert himself remarkably, and he kept the game hustling from the very start.

Newport scored twice in their half of the first inning, and were prevented from making a third tally by a beautiful throw from deep left to the plate.

Then Newport went into the field. They filled the box with Burton, of Corinna, a Colby man and a puzzling "south-paw" pitcher. Burton's greatest fault was his slow delivery, but, being in good form, he more than made up for it by his tricks in "working the batter."

Newport had not beaten the Institute team in two years, and the M. C. I.'s fancied they had a snap. They had been against Burton before and hit him pretty hard, and they believed they could do it again. But Burton, who was a determined chap with a bulldog disposition to never give up, was there to redeem himself that day. He proceeded to strike out the first two men with great ease, and then he caused the third man to pop up a light fly that he gathered himself without getting out of his tracks.

The Institute boys laughed at this.

"We'll fall on him and hammer him out of the box the next inning," they said.

But they did not, for neither side scored in the following inning. There were, however, three close plays, one at second, one at third, and one at the home plate. Frank Merriwell was on hand to witness every play from the most advantageous point, and his decisions could not be disputed with reason.

Both players and spectators began to see that the umpiring was making it a remarkably lively and interesting game at the very start off.

In the fourth inning the M. C. I. team tied the score, and in the fifth it took a lead of three.

Newport had not been able to score thus far after the first, and the Institute

lads declared it was "all over but the shouting." That did not disturb Burton, who continued to work in the same cool, deliberate manner.

In the seventh inning Newport got a tally but M. C. I. made two more giving them a lead of four.

In the eighth Newport cut it down by two in their half and then Burton "pitched for his life." In vain the Institute lads tried to get a safe hit off him. One man fanned and the others were "killed at first." As both of these decisions were close a M. C. I. player started a vigorous kick on the last one but Frank who had made every ruling promptly and firmly, quickly closed the kicker up.

Then came the "fatal ninth." Newport needed two to tie and three to win. If they made three and whitewashed their opponents the game was theirs.

They started in by getting two men out in a hurry, and the boys from Pittsfield were laughing over the "snap." Then a weak hit landed a runner on first. The next man was not a heavy hitter, and so, instead of trying to stop the runner, the pitcher attempted to end it by striking the batter out. That gave the man on first a chance to steal second without danger, and he did so. Then the batter rapped out a light one that was fumbled, and crossed first ahead of the ball.

Burton came to the plate. He had been hitting poorly, but now there was a look of grim determination on his dark face.

"Get Old South-paw, Winnie," called one of the players to the pitcher.

The twirler grinned and nodded. He was confident, for he had been fooling Burton all day on a slow drop. To start off, he sent a straight whistler over the plate so near to the batter that Burton was forced to jump back. Then the pitcher fancied he had his man unnerved. The spectators were shouting and cheering, trying to rattle both pitcher and batter.

The second ball was a slow drop. Burton waited for it, got under it, hit it, lifted it into the air with awful force. Away it flew over the ground and down among the cottages, and, when last seen, it was bounding merrily among the trees.

Read About West Point's Fat Boy "Indian," in The Half-Holiday.

making for the lake, which showed blue in the distance.

Round the bases sped the runners, and three scores came in before the ball was overtaken and returned. It was a "homer" for Burton, and he had placed Newport one score in the lead.

The crowd cheered itself hoarse, and the boys from Pittsfield looked disgusted.

The next batter sent up an easy one for the shortstop, and Newport was out.

The M. C. I.'s came in growling. They were determined to win the game by hard batting in the ninth.

"Get onto Burton, fellows," said the captain. "We must do it right here. We can if we try."

They did try, but Burton was doing great work just about that time. He had won the game by his hit, and now he did not propose to lose it by his work in the box.

The bases filled up, however, with only one man out. A good hit meant two runs.

Then came two decisions on a rattling double play, and Merriwell got both of them right by swift work. Both were declared out, and the game was over—Newport had won!

Some of the Institute men started to growl, but the captain cut them off sharply.

"It was the best umpiring I ever saw!" he exclaimed, enthusiastically. "Mr. Merriwell, we owe you our thanks. You did a beautiful job, and I believe you made this game one of the best ever played on this ground. There were any amount of close decisions, and I think you had all of them right. Newport beat us to-day, but I am not raising a growl."

He shook hands with Frank, and the Newport captain came up and did the same. The pitchers of both teams stated that never before had they been so well satisfied concerning the rules on balls and strikes.

The Newport captain proposed three cheers for the M. C. I.'s, which were given. Then he proposed three more for the umpire, and there was an almost universal response.

"Well," said Hodge, coming up to Frank, "that was a better game than I expected to see here, but I know your

work had something to do with it. Poor umpiring would have set half those fellows kicking and ruined the game."

"It's new work for me," laughed Frank; "and I am not particularly stuck on it. Now I'm hungry enough to eat anything. I want some of those 'army beans'."

"Yaw," grunted Hans, waddling up, "I vos so hongry dot you can veel id ad der bit uf my stomachs. Id vos awful ven you felt all gone ad der bit uf my stomachs."

"Where are Browning and Diamond?" asked Frank.

"Don't know," answered Bart. "Think they must be taking in the dance. I reckon we'll find them there."

"Then we'll go down to the hall."

On their way, however, Browning was seen coming toward them hurriedly, much to the astonishment of all.

"He's really hurrying!" exclaimed Frank. "What does it mean?"

"Something is up," declared Hodge.

"Something has gone wrong! Diamond isn't with him."

Bruce came up, breathing heavily.

"Come on, fellows!" he exclaimed.

"We are needed."

"Where?" asked Frank.

"Up the shore."

"What's the matter? Diamond in trouble?"

"Not yet, but he is in the toughest sort of a crowd, and I knew I would have no influence to get him out of it. That's why I came for you, Merriwell. He will do as you say."

CHAPTER X.

A "SKIN GAME."

"What sort of a crowd is Diamond in?" asked Merriwell, somewhat puzzled by the big Yale man's words.

"A poker gang."

"Oh! that's it?"

"Yes."

"How did he get into it?"

"Don't know. I saw him talking with two fellows, and then they walked away, and he went with them. Something made me follow them, and that's the way I got onto it. You know there is nothing Jack had rather do than play poker."

"But he quit."

"At college, yes; you induced him to do that. That's why I came for you now. I might have waded into the whole crowd and taken him out by force. Was tempted to do it, but my reason told me it was not a good plan."

"It is strange to me that he should play poker with strangers. It's not like Jack."

"Well, I suppose he thought he might as well have some sport while he was away down here, and I don't believe he is looking for sharpers in this part of the country. It's more likely he thinks himself as sharp as these people. Besides that, they are playing a very small game."

"How small?"

"Five-cent ante, twenty-five limit."

"Well, I have seen a man lose ten or fifteen dollars at that. He can lose more if he is playing against crooks. But what made you think Diamond is in a gang of sharpers?"

"Mr. Jim Welch is playing with them."

"And Jack Diamond is playing at the table with Jim Welch? Well, this is a surprise! I can hardly believe it."

"I'll show you."

Hodge was not saying anything now, but he did not miss a word. He was no less astonished than Merriwell to learn that Jack was playing with Welch.

"Vait!" gurgled Hans, who was getting out of breath. "You can'd kept oop mit me uf I hurry so, can I?"

"You had better keep back anyway," said Bruce. "They will hear you if you come lumbering up to the cottage they are in."

"Who toldt you so?" squawked the Dutch by. "How vos id I knew so much apout your pusiness? You make me haf dot tired veelings, Misder Prowning!"

"Bruce is right," said Frank. "You had better keep back, Hans. There may be a fight, and you will get in the way."

"A vight!" gasped Hans. "Oxcuse me! I vos nod a scrappers! I vill sot down wnd vait dill you got pack here."

Then he proceeded to sit down at the foot of a tree, leaning against it. The

others hurried on. They left Camp Benson and continued up the shore to a small cove.

"There is the cottage," said Bruce, pointing out one that stood back by itself amid the trees.

"It looks deserted," observed Frank.

"That is because they have closed the door and put up the shutters to the windows."

"But how are we to look in?"

"I know a way. Come."

They followed him round behind the cottage, and then approached it with great caution, stepping lightly, so that they would not be heard.

As they came near, they could hear a humming of voices within. They crept up to the back of the cottage, which was not shingled on that end, and Browning applied his eye to a knot hole. After a moment, he drew back, showing astonishment.

"You can't guess who is trying to get into the game now?" he whispered.

Frank shook his head.

"Look and see," said Bruce.

Merry did so. Applying his eye to the knot hole, he was able to look into the cottage. He also could hear the talk of the men around the table.

Six of them were seated, Diamond and Welch being two of the party. Another man, evidently a late comer, was standing. He it was who was trying to get into the game.

It was Bill Bunker!

"Why can't I come in?" he was demanding, in a half drunken manner. "Mr. Welch will speak for me."

"Yes," said Welch, "he is a friend of mine, and he is all right, gentlemen. I will speak for him."

"It makes too many players at one table," said one, who seemed to be something of a stranger to the others. "We have enough here now."

"He isn't one of the gang," thought Frank, immediately. "He and Jack are the birds they are plucking."

"Do the others object?" demanded Bunker, aggressively. "Look here; I've got money to burn, and I'm looking for an open grate to burn it in."

Then he took out a roll of bills with

one hand and jingled some bright yellow pieces with the other.

"Gold!" exclaimed a player. "Where did you get so much of that stuff? Gold isn't plenty in these parts."

"Well, I've got this, and you may have it—if you can win it," said Bunker, with drunken swagger. "Shall I come in?"

"What do you say, Mr. Diamond?" asked Welch, speaking to Jack.

"Dunno's I care a rap," said the Virginian, thickly. "His money's good sanybody's."

Frank started, astounded.

"Diamond has been drinking!" was his first thought. "By Jove! the fellow is half drunk!"

Nothing could have astonished Merriwell more, for Diamond was not a hard drinker, in fact, was not a steady drinker, although he sometimes took a little beer or wine. Now, however, he was somewhat intoxicated, which explained how he happened to be playing poker with a lot of strangers.

It was growing dark. Welch got up and lighted a lamp within the cottage, saying:

"I don't think there is any real objection to letting you into the game, Mr. Bunker; but the size of it may not suit you."

"What's the limit?" asked Bunker.

"A dollar—ten cents ante."

This was another surprise for Frank. It was evident the limit and the ante had been raised since Browning left.

"Five dollars would be better," said Bunker. "Let's make it that. Tell you I've got money to burn. You fellers may as well have some of it for kindling. What say?"

"We'll have a drink all round," said Welch, producing a bottle and glasses.

The drinks were poured and taken, and then, after a brief discussion, it was decided to raise the limit to five dollars and let Bunker into the game. The fellow who had raised the first objection stood out the longest, but he finally gave in.

Diamond lighted a cigar. He had a pile of money before him, as they were not playing with chips.

Soon the game was running again.

Back of the cottage a brief consultation was held by Jack's three friends, and then Merriwell again peered through the knot hole. He quickly grew interested, for a large jack pot was on the table, and there was brisk betting before the draw. Four of the seven remained "in." They were the stranger who had objected to Bunker, Diamond, Welch and Bunker himself. Bunker was dealing.

Frank watched every move, and he quickly detected the fact that Bunker was "clever." The man was holding back the top cards as the proper ones came up, and he gave three thus held back to Welch, who was drawing to a pair.

"That is enough!" whispered Merriwell, grimly, as he drew back. "It's a skin game! We must get in before this hand is played out."

Round the cottage to the door they went.

"We won't stop to knock," said Browning. "Stand aside!"

With a rush, he hurled himself against the door, which flew open with a smash and a slam.

CHAPTER XI.

A HOT BATTLE.

Into the room went the big college man, followed by Merriwell and Hodge. The front room was empty. As Bruce paused a moment, Frank sprang past him, crying:

"Come on!"

He rushed into the back room, where the game was taking place.

The gamblers were hastily rising to their feet and gathering up their money, thinking they were raided by officers. They were filled with consternation.

Into the room came Merriwell, Browning and Hodge. Frank was at Jack Diamond's side in a moment. He spoke swiftly:

"You're in a skin game, old man! There's a job to rob you here! I've seen proof of it."

The Virginian was somewhat bewildered by the sudden and unexpected appearance of his friends. He did not move, but Frank gathered up the money before

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him, scooping it off the board in a twinkling.

The card players were amazed when they saw a lot of beardless young fellows come in upon them. At first they did not understand what it meant, but Welch quickly took in the situation. He saw that Diamond's friends had followed him there to save him from the trap.

"These are not officers!" he shouted. "They have no right in here!"

"No!" cried Bunker, furiously. "They broke in without right! Give them blazes! Punch them!"

"Try it!" growled the big Yale man, squaring his shoulders and lifting his "dukes." "It will be sport!"

"At them!" howled Welch.

He leaped forward, but Browning reached out a hand and seemed to catch the fellow in mid-air. With a swing, he flung Welch fairly across the table.

"Come up, gentlemen!" he thundered. "I'll take care of the whole of you if you walk up one at a time."

One of the gamblers caught up a chair and flung it at the head of the big man. Bruce did not dodge, but he caught the chair and flung it back promptly, knocking the fellow down.

By this time Merriwell had succeeded in pulling Diamond to his feet, and he was trying to impress the Virginian with a sense of the situation. Jack started to protest that he was all right and had not needed assistance, but just then one of the gamblers tried to hit Frank. Diamond saw the movement, and that, more than anything else, awakened him. Like a flash, he whirled and let the fellow have it with his left, striking him under the ear. It was a savage blow, and it knocked Merriwell's would-be assailant spinning into a corner.

"Don't try to strike a friend of mine!" rang out the Virginian's voice, now clear as a bell. "You can't do that while I am around!"

"At them!" snarled Bunker. "Knock 'em out!"

Then there was a general charge on Merriwell and his friends. The gamblers caught up any kind of a weapon and started in to lay out the intruders in short order.

But they had started in on a hard job, as they were soon to discover, for the four Yale men were fighters. Now that he was aroused, there was nothing slow about Browning's movements, and he actually enjoyed the fight.

During the next five minutes there was a pitched battle in that room, and a savage one at that. At the outset, the gamblers fought furiously, and some of the intruders were not to escape without small injuries.

Frank Merriwell singled out Bunker, who had caught up a stick of wood and was trying to get a crack at Browning that would lay the big man out. Merry lit on the ruffian and wrenched the club from his hand, at the same time giving him a jab that sent him reeling up against the wall.

Bunker turned, snarling like a wounded animal. With a leap he was upon Frank, and he attempted to crush Merriwell down with the fury of his assault.

But he had struck a lad who would not be crushed so easily. Frank met his rush, grappled with him, gave him a wrestler's trip and hurled the man over his hip.

Bunker shook the cottage when he fell, but he was up again quickly.

"I'll fix you?" he grated.

Frank laughed outright.

"Come on," was his invitation. "You don't seem to be doing very well so far."

Then they met again, but this time Frank dodged and gave the man a body blow that brought a grunt from his lips.

Bunker was a fighter, and he was not awkward in his movements, although he was astonished by the work of the lad he had expected to knock out so easily. He whirled again, and this time he struck so quickly that Merry was hit a glancing blow on the cheek.

"That's not so bad," admitted Frank, cheerfully. "Come again."

Bunker accepted the invitation, but the blow was parried and returned with interest. Then there was some "in-fighting" that would have set a crowd of spectators wild had it been at a boxing match. Merry was rapped several times before he got in another good one, but he got it in at last.

Panting, Bunker dropped to his knees.

He did not go down, however, but made a forward plunge in rising, trying to come up under Frank's guard.

Merry leaped back and so was not caught about the body and lifted, that being the trick Bunker had attempted.

Browning's heavy voice was heard urging the whole crowd to "come and see him." Now and then he would grab a man and fling him bodily through the air. Thus it happened that he threw one of them against Frank, and Merriwell was knocked flat upon the floor. Bunker fancied he saw his opportunity, and he leaped up with the intention of planting both heels in Frank's face. It was a wicked, almost murderous attempt, but it did not succeed.

Browning saw him, and, being within reach at that moment, thrust out a hand, caught him in mid-air before he could drop on Frank, and gave him a fling.

Browning's wonderful strength saved Frank Merriwell from disfigurement for life, possibly from a fatal injury. Bunker was hurled across the room, and Merry leaped up.

"Good trick, old man!" he exclaimed, appreciatingly. "Dead lucky for me that you did it."

Diamond and Hodge were doing their level best, and now there was a bellowing sound in the other room, and Hans Dunnerwust, armed with two clubs, one in each hand, came plunging in.

"Oxcuse me!" he cried. "Berhaps you vant me to lick myseluf! Vale, I vos a vighter from Vighterville! Whoop! Shoost seen how I got der game indo! I pet der whole crowdt vill lick me pefore der vun is ofer!"

Then he lay about him blindly with those clubs, being nearly as dangerous to his friends as to his foes.

Browning caught Hans by the collar and a convenient part of his trousers and flung him out into the other room, closing the door.

"There!" grunted the big fellow; "now we will proceed with the festivities. Let the band play on!"

The gamblers were astounded, for they were beginning to believe that the intruders all enjoyed fighting. Many of the rascals were bruised and bleeding,

and they were beginning to weaken. Welch urged them on.

Bunker waded into it again, and, aided by Welch, he led the gang to another assault.

Frank singled out the man who had tried to stamp upon him. He forced his way toward Bunker, reached him, went at him again.

"You are the one I am looking after?" he cried. "I have a score to settle with you, and I am going to settle it!"

Then they went at it again, but now Merriwell showed himself far the man's superior. He hit Bunker repeatedly.

One of his blows brought about a remarkable result. The beard on Bunker's face was knocked away and nearly came off.

"It's false!" thought Frank.

At that moment the hanging lamp came down with a crash and went out, leaving the room in absolute darkness. Browning caught hold of Merriwell and Diamond and forced them out through the door, Hodge following instantly. All four rushed out to the open air, where Hans Dunnerwust joined them.

"It's all over," said Frank. "Let's get away quickly. This row will bring a crowd to this spot, for it must have been heard."

Now it was quite dark in the woods, and they hastened away into the thick shadows.

CHAPTER XII.

FRANK'S CAPTURE.

The following morning the campers on Sandy Point were astir at an early hour. Browning did not carry a mark of the conflict, but Merriwell and Hodge showed slight bruises.

Diamond was thoroughly ashamed of having been found in such a gang. Naturally distant toward strangers, it was difficult for him to explain how he had been led into the trap. Seeing this, Frank did not press him for an explanation. The real truth was, however, that, overcome by mortification because of the poor showing he had made in the canoe race, the Virginian had decided to take a drink. Being in a prohibition State, he had found it difficult to obtain anything. However, he had found an in-

dividual who claimed to know where there was something, and Jack had been led to the cottage up the shore. After taking two or three drinks, the Virginian did not notice that the party that gathered was composed of persons who seemed to have a secret understanding one with another. Jack was looking for excitement, and a game of poker promised to provide what he sought. Thus he was drawn into the game. After it began Welch appeared and was taken in. Then came Bunker. The reader knows what followed.

Dunnerwust turned out early and built a fire. Then he wandered away from the cottage, going out to the shore.

Twenty minutes later, he came panting and stumbling into the cottage, showing symptoms of great excitement.

"Xvick!" he gurgled. "Somepody gone oudt und drife him away!"

"What's the matter, Hans?" asked Frank.

"He vill got away uf you don'd hurry oop!" spluttered the Dutch boy.

"Who will get away? What's the matter with you?"

"Der man mit der viskers."

"What man?"

"Der one vot seen me ad der gottage vere der vight peen last nighd. I shust seen him oudt here."

"The man with the whiskers?" repeated Frank. "There was but one man with whiskers at the cottage last night. That was Bunker. He can't be here."

"Yaw; he vos oudt there."

"Then he is up to some crookedness!" exclaimed Merry, leaping to his feet and catching up a shotgun. "Where is he, Hans?"

"Oudt towart der ganoes."

Frank sprang through the doorway, and Diamond followed. Seeing this, Hans ran after them, directing them by shouting loudly, much to Merriwell's disgust.

"If there's anybody out here, he'll know we are coming," thought Frank.

Straight out toward the beach on which the canoes lay Frank ran. He was not long in coming in sight of the shore. When he did so, he saw something that made his blood leap in his veins.

Bill Bunker was pushing off from the shore in one of the single canoes. The man could hear the voice of Hans, and it was plain he knew some one was coming, for he started to paddle away as swiftly as possible.

Frank broke out of the woods and ran down to the very water's edge. Then he threw the gun to his shoulder and took aim toward the man in the canoe, shouting:

"Stop! Come back here, or I will shoot!"

Bunker cast a look over his shoulder and saw Merriwell. He hesitated, with the paddle poised in the air. It was plain that he was in doubt.

"I mean business!" declared Frank. "You are stealing one of our canoes, and I shall be justified in shooting you. As true as there is a gun in my hand, I'll shoot if you do not turn about at once and paddle back here!"

No one could doubt his earnestness. Bunker did not hesitate longer, but promptly turned about and sullenly paddled to the shore.

"What were you doing with that canoe?" asked Frank.

"Well," said the man, "I did mean to take all of them as payment for the guns you lost for Welch and I yesterday morning, but I heard you coming before I was ready to take them in tow. You will have to pay for those guns before I am done with you."

"So that was your trick? Well, it was just what I should expect from you."

"Well, I don't know as I want your old canoes anyway."

Bunker turned to walk away, but Frank stopped him.

"Not so fast," said Merry, grimly. "I am not through with you."

"What do you want?"

Again Frank covered the man with the muzzle of the shotgun.

"Up with your hands!" he commanded.

Bunker turned pale.

"What for?" he asked.

"Because I command you to put them up. Be lively about it! I know I am dealing with a desperado, and I shall not hesitate to shoot if you try to fool with me."

The man tried to palaver, but that did not go with Frank, and he was forced to obey. He held his hands above his head, and then Merry directed Diamond to search and disarm him. This Jack did, taking a revolver and knife from the man.

Following this, the painter was taken from one of the canoes, and the man's hands were bound behind his back, despite his protestations and threats. Then he was marched to the cottage.

Browning and Hodge were just coming out to see what was going on when the trio appeared with the prisoner.

"He was stealing one of our canoes," explained Frank.

"Well, what are you going to do with him?" asked Bruce.

"Don't know yet. I'll decide on that point later."

Bunker was marched into the cottage, and then Frank observed:

"There is one little point I mean to settle without delay. There is a certain mystery about this gentleman. If I am not mistaken, it does not require a razor to give him a clean shave."

Then he took hold of the captive's whiskers and gave them a sharp jerk. They came off in his hands, showing they were false.

"Just what I thought!" exclaimed Merry, triumphantly. "Now how about this long hair?"

It did not take long to establish the fact that Bunker wore a wig and his face was stained with paint that made it look coarse and repulsive.

"Fellows," cried Merriwell, "see that scar under his ear! I have made a big catch this morning, for this is the gentleman Ben Bowers, the sheriff wants to see. This is Joe Tweed, who robbed and nearly killed Peter Small!"

Frank's words gave the others a shock, but they saw that, with his disguise removed, the man answered the description Bowers had given of the robber.

Of course the captive denied that he was Tweed, but that made no difference with Frank.

"Mr. Bowers will decide that point," he said. "I shall take you over to see him to-day."

The prisoner resorted to threats, pleading and attempted bribery. Everything was unavailing. Frank was determined, and that very day, before noon, the man stood before the sheriff and was identified as Joe Tweed.

"Young man," said Bowers, "you done a big job when you caught him! The reward is your'n, and I'll see that you git it. I was afraid the blamed critter had got clean away."

"And so I would," said Tweed, sullenly, "if I had not been a fool. I might have skipped yesterday, but I stayed to get a crack at Frank Merriwell, and he has landed me here. I made my mistake in not letting him rip, even if he was responsible for my ducking in the lake. But I never robbed old Small, and I defy you to prove that I did."

This did not prove so hard, however, for Jim Welch turned out to be Tweed's accomplice, and he gave the whole thing away when he was accused. Almost every dollar of the stolen money was recovered, and both Welch and Tweed were indicted and held for trial.

Merriwell actually received the reward that had been offered for the capture of the robber.

"Fellows," he said, "that was a great catch, for this money will go a long distance toward defraying the expenses of our trip. We are having lots of sport, and it is not costing us much."

"But you must acknowledge one thing," said Hodge, with a show of triumph.

"What's that?" asked Frank.

"That you failed to find a redeeming quality in one rascal, and that one was Jim Welch."

"Well," laughed Frank, "Welch did not turn out very well, but still I do not believe he is all bad. He has not been given much of a show to exhibit the better side of his nature."

[THE END.]

The next number (III) will contain as the complete story, "Frank Merriwell's Guide; or, Sport Around Moosehead Lake," by the author of "Frank Merriwell."

"Cliff Faraday in Cuba. A Naval Cadet's Adventures," is now running in *The Half-Holiday*.

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NEW YORK, MAY 21, 1898.

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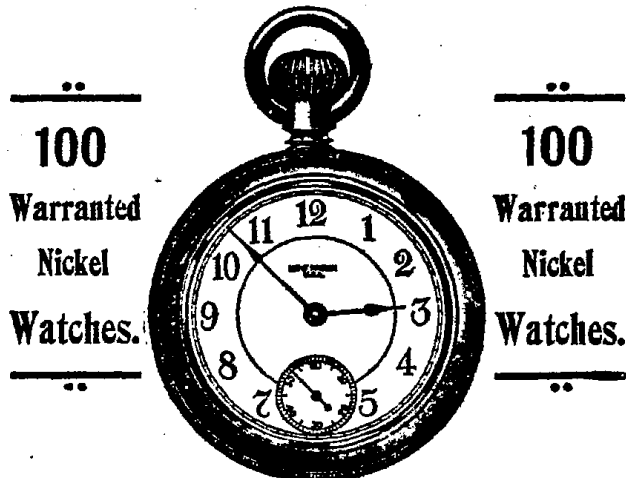
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This contest will close Saturday, May 21st, 1898. Postals should be addressed to "HUNDREDTH ISSUE CONTEST," TIP TOP WEEKLY, STREET & SMITH, NEW YORK CITY.

"TYPICAL AMERICAN NAVAL VESSELS"—THE HALF-HOLIDAY. NO. 14

Talks With Tip Top Readers.

The "Hundredth Issue" prize contest ends with this number of the Tip Top Weekly. The vast number of postal cards received necessitates several weeks of careful examination, and it may be sometime before the result can be announced. The names of the lucky winners of the one hundred watches will be published as speedily as possible, and we ask the contestants to possess their soul in patience.

The present series narrating Frank Merriwell's adventures in the Maine woods will be followed by another of engrossing interest. The details will be announced in due time.

Have you followed the lead of the majority of our readers and purchased a Tip Top Weekly binder? The cost is only 35 cents, and this small sum will enable you to preserve your favorite publication in a neat, durable form.

Correspondence.

A. K., St. Louis, Mo.—Yes, there is a foreign coin called "Widow's Mite." It is a very minute piece, being but three-tenths of an inch in diameter, and weighing about 10 grains. On one side nothing is discernible; on the other is a mint monogram, very much resembling the letter X, with a line crossing it near the top. Whether it is Samaritan, Syriac, or Greek, is not known, but there is no doubt that it belongs to the age shortly before and after the advent of Christ, and its size seems to prove it to be a lepton—the smallest of Greek and Syriac coins. The "Widow's Mite" did not bear the head of any ruler of ancient days.

C. L., Wilmington, Del.—1. Your parents know what is best for you, consult with them. 2. The life of a sailor is full of hardships, and not much pleasure. If boys who are bent on going to sea could only take a trial trip for a few months and work the same as an ordinary sailor, we venture to say that they would be content to be a land lubber. "A life on the bounding wave" is well enough to read about, but the charm is lost when put to practical use.

R. W. A., Janesville, Wis.—The Argentine Republic was discovered in 1517, and settled by the Spaniards in 1553. In 1816 it became independent of Spain, and in 1835 De Rosas, a successful soldier against the Indians, was elected Dictator of Buenos Ayres, which he held till he was defeated by Urquiza, when he fled to England. Under its present constitution the Republic is composed of fourteen provinces and nine territories, with a large seaboard on the east coast of South America.

The Boy Artist.

BY R. L. VANCE.

One March day, many years ago, we found ourselves ascending to the top of the famous Cathedral of Milan, a structure that has been so many centuries in building, and which is not yet completed. Once upon the summit, the sensation is very much like that experienced when suspended in a balloon; standing as you do in an isolated pinnacle four hundred feet above the earth.

Below you lies the city of Milan, the capital of Lombardy, the dwellings, churches and towers resembling toy houses; the people in the broad Via Victor Emmanuel seem to be exaggerated insects. But the distant view is glorious indeed, and fully repays the toil of those almost endless steps which lead you to the summit. The green and fertile plains of Lombardy stretch away from the city walls on all sides until they meet the foothills of the Alpine range, or mingle with the horizon toward the distant shores of the Adriatic.

In the range of sight lay Mont Blanc, Mont Genis, Mont St. Bernard, the Simplon Pass, the Bernese Oberland Range, and far away in the northeast, the long reach of the Tyrolean Alps looms up, their white snow crests glistening in the bright sunshine.

A gauze-like veil of golden mist just shrouds the finest of pinnacles beneath your feet, and which spring from all parts of the wonderful structure. The picture is indelible. You can never forget its comprehension and marvelous beauty, nor the thrilling sensation which sends the blood leaping through your veins as you gaze from the dizzy height of this "eighth wonder of the world," as the Milanese call the Duomo, in their excusable pride.

Coming down from the lofty spire of the famous cathedral, we turned our steps toward the west gate of the city to the small piazza, in which are the remains of a former convent of St. Maria delle Grazie, and which are to-day used as a cavalry barrack. But within the ancient structure the large hall which once formed the refectory of the convent, is carefully preserved and guarded by the government with jealous care.

Here is what the world estimates as one of the greatest works of art and genius extant. People have made a pilgrimage of thousands of miles to see this famous picture, painted in oils upon the bare walls of the old convent. Next to the cathedral it is the great attraction to the traveler who visits Northern Italy, and is held in almost sacred veneration by the citizens themselves.

Splendid copies in oils, as well as the finest line engravings, have rendered this picture of "The Last Supper" familiar to the world, but the great original, in all its effectiveness, can never be removed. It must go, by and by, with the crumbling walls, for even now the

finger of time has touched it here and there, but still has left us the perfect effect of the inspired artist, Leonardo da Vinci.

The painting is too familiar to all to require detailed description, but as it presents itself in the original it covers one entire end of the large and lofty hall, and would measure, the figures being all life size, some forty by fifteen feet, as near as one can recall its actual dimensions. It is never without visitors standing before it during the hours of daylight, many being drawn thither by religious instinct, as to a chapel in the cathedral, kneeling and offering up a silent prayer.

It is impossible not to be filled with admiration as one stands before the glorious work and not to recall the history of its renowned author, the universal genius of his day. He was painter, poet, sculptor, architect, chemist, astronomer, the idol and ornament of courts, and the companion of sages. He was a man as beautiful in mind as in person, and with a heart as pure and noble as his intellect.

The imagination became very busy as we stood there quietly before the grandest effort of this genius, who, though dead, still lives in the appreciation of a Christian world.

We had only to close our eyes to be carried back to the fifteenth century, and into a dimly-lighted Italian studio, decorated by pieces of old armor, helmets, banners, fragments of antique statues, panels covered with unfinished drawings, a few artist's materials scattered here and there, and many an uncompleted sketch, a studio having all of the characteristic confusion, irregularity, and uncleanness that attaches to the domestic surroundings of the dreamy artist who lives so far above every-day life in his vivid imagination.

On an easel in the centre of this untidy and ancient studio, upon which the rays from the skylight descend almost vertically, is a large picture representing the baptism of our Saviour by St. John. An old man, palette and pencil in hand, stands gazing at the picture. It is his own evidently, but why that strange, enraptured gaze with which he now regards the canvass?

It is not at the painting as a whole that the gray-haired artist is gazing. His eyes are not arrested by the central group; but he regards with admiration mingled with astonishment the shining figure of an angel holding up a mass of drapery to permit the spectator to behold the scene of the baptism. A supernatural halo seems to surround the radiant figure. Color, light, shade, expression, nothing is wanting to the illusive effect of the painting.

Long and silently the old painter, Andrea Varocchio, gazed upon the work, now retiring for a few paces, now returning to a nearer view. What did it mean? He had been absent for but three days, and here he returned to find a wonderful addition to his baptismal

BICYCLES ARE GIVEN AWAY TO HALF-HOLIDAY READERS.

scene, as if by magic. Still in wonder and admiration he gazed. At length, calling his boy pupil, to whom he was imparting the rudiments of art, and who aided him in the mixing and preparing of his colors.

"Boy, who has been here in my absence?"

"No one, master."

"Art sure, boy?"

"I am sure."

"And yet my work is meddled with."

"I am sorry," said the lad, with contrition.

When called by his master, the boy had emerged from the shadow of some curtains which had partially concealed him when old Andrea first entered. He stood abashed, as though he had been guilty of some misdemeanor and expected severe reproof, while his slender but graceful figure as he stood there before his master gave promise of a coming beauty which should be as radiant as that of the angel in the picture.

"Boy," repeated the old artist.

"I am here, master."

"Who painted that?"

"I did, Master Andrea," replied the boy, blushing.

"And who assisted you?"

"No one."

"So, so," mused the old painter, again approaching the canvas and gazing at it.

The boy was expecting and awaiting the reproof.

"You did it alone?"

"Alone," responded the pupil, quite abashed at the protracted examination.

"Is it ill done?" finally ventures the boy.

"Ill done! It is a masterpiece. My own work is but a daub beside it. The child has vanquished the veteran at his own art. Henceforth Andrea Varocchio will never touch pencil more."

And the old master kept his word. But he—the boy artist—was this figure a premature blossom of promise, which should bear no fruit? No, it was the first of a series of triumphs rising in greatness till "The Last Supper," still the admiration of the Christian and artistic world, crowned the fame of Leonardo da Vinci.

Sense of Touch.

Between the shoulder blades, over the region of the spine, the skin is almost insensible to touch. The edges of the eyelids display great sensibility, owing to which they close at the slightest touch, thus protecting the organs they cover. Where the skin is stretched, as over the knee or elbow, the sense of touch is slight; but on the palmar surfaces of the hands, feet, or fingers, it is most delicate. The tip of the tongue is capable of distinguishing the two points of a pair of compasses when only .0394 inch apart.

Comic Column.

VILLAGE THEATRE MUSIC.

Village Boy—We played theatre to-day, and it was great fun.

Father—What part did you play?

Boy—I wasn't in the act. I was one of the musicians. We had a drum, an' three horns, an' six combs, and some ropes stretched over a barrel for the big fiddle. It sounded just like a theatre orchestra.

UNACCOMMODATING ANIMALS.

Little Johnnie—Do cats like fruit cake?

Little Dick—No.

"Do rats and mice?"

"No. Why?"

"Nothin'; only there's some in our closet at home, where I can reach it. I wish cats or rats or something liked fruit cake.

OLD FOLKS NOT INTERESTED.

Little Son—I wish bicycles had been invented when you were a boy.

Father (an influential citizen)—Why so, my son?

Little Son—'Cause we'd had good roads by this time.

A FOOLISH RULE.

Professor—Keep your eyes on the notes. Don't look at your fingers.

Fair Pupil—The idea! How would I ever know whether I was striking chords or discords?

NOT FIGHTING.

Mother—Horrors! You naughty boy! You've been fighting.

Little Son—No'm.

"How did your clothes get torn, and your face get scratched?"

"I was tryin' to keep a bad boy from hurting a good little boy."

"That was noble. Who was the good little boy?"

"Me."

PLAYING CHURCH.

Mamma (reprovingly, Sunday)—You told me you were going to play church.

Little Dick—Yes'm.

"Then I'd like to know what all this loud laughing is about."

"Oh, that's all right. That's Dot and me. We're the choir."

A SURPRISE.

He—Is that your school friend? Why, she isn't so very ugly.

She—Ugly? Who said she was?

He—You said all the girls loved her."

SMALL LOSS.

Mother (reprovingly)—You have never taken a prize at school yet.

Little Dick—N-o, but I guess they're only plated, anyhow.

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