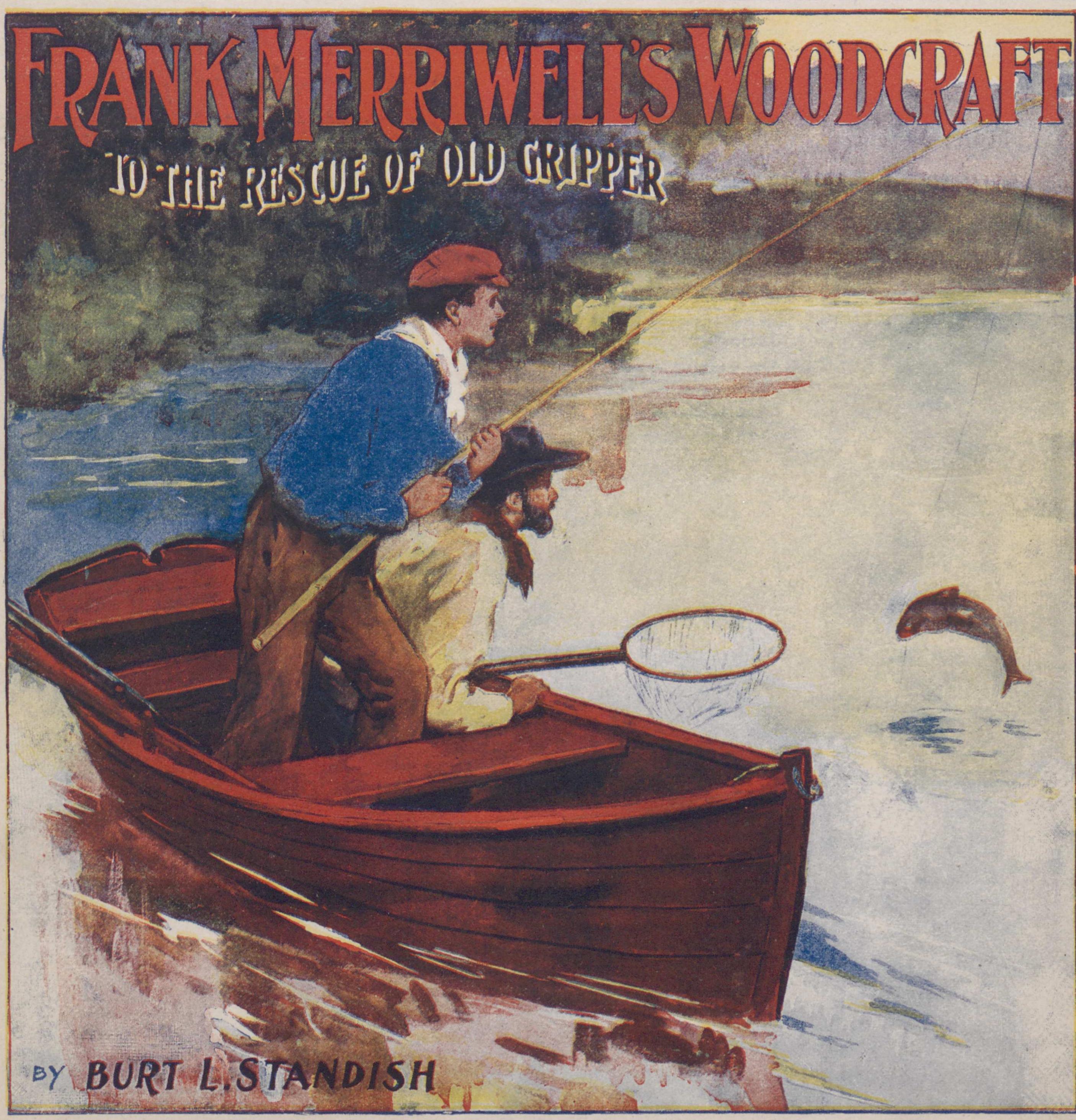
# LARGEST WEEKLY CIRCULATION IN AMERICA

# TIPTOPWEELLY IDEAL PUBLICATION FOR THE AMERICAN YOUTH

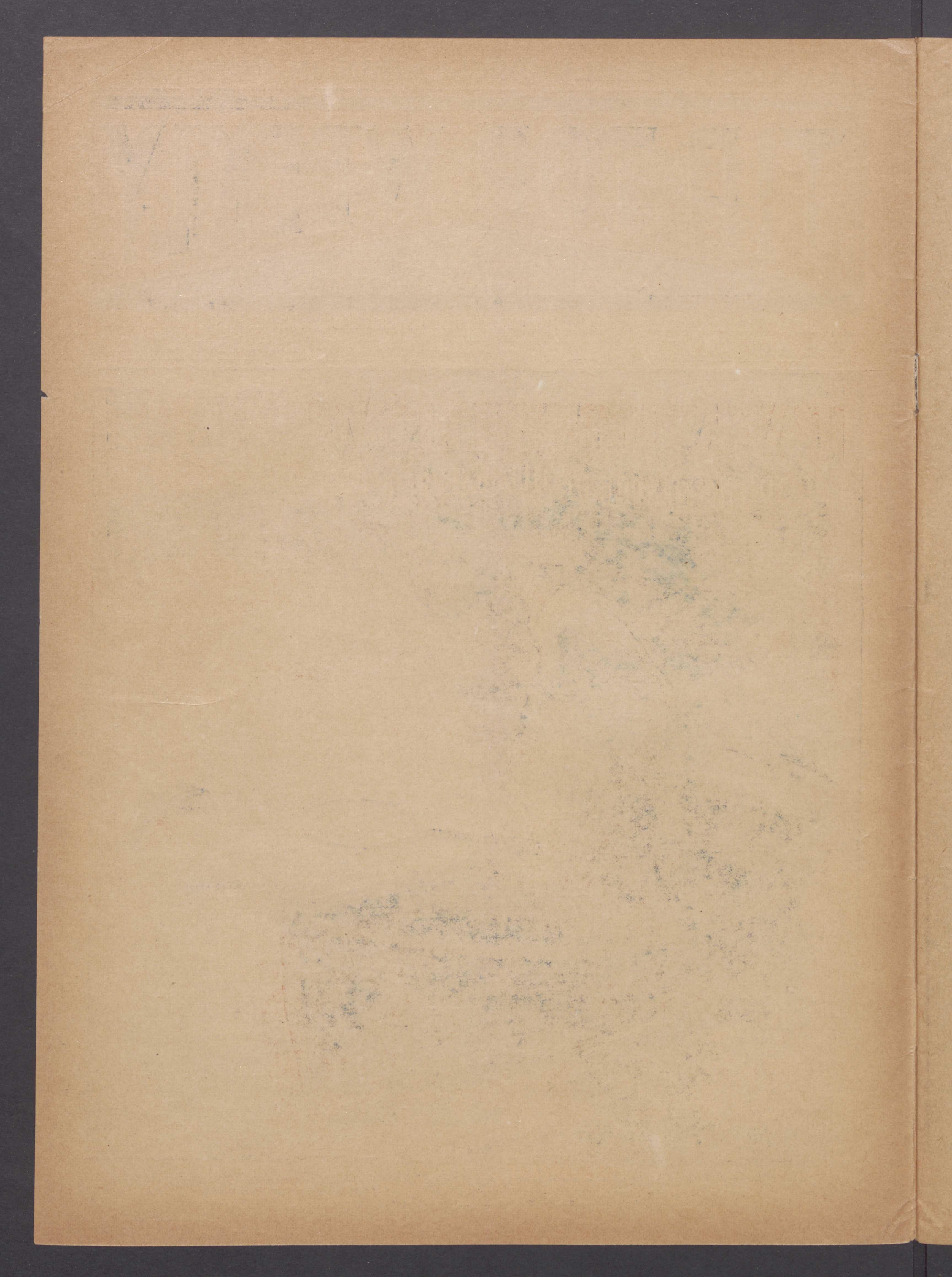
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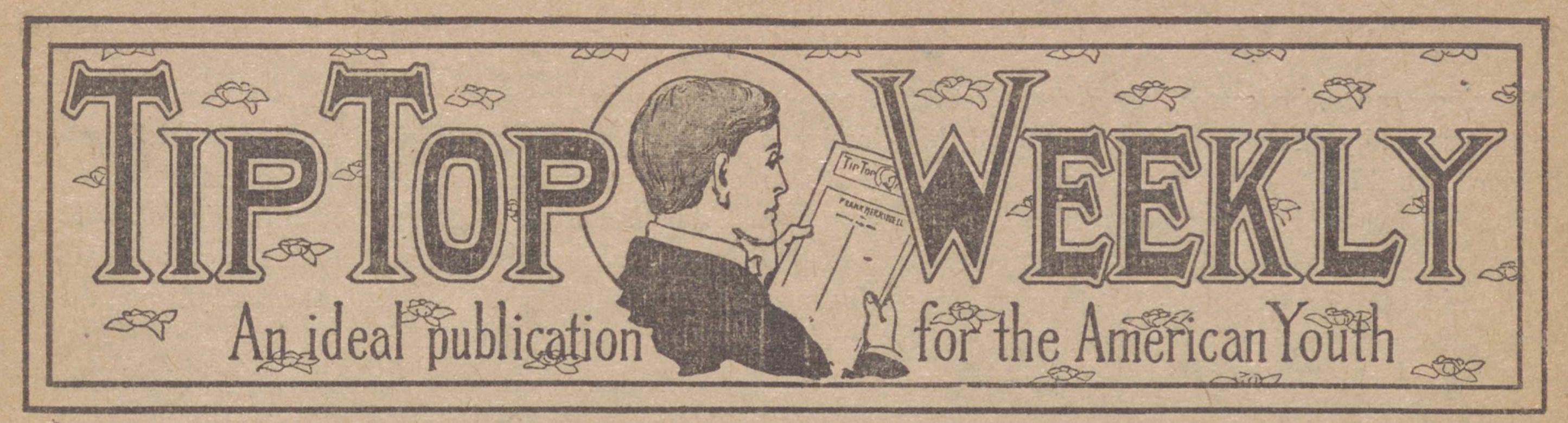
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"Great Caesar!" cried Hatch, as the salmon once more leaped from the water, and shook the spoons with a musical jingling sound. "Isn't this the real thing! Easy Merriwell—easy! Play him, my boy—play him! Give him a little line; that's the way!"





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NEW YORK, November 12, 1904.

Price Five Cents.

# FRANK MERRIWELL'S WOODCRAFT;

OR,

# To the Rescue of Old Gripper.

By BURT L. STANDISH.

### CHAPTER I.

19/42/4/20

MEN OF GREAT AFFAIRS.

Up in the Adirondacks the nights were becoming very cool. Already the mountain slopes were bespangled with crimson and gold, and the leaves of the deciduous trees were beginning to fall and rustle on the ground. In the forests squirrels chattered and partridges drummed. By day the sun shone warm and bright and the air was like wine. At night, in order to be comfortable, a man needed heavy garments.

In a picturesque location on the shore of beautiful Lake Placid stood a rude, yet comfortable, cottage. It was not built, however, for occupancy in cold weather, and at this season of the year it was necessary at nightfall to close the doors and windows and start a fire in the big stone fireplace.

One night this fire was burning brightly, filling the room with a cheerful warmth. Three men sat before

it—three men vastly different in personal appearance, yet alike in the one fact that all were possessors of great wealth acquired by unusual acumen in colossal financial enterprises.

Had you seen those three men as they sat thus, unmindful of the cry of a lonely loon that came from the pulseless bosom of the lake outside the door, you might not have dreamed that they differed from ordinary and commonplace human beings. Indeed, you might have thought one of them stolid and dull of wit. He sat motionless in the big, wide armchair, his pudgy hands clasped over his rotund stomach, his florid face devoid of expression, his heavy-lidded and slow-moving eyes dull and lifeless. Yet this was Sudbury Bragg, widely known as a power in Wall Street—a man who, born in comparative poverty, had risen by his own efforts to the position he held.

Even less noticeable was a small, pale, almost timid-

appearing man, who sat within a few feet of Bragg and occasionally stroked, with a thin hand, his closely cropped whiskers. His dark clothes accentuated his pallor and made him seem like one in the first stages of consumption, who had sought relief and recuperation amid the pine forests of those mountains. This was Warren Hatch, who had started in life with a hundred thousand dollars and was now possessor of millions.

Beyond question the most striking man of the group sat near one side of the fireplace, grimly smoking a corncob pipe. His clothes were rusty brown and fitted him poorly. He had a bristly, close-cropped, sandy mustache, besprinkled with gray, while the top of his head was shiny and smooth as a billiard ball. His rugged features were deeply furrowed, and at first glance he might have been taken for a laborer; but the palms of his reddish hands were smooth and soft as a woman's. One glance from his keen, piercing, intelligent eyes was enough to convince anyone that here was an unusual and remarkable man.

This was Watson Scott, nicknamed "Old Gripper," and known the world over among men of great affairs as the embodiment of success and a wonderful example of the self-made money king. Born in the lowliest walks of life, compelled to struggle against adversity and poverty at the very outset, having received only the most meager and unsatisfactory education, this man had risen by his own will power, determination and perseverance until he had reached almost the highest pinnacle of human achievement in the financial world.

At length Warren Hatch stirred nervously and drew forth his watch.

"It's getting late," he said, in a voice that corresponded with his physical appearance. "The train arrived at Newman hours ago. If Bland and Merriwell were on that train, they should have been here long before this."

Old Gripper smoked on without even glancing at the speaker.

"It's getting late," Hatch repeated, in a little louder tone. "I am going fishing in the morning, and I propose to be out at the first crack of day. Hadn't we better turn in? What do you think, Bragg?"

"Hey?" grunted the corpulent man, as he rolled his dull eyes toward the speaker. "Did you speak to me, Hatch?"

"Yes; I suggested that we turn in. Evidently some-

thing has happened to prevent the men we expected from arriving to-night. If you're going out fishing with me in the morning, you will need your sleep."

"What's the use to get up so confounded early to go fishing?" asked Bragg. "The fish won't leave the lake, will they? We can find them any time we go after them, can't we?"

"The minute you got up here," said Hatch, "you collapsed, and it's almost impossible to move you. Of course the fish will remain in the lake; but, if we're looking for any sport, we'll have to be out in time to find them as they are hunting their breakfasts. They start feeding early, and that is the time to catch them, for they are hungry and will bite then. After they've had breakfast, they are a great deal like you and I, and may refuse to nibble at the most tempting morsel dangled before them."

"Well, I am ready to turn in any time when the rest do. What does Scott say?"

"He hasn't said anything."

"Come, Scott," grunted Bragg, "let up on that old pipe long enough to say something. You've been dragging at it ever since supper."

Still Old Gripper smoked on.

Warren Hatch seemed a trifle annoyed.

"I am going to bed," he declared. "You two can sit up till daybreak, if you like."

As he made a move as if to get up the man with the pipe spoke for the first time.

"Hold on," he said, and there was unmistakable command in his voice. "We're not going to bed now."

Hatch lifted his eyebrows and regarded the speaker with an air that indicated the slightest touch of annoyance.

"It's your privilege to decide what you will do in my cottage," he said. "You're at liberty to make yourself at home here. I see no reason why I should sit up longer to-night."

Old Gripper removed his pipe from between his teeth and permitted his piercing eyes to rest on the host.

"Thanks, Hatch," he said. "You have made that plain to us already. But you know my time here is limited. I am going back to-morrow, and I must get at something decisive to-night."

"Very well. I think we can settle the matter without any further discussion or delay. I am sorry you troubled yourself to come away up here, as long as you why you did it."

"I thought I had made that plain enough to you. I wanted to hear from your own lips that you had changed your mind after giving me your pledge to go into that railroad deal."

"Every man has a right to change his mind, Mr. Scott," said Hatch, somewhat stiffly.

"And he also has a right to give his reasons for so doing in a case like this," retorted Old Gripper. "I know you have said you became convinced that the whole thing was impracticable and could not be made a paying venture. I also know at one time you were fully satisfied to the contrary. Now, see here, Hatch; I don't presume you fancy I asked you into this thing out of any feeling of affection for you."

Hatch lifted a thin hand in a deprecatory gesture.

"All right," continued Scott, without waiting for the small man to speak. "At the same time, I fancied you had understood why I offered to take both you and Mr. Bragg in on the ground floor. Your money was one consideration, but your good judgment outbalanced your dollars. You can't presume for a moment that I chose you because I thought you would be easy to hoodwink or pluck. Had I wished to hoodwink anyone or pluck anyone, I could have found other men, with just as much money, ready to jump at the opening at my advice. When I choose my partners in an affair of this importance and they pledge themselves to me, it annoys me to have one of them go back on his pledge. It annoys me to have anyone question my judgment in an affair like this. Still I am ready to show evidence that the thing has every prospect in the world of being a success, if properly handled. I have brought papers and documents for that purpose; but I expected additional evidence on the arrival of my secretary and Mr. Merriwell. I have withheld my papers, waiting their arrival. Why they are not here I can't say. am ready now to place before you the documents in my possession, and I think you should go over them with me to-night."

"Then you have given up Bland and Merriwell?"

"Not entirely," answered Old Gripper. "From what I've learned of this Merriwell, he's a man to keep his appointments. Still I know occasions will arise when the best of us fail."

From his inner pocket he removed a bulky manilla envelope with a rubber band around it. As he did this

positively decline to either fish or hunt. I don't see the three were somewhat surprised by a knock on the door.

> It was Hatch who hastened to the door and flung it open.

A man entered.

"Bland!" exclaimed Old Gripper. "At last you're here!"

"Yes, I am here," said Bland; "but I'm sorry to

"Where is Merriwell?" interrupted Scott.

"I am sorry to say," Bland hastened, "that Merriwell is not with me."

"Where is he?"

"Heaven only knows where he is now," answered the private secretary, who seemed greatly agitated. "I think he is dead."

"Dead?" gasped Hatch.

"Dead?" cried Scott.

"Dead?" mumbled Bragg.

Then Bland hastened to tell his story.

"We left New York together and remained until nearly noon in Utica, taking a train which would land us in Newman this evening," he said. "On the train were a number of sportsmen and hunters. This side of Central Junction Merriwell became involved in a serious quarrel with several of these men. He insulted one of them and drew a pistol. Shortly after we passed Saranac Junction the trouble began again. Of course, I did what I could for Merriwell, but that was very little. Those men had been drinking, and they were furious because he had drawn the weapon on them. They drove him to the rear end of the car, and one of them fired at him. I saw Merriwell fall off, and I believe he was instantly killed. After that I was terrorized by those men, who threatened to serve me the same if I did not keep still. In terror of my life, I was compelled to remain silent. I could not even make a complaint against them. They left the train at Ragbrook. I was compelled to remain on it until Newman was reached. Since arriving there I have been doing all I could to learn the truth regarding Merriwell's fate.

"This is horrible!" cried Hatch.

"Horrible!" agreed Brooks.

"Some one will pay the penalty for it!" declared Old Gripper, in a harsh and terrible voice. "This murder was committed by Merriwell's enemies, who have done everything in their power to down him, whose evil influence has been felt by you, Mr. Hatch, and who,

beyond question, followed him up into these mountains for the purpose of assassinating him. Never before have I met a young man whose self-confidence, honesty and manhood so appealed to me. Never before have I met a young man in whom I became so deeply interested. As sure as my name is Watson Scott, his death shall be avenged!"

"Thank you, Mr. Scott," said another voice at the flight. door; "but he is not dead."

Frank Merriwell himself walked into the room.

# CHAPTER II.

THE FUGITIVE.

The singing of bullets was not an unfamiliar sound to Frank Merriwell. More than once he had listened to the peculiar nerve-straining whine of lead as it whistled through the air.

Astride the horse lately ridden by Porfias del Norte, he went tearing down the road that led into the deeper shadows of the valley.

On either side of the road were dense thickets, and the tree branches were above his head. Through these branches at intervals the moonlight fell in sprinkles and splotches; but these spots of light were not sufficient to enable his pursuers to obtain more than a fleeting glimpse of him as he shot through them. As they were likewise mounted and riding hard, their aim was most uncertain, and Frank felt that his only danger was that he might be hit by a chance shot, fired almost at random.

A short time before, while riding rapidly along that road, with a fifteen-year-old boy as his guide, Merry had been swept from the saddle by a rope stretched across the highway between two trees.

The boy who was behind him bent low upon the back of his horse and passed under the rope.

Had not Frank's enemies been too eager, it is probable the lad would have stopped to investigate. Those enemies, however, sprang out from their places of concealment, and, seeing them, the boy was filled with terror and urged his horse to its greatest speed.

Wishing to prevent the boy from carrying a report of what had happened to Newman, which was not far away, Porfias del Norte, leader of Merriwell's captors, had hastily mounted his own horse and attempted to overtake the lad. In this effort he failed and was compelled to turn back in disappointment and baffled rage.

In the meantime, one of Merriwell's captors, an

Irishman named O'Tool, who had not forgotten how his life was saved by Frank that very day, found an opportunity to cut the bonds of the captive and whisper in his ear directions by which he might escape.

When he returned and sprang from the saddle, Del Norte called O'Tool to hold his horse, at the same time urging the others to get their animals ready for hasty flight.

The Mexican could not resist the temptation to taunt his supposed-to-be helpless victim. But as he bent over Frank, who still lay stretched on the ground, he was suddenly seized by Merriwell's strong hands and flung over on his back. A moment or two the desperate youth paused to choke his enemy, and then he leaped away to the spot where O'Tool had once more turned the head of Del Norte's horse toward Newman. To the back of that horse Frank sprang, while the Irishman seemed to reel backward beneath a blow, falling by the roadside.

In this manner Frank obtained a start; but Del Norte lost not many moments in leading the pursuit, firing shot after shot in the hope that a bullet might reach Merriwell or wound and check the horse bestrode by the escaping youth.

Until Del Norte forged ahead of them and they feared they might hit him, his companions followed his example, and their pistols barked spitefully, awaking the echoes of the valley.

O'Tool had thrust a pistol into one of Frank's pockets, and, wishing to know if the weapon was loaded and ready for use, Merry drew it and turned in the saddle, cocking it as he did so. A pull at the trigger caused a reddish spout of flame to leap from the muzzle of the revolver, and thus the youth sent one bullet zipping over the head of Del Norte.

That was the only shot he fired.

"O'Tool, you're all right!" he laughed, as he returned the weapon to his pocket and once more bent low that there might be less chance of getting a piece of lead in the back. "I misjudged you, my Irish friend. You have taken chances to repay the favor I did you, and I hope no harm comes to you because of it."

A feeling of exultation settled on Frank as he realized that the horse beneath him was a splendid animal with great speed.

"Del Norte was certain to have the best beast in the bunch," he muttered. "I ought to get away with ease, barring accident."

"It was not long before he knew he was gaining. The shooting behind him grew less and finally died out. Still his ears told him the pursuit had not ceased.

Where the shadows were deepest in the wooded valley he came to a fork of the road, with two branches running on, one to the right and one to the left.

He was given no time to consider which road he would take. Almost before he realized it, his horse carried him onto the left fork.

This road did not seem as well traveled as the one just left. There were wheel tracks and a path along the middle of it; but, with a sudden thought, he kept close on the side of the road, where the grass seemed growing. In this manner the hoofbeats of the horse were somewhat muffled by the turf.

Now it happened that, on reaching the point where the road forked, Del Norte decided Merriwell would naturally keep to the right and continue toward Newman, in which place he could seek shelter from his pursuers.

Right there Del Norte made a blunder.

Not until he had ridden some distance along the right branch and reached a point where the woods grew thinner and the moonlight fell for a long distance a mistake. No longer could he catch an occasional fer for this!" glimpse of a fleeting shadow in advance. No longer could he hear the echoing hoofbeats of the fugitive's horse, and, therefore, he suddenly pulled up, crying to his companions for them to stop.

Two of them, who were only a short distance behind, quickly obeyed; but the third did not understand and came on, the hoofs of his animal ringing clear and still awaking the echoes.

"Carramba!" snarled Del Norte. "Stop that fellow -stop him! I told him to be still!"

At last the man understood and flung his horse to a stand, after which he listened.

Leaning forward in his saddle, Del Norte placed a curved hand behind his ear.

"Fiends take him!" he grated. "I hear him no longer. Has he melted into the moonlight? Has he taken wings?"

"Listen!" exclaimed the man nearest. "I think I heard a sound on the other road."

Instantly the attention of all was turned toward the tions. left fork, and the still air brought to their ears a regular muffled sound that all knew was produced by the swiftly moving feet of a horse.

Del Norte swore in Spanish.

Yanking his horse round, he shouted for the others to follow him and led them back to the point where the road forked.

"We will never overtake that fellow to-night," said one. "I knew there was no chance of it unless we hit him or his horse. This road leads to Lake Placid, and he will reach the lake a long distance ahead of us."

Again the Mexican gave vent to some violent language.

"That's right," he finally admitted. "Merriwell has escaped us to-night. He has beaten me, after all."

"But how did he do it?" questioned another of Del Norte's companions. "We had him tied securely, and he seemed unconscious."

"Tied securely, you fools!" raved the enraged rascal. "Why, he was not tied at all! When I bent over him, he seized me by the throat and flung me down."

"But he was tied!" asserted a third. "I did the job, and I took pains to make it a good one. Without assistance he couldn't have freed his hands in a year."

"Then how did it happen?" demanded the leader. "Tell me that! How did it happen? I left him to you while I pursued the boy. I returned, and he escaped on the highway did the Mexican suspect he had made from us all. By the saints I adore, some one shall suf-

"O'Tool!" cried one. "Where is O'Tool? Let him explain! He was last in charge of Merriwell."

"May satan roast him forever!" burst from Del Norte's lips. "He betrayed me! He released the Gringo!"

"That's it! That's right!" exclaimed the others. "O'Tool must have done it!"

"Then let me get my hands on O'Tool," grated Del Norte, "and he will regret the day he was born! Follow me, and we will find O'Tool."

With his heart burning with fury, the baffled scoundrel retraced his course to the spot where Frank had been captured. There, aided by his companions, he sought in vain for the Irishman.

The woods were deep and dark, and O'Tool was not found that night.

As Merriwell entered by the open door, the four men in the cottage at Lake Placid uttered exclama-

"Here he is!" cried Old Gripper.

"Pretty lively for a dead man," grunted Sudbury Bragg.

"Mighty queer business," said Warren Hatch.

But it was Belmont Bland who seemed the most astounded and startled. Indeed, for a few seconds his face wore an expression of great dismay.

"Merriwell-alive!" he whispered.

"Here, you two," growled Watson Scott, glancing from Frank to Bland and then back again, "what do you mean by this business? What sort of a joke is it? What kind of a cock-and-bull story were you giving us, Bland?"

The private secretary took a strong grip on his nerves and hastened to speak.

"It was no cock-and-bull story," he declared. "Mr. Merriwell will tell you so. Mr. Merriwell will tell you, just as I stated, he was attacked on the train and apparently left dead by the side of the railroad."

Frank was covered with dust and his hat was gone. With his hands in his pockets, he faced Bland, who could not meet his steady gaze.

"I presume Mr. Bland fancied I was left thus," he said. "In truth, there was trouble on the train. I found a number of my enemies were following me, two of them being in disguise, and one of the two was Porfias del Norte himself. I penetrated Del Norte's disguise and exposed him. After that I was in no small danger, and only by leaping from the rear of the train and throwing myself into a clump of bushes at the side of the track did I escape. Since then I have had further adventures of a somewhat exciting nature."

Frank told his story, interrupted at frequent intervals by exclamations from the listeners. When he had finished, Old Gripper stepped forward, an expression of satisfaction and pride on his face, and seized the youth's hand.

"This, gentlemen," he said, "is the kind of a man who led me to take an interest in the Central Sonora Railroad project. I like a man of sand and good fighting blood, and I think you will acknowledge that Merriwell has demonstrated he is built of the proper stuff. My boy, I congratulate you. I was not willing to believe anything could prevent you from keeping your appointment here to-night. I know now that only death could have stopped you."

"Thank you," said Merry. "It did seem at one time as if I'd fail to get here, but here I am. Plotting, trickery and treachery did not check me."

"Shake hands with Mr. Hatch, Mr. Merriwell," said Old Gripper. "He was lately talking about getting to bed early in order to start fishing at daybreak in the morning. Perhaps he will be willing to sit up a while now."

"More than willing," nodded Hatch, as he shook Frank's hand.

"This is Mr. Bragg, Mr. Merriwell," said Scott. "The atmosphere up here seems to make him very sleepy: but I notice he's wide awake now."

"I should say so!" grunted Bragg. "This fellow seems to be one of the kind to wake anyone up. By George! Merriwell, your enemies must be a desperate lot."

"So they are," nodded Frank. "Porfias del Norte is a man to hesitate at nothing, and apparently he has chosen his associates with a great deal of sagacity. They are the kind to back him in everything, and I presume he pays them well."

"I congratulate you, Mr. Merriwell," said Bland, as he stepped forward and half extended his hand. "I hope you don't blame me for anything. I was unarmed. I never carry a weapon. I couldn't do a thing to help you."

"It appeared that way," said Frank, failing to notice the proffered hand. "Of course Mr. Scott did not engage you as a fighter. As a private secretary you may be all right."

He placed peculiar emphasis on the words "may be."

"Oh, Bland's all right, in his way," declared Old Gripper. "I never fancied there was much fight in him; but he's trustworthy and reliable—trustworthy and reliable."

"You have known him much longer than I have," said Frank.

"It's plain you do hold resentment toward me," said Bland. "I am sorry, Mr. Merriwell; but your reason should teach you I could not do a thing for you. After arriving at Newman, I told the station agent and others what had happened, and I presume they are trying now to find out if you are living or dead."

"They can do little to-night," said Watson Scott.
"We'll inform them in the morning that you're very much alive, Mr. Merriwell. Close that door, Bland, and bolt it. Pull the shades close. We shall have no spying eyes to see us. Here are the documents I brought with me."

He flung them on the table.

"We will get through with this business to-night," he said, "for I must return to the city to-morrow. Mr.

Merriwell, have you brought anything that will interest Hatch and Bragg?"

Frank took from an inner pocket a leather pocketbook, smiling with satisfaction.

"My captors did not find time to search me thoroughly, and, therefore, I have these two papers, which may prove interesting," he said.

From the pocketbook he removed the papers and placed them on the table.

"You may be tired, Bland," said Old Gripper.

"There's a couch yonder; take a rest."

"If you need me, sir-"

"Not now. Not to-night. Lie down."

It was a command, and Bland retired to the couch. Although he soon closed his eyes, he remained very wide awake and his ears were wide open.

Bragg, Hatch, Scott and Merriwell gathered about the table, drawing up their chairs, and until long past midnight they were busy examining the documents.

Frank had many things to say, yet he wasted no words. Everything he uttered was straight to the point, and his statements counted.

The result was satisfying to him and to Watson Scott.

# CHAPTER III.

### SPORT ON LAKE PLACID.

In spite of the late hour at which he retired, Warren Hatch was up before daybreak. Seeming to feel a hint of rain in the air, he donned a rough suit of clothes and took from its hook a long rain coat.

His rod and tackle had been prepared, and he slipped out of the cottage as the first gray hint of dawn appeared in the east.

Before the cottage two boats were moored. One of these he drew in to the shore. As he was putting the oars into the boat and adjusting the rowlocks, he was startled to hear a step behind him. Turning quickly, he saw in the dim light of morning the tall, athletic figure of Frank Merriwell.

"Mr. Merriwell!" he exclaimed, in surprise. "I supposed you were sound asleep. What are you doing?"

"I heard you moving, Mr. Hatch," said Frank, "and I took a fancy to turn out. I think Mr. Scott said last night you contemplated going fishing this morning. Do you mind company?"

"Company! I should be delighted. Do you fish, Mr. Merriwell?

"Whenever I can find an opportunity. But I am willing to do the rowing this morning. It will be a pleasure to watch you fish, sir."

"Now, see here," said Hatch, "I am no pig, and I'd feel like one if we went out there and I did all the fishing. You wait. There are plenty of rods, and I will get you one."

"If it's not too much trouble--"

"No trouble at all. Why, I couldn't turn Bragg out at this hour with a ton of dynamite, and Scott doesn't care a rap about fishing. I will fix you."

Hatch hastened back to the cottage, soon returning with a rod and tackle.

"Here you are," he said. "Now I will get the minnows, and we will be off."

He soon placed a large can of minnows in the boat, having dipped them with a net from the little trap where they were kept, and soon the two pushed off.

The sky was overcast, yet the gray light in the east was spreading slowly. It fell on the placid surface of the lake and enabled them to see in the distance the wooded outlines of a large island.

"I think you will find that rod all right," said Hatch.

"It's a good one. It may be you won't fancy the tackle.

I know mine is regulated to suit me. Let me take those oars while you look after yours."

With the understanding that he should resume the oars as soon as he had prepared his tackle in a satisfactory manner, Merriwell surrendered them.

Hatch had brought along a supply of hooks, flies; spoons and things of that sort, and it was not long, as he watched Frank deftly at work, before he became convinced that Merriwell was not a novice in the art of fishing. This added to his interest in the youth, and they discussed baits and gearing with the increased enthusiasm of brother anglers.

As soon as Merriwell had prepared his tackle to suit him, he insisted on again taking the oars.

"I know where we will be pretty certain to find 'em," said Hatch. "We're out far enough from the shore. Keep her headed just as she is."

With a sensation of keen pleasure in the exercise, Merriwell sent the boat skimming over the bosom of the lake.

"You're a good man with the oar," nodded Hatch. "You handle it with the skill of an expert. Where did you learn to row?"

"At college."

"What college?"

"Yale."

"Then I will wager something you were on the crew."

"You wouldn't lose, Mr. Hatch."

"Did you row against Harvard?"

"Twice."

"And won\_\_\_"

"Both times."

"You're one of those athletic young men they produce nowadays. Do you know I made a big mistake in my college days. Athletics were not so much the rage then as they are now, and I took no interest in them. I boned through my whole course and tried to finish at the head of my class. That was a serious blunder, for I undermined my health; and I have felt it ever since. Had I spent a portion of my time in building up my physical powers, I'd be better fitted for business to-day. I have to guard my health and take every precaution to ward off sickness. My frailness is a constant source of annoyance and a continual drawback. I never hear anyone railing about college athletics that I fail to express my views. To be sure, such things may be carried to excess, just the same as any good thing can be overdone. Still I believe that gymnastics and proper athletic exercise should be a compulsory part of every college course."

"I can shake hands with you on that," said Frank, heartily. "The trouble at present is that boys best fitted by nature for athletics go into it, while those who are in need of athletic training and physical development refrain from taking to regular work in the gymnasium and on the field, fearing their physical weaknesses and imperfections may arouse the mirth and derision of their companions. This thing will be set right when in every college it is required that all students take a regular course in physical culture and those who are weak and deficient are pushed forward properly, just the same as would be the case if they were deficient in mental acquirements."

"Your ideas and mine correspond exactly," nodded Hatch, who was now preparing his bait. "If you slacken up a little and row slower along here I'll troll. This is good fishing ground."

"Good fishing ground," laughed Frank. "What a misnomer! Still that's the way people express it."

Hatch was attaching a minnow, and soon he was ready for business. He dropped the bait overboard, released the catch on the reel and permitted the line to run out.

"That's a fancy reel you have there," observed Frank.

"It's the finest made," said the man in the stern of the boat. "I take care of it, and it runs with the smoothness of a watch."

"Triple action?"

"Quadruple. Every turn of the hand causes it to turn four times. And in that manner I can get in the slack fast enough for any purpose. Just a trifle slower, please. I want to sink that bait a little deeper. I think most people fish too near the surface with a bait like that."

"I am afraid it's going to be a bad day," said Frank, with a glance toward the sky.

"It's a great morning for fishing, and I think it will clear up by and by."

Merry shook his head.

"It's going to rain," he said, positively. "Either that or I am no weather prophet."

"Well, now, I think myself something of a judge in regard to the weather, and I'll bet you ten dollars it won't rain to-day."

Merry laughed.

"If I were a betting man," he said, "I'd give you odds, Mr. Hatch."

"Don't you ever bet on anything?"

"It's against my principle."

"But occasionally you put your scruples aside and make a venture, I fancy?"

"I have made many ventures, but not betting. My ventures are of a different nature."

"Well, I rather like that in you," asserted Hatch. "Booh! It's decidedly chilly this morning. I think I will slip on my rain coat."

He did this, and his hand struck against something in one of the pockets of the coat as he was putting it on.

"Just the thing!" he exclaimed, producing a pint flask and unscrewing the top. "I thought I might need something of this sort to keep my blood stirring, and I slipped it into the rain coat. Here, Mr. Merriwell, take a swallow or two."

The flask was extended toward Frank.

"Excuse me," said Merry.

"What?"

"I don't need it."

"Oh, well, it won't hurt you, if you don't need it. It will take the numbness out of your bones and make you feel better."

"Nothing in the world could make me feel better, Mr. Hatch," laughed the youth. "I am confident that liquor is of very little use in making anyone feel better. It produces a temporary exhilaration that must be followed by a collapse, and the depression of the collapse more than offsets the exhilaration."

that you never take liquor under any circumstances."

"Although I didn't mean to infer such a thing," answered Frank, "it's a fact."

Warren Hatch paused with the flask in his hand and looked at his companion searchingly, an expression of doubt on his pale face.

"Come! come!" he said. "That's almost too much. In the city young men like you, who knock about the world, always drink a little, for there are times when they can't help it—times when they can't refuse without being impolite and offending."

"On the contrary, Mr. Hatch, I believe there is no time when a man who is known to be an abstainer may not refuse without impoliteness or offense. The moment he weakens and drinks with one man he's lost, for then follows the impoliteness if he refuses to drink with another man who is equally his friend."

"Now see here, Merriwell, do you mean to tell me in all seriousness that you are a total abstainer—a temperance crank?"

"I am not a crank. I would not interfere with you, Mr. Hatch, or with any other man who has his own ideas about drinking and maintains his self-respect. Drink as much as you like, and be sure you will receive no criticism from me. At the same time, you must acknowledge that there's a great difference in men. Some seem to be able to take the stuff when they want it and then let it alone. They can put it aside with perfect ease and apparently feel no craving for it. With other men it's quite different. They must let it alone entirely or it gets hold of them and makes them its slaves."

"Ah! I believe I understand you better!" nodded Hatch. "You're afraid of it. You have tried it and found that you can't handle it."

"On the contrary, sir, I am not in the least afraid of it. I have no reason to believe I can't handle it if I choose to drink it."

"Then why do you decline to drink?"

"I have a number of good reasons. To begin with, I am confident that it's weakening and demoralizing.

But even though I felt it might not harm me in the least, I should still decline to monkey with it."

"Why?"

"On account of the bad example I would set for others who might not have the same will power as myself and might not be able to handle the stuff as well. "Quite a little temperance lecture," said Hatch, with I have a brother. He's a clean, manly boy. I should a cough. "But I don't suppose you mean to infer hate to set him a bad example in any way. He believes that whatever I do is right. If I were to drink moderately, even though it were on rare occasions that I did so, in order not to set him a bad example I would have to play the hypocrite and keep the fact concealed from him. Never in all my life have I concealed anything from my brother, and between us there's absolute, open frankness."

> A peculiar look settled on the face of Warren Hatch. To his pale cheeks came a slight flush as of shame.

After a few moments' silence, he slowly said:

"I don't know but that you're right about this example business, Merriwell—in fact, I believe you are. I have a reason for thinking so. I have a boy of my own, and I don't care about setting him a bad example. These youngsters to-day are pretty shrewd, and they generally know what's doing. I have used whisky as a stimulant for a number of years, but in future I believe I will cut it down to medicinal use entirely."

Saying this, he replaced the cap on the flask and dropped it back into his pocket

Barely had he done this and taken the fishing rod from between his knees when there was a sudden jerk and the reel began to hum.

He struck instantly and shouted:

"Got him-got him fast!"

Frank checked the forward motion of the boat with several back strokes and swung it round, in order to give his companion full sweep in playing the fish.

Hatch began to work the reel, and in a moment a beautiful salmon leaped clear of the water at a considerable distance, giving the bait a jerk that caused both occupants of the boat to hear the rattle and ring of the spoons.

"He's a dandy!" exclaimed Frank.

Four times in rapid succession the fish leaped from the water in his frantic efforts to free himself from the hook.

"You can't do it, my boy!" exclaimed Hatch, in triumphant delight.

Next the salmon cut swiftly through the water, turning first one way and then another. Every time Little by little he brought the fighting fish nearer the boat.

Frank kept the boat in the proper position for his companion to play the fish with all the skill he possessed. At last the salmon was quite near the boat, although still fighting for liberty.

Merry got the landing net ready.

"You will have to tire him a little more, Mr. Hatch," he said. "He's too lively now. Wear him out."

Hatch kept the fish struggling for several minutes longer, at last bringing it close to the side of the boat.

Frank made a skillful dip with the net and lifted the salmon from the water, although it jumped and attempted to get clear in a last desperate effort at selfpreservation.

"Well done, Mr. Hatch!" said Merry, as the handsome fish lay flopping in the bottom of the boat. "That was real sport."

"You helped me, Merriwell. I have been out here before now, with a duffer at the oars, and had him bother me by handling the boat awkwardly. We'll have salmon for breakfast this morning. Just think of Bragg snoring away back there like the lazy beast he is! Just think of Old Gripper refusing to fish under any circumstances!"

"They don't know what they are missing. Perhaps it's a good thing we're not all equally interested in fishing, for the fish might become scarce if we were."

"Here, let me take those ears. You try your hand at it."

"No; I will try my hand without relinquishing the oars. It won't be the first time I've done it."

"But you can't row and fish at the same time."

"Can't I?"

"Can you?"

"I can try it," laughed Merry, as he secured a minnow and prepared his bait.

It was soon ready, and he dropped the bait over on one side, releasing the catch on his reel. Then, as he once more pulled at the oars, the line slowly ran out.

Within ten minutes Merry dropped the oars and clutched his rod, giving a sharp jerk.

"Did you nail him?" exclaimed Hatch, excitedly.

"What do you think?" asked Frank, as the reel hummed.

"Got him, Merriwell!" shouted the excited man.

the line slackened a little Hatch deftly reeled it in. "Now let's see what you can do! Now show your skill! I'll bet mine is the larger fish."

> Frank stood up in the middle of the boat, playing his fish. Almost immediately he observed:

> "He weighs at least three-fourths of a pound more than yours, Mr. Hatch."

"How do you know?".

The fish broke water, jumping high in the air.

"I was going to say I could tell its weight by the scales on him," said Merry, laughingly, "but it's another salmon, and I'll take that back. He's a beauty, Mr. Hatch. There he comes again."

"Great Cæsar!" cried Hatch, as the fish once more leaped from the water and shook the spoons with a musical, jingling sound. "Isn't this the real thing? Easy, Merriwell—easy! Play him, my boy—play him! Lord save you, don't lose him! That's the way! Give him a little line! Now take him in! That reel doesn't work as well as mine. I am ashamed of myself-by Jove, I am! I should have given you my tackle. That's the way to do it—that's the way! Ah-ha! isn't he a sassy feller? Isn't he lively? Isn't he fierce?"

Warren Hatch literally palpitated with the excitement of it as Frank worked with the frantic fish. It was no easy task to handle that salmon properly, for he resorted to all the tricks of his kind in order to break free from the hook. Even when close to the boat, he jumped high out of the water, after making a sudden dash, and his shining body shone like silver in the gray morning light.

"Steady, my boy!" hissed Hatch, who was ready with the landing net. "He's still got plenty of ginger. You will have to wear him out a little."

Merry kept the salmon moving until the handsome fellow was pretty well exhausted. He then brought it close to the boat, causing Hatch to utter various exclamations as he saw the full bigness of the finny beauty.

Quivering with the excitement of it, Hatch attempted to land Frank's catch, but, as he thrust the net beneath the fish and lifted it, the big fellow gave a spring that carried him clear of both net and hook. He would have fallen back into the water and escaped; but, like a flash, Frank struck with his left hand and knocked the salmon into the bottom of the boat.

"That was a close call," said Merry,

"Goodness! goodness!" panted Hatch. "I thought he was gone! You were quicker'n lightning, Merriwell. You saved him. Look at him, boy-just look at him! Why, he must weigh two rounds more than mine! Merriwell, you're all right! You're a sportsman, and you're a jolly good fellow! You can count me into that railroad deal right up to the last loose dollar I have!"

Frank had won Warren Hatch without again referring to the business that had brought him up there into the Adirondacks.

# CHAPTER IV.

WHAT HAPPENED TO WATSON SCOTT.

For all of the evidence placed before him, for all of the arguments brought to bear, for all that he seemed partly persuaded, Warren Hatch had retired after that long night's session at his cottage in an uncertain frame of mind.

Merriwell had felt this to be the case.

Frank did not sleep immediately on turning in, but lay some time considering in what manner Hatch might best be nailed. Only for Old Gripper's strong determination to angle the man into the deal, Frank might have felt it better to cease dallying with Hatch. He knew, however, that Watson Scott had chosen his associates with care and was not a person to make a mistake in his selections.

Before sleeping Merry decided that he would not fail to rise early enough to go fishing with Hatch in the morning.

Having settled this thing in his mind, he considered the hour at which Hatch would start and commanded himself to awaken at that hour, in order that he might not oversleep.

Now, by constant training, Frank had acquired a peculiar faculty. With him, under any circumstances, an alarm clock was not a necessity. Simply by fixing his mind on the hour at which he wished to awaken, by having this in his mind the last thing before he went to sleep, and by commanding himself to awaken, he accomplished his purpose. No matter what the hour decided on, were it one, two, three, four, or five o'clock in the morning, without fail he awoke within five or ten minutes of that time.

Although greatly tired by what he had passed through during the last few days, Frank awakened in time to join Hatch, and, as we have seen, without once referring to the business that had taken him to Lake Placid, he won his companion over.

"I don't think you will regret your decision, Mr. Hatch," he said.

"Somehow I feel sure I will not regret it. Since meeting you, since getting an insight into your character, I have arrived at that conclusion. You're level-headed, Merriwell, and you're about the finest specimen of the young American of to-day it has been my fortune to meet."

"Your frankness embarrasses me," laughed Merry.

"And it surprises me," said Hatch. "I am not often given to throwing bouquets at anyone. I don't know just why I talk this way to you. Somehow the fact that you are perfectly open and aboveboard leads me to be the same. It's a rare thing in this day that we meet a man who seems to have nothing to conceal. In the game of business we listen to a man, hear his statements, and try to decide what he has hidden up his sleeve. That's the principal trick in the game as it's usually played. You don't seem to play the game that way."

"I don't think it necessary, sir, to resort to underhand methods, and I never try trickery unless absolutely forced into it by others. I confess to you, Mr. IIatch, that I wondered greatly over Mr. Scott's determination to hold you to your first agreement."

Hatch looked somewhat embarrassed.

"I presume you wondered what led me to change my mind. I didn't tell you last night, for it was late and I was tired. Of course I believed from the start that Scott was sincere, and I knew it was not an easy thing for anyone to mislead him. At the same time I had been approached by parties who tried to demonstrate, and seemed to demonstrate, that your whole scheme was based on a mighty shaky foundation. You were represented as a hot-headed, foolhardy, reckless chap, who plunged into schemes of this sort and sometimes won through sheer luck and brazen boldness. I conceived you to be something entirely different than you are. I am very glad my eyes have been opened to your true character, Merriwell. Instead of being reckless and foolhardy, instead of being a headstrong plunger, I am inclined to think you are level-headed, careful, and with plenty of good judgment and shrewdness, yet with determination and will power that leads you to fight to the last gasp for your rights and has caused others to think you reckless. But there was still another reason why. I was practically persuaded to withdraw from your project. I was offered inducements—powerful inducements to take part in the enterprise of your antagonists."

"I thought it likely," nodded Merry.

"They did make it seem as if the foundation on which they are building is safer than that on which you rely. Consideration of the evidence placed before me by you last night, however, has produced in me a change of heart."

"In which case," smiled Merry, "Porfias del Norte

has been completely baffled."

"There was another thing that led me to consider Del Norte's case as pretty desperate. It was the fact "Look here," said Hatch, "I want you to come here that he was reckless enough to attempt by such unlawful means to prevent you from reaching Lake Placid. For the first time, my eyes were opened to the fact that he is a lawbreaker. It's up to you, Merriwell, to I don't fancy he really intended to murder you. No, you I appreciate the favor." thing."

"I think, Mr. Hatch, that you do not yet comprehend the full extent of that man's villainy. In certain parts of Mexico the law is lax and poorly enforced. In this region Del Norte might triumph over an antagonist by destroying him and might escape punishment for his crime. I don't believe he realizes the peril of such a method in this country."

"Well, you can make him realize it. You can have him arrested and make him answer for his actions. I presume you will do so."

"That's my intention. He has now committed crimes punishable by law in the State of Maine and in the State of New York. I shall swear out a warrant for his arrest and employ officers to run him down."

"That's the talk—that's the talk, my boy! That's the proper method. I presume you will go about it at once."

"To-day."

"Having fizzled in his efforts to block you, I believe he will lose little time in getting out of this country. Unless you move quickly, he will slip you."

"I'm going into Newman this morning.

Hatch looked at his watch.

"You've still plenty of time. We can fish a while longer and have breakfast before you leave for Newman."

They continued fishing for some time, making several catches by trolling.

After a while Hatch suggested trying a little fly fishing nearer shore, and he rearranged their tackle, while Merry pulled in toward the eastern bank of the

"No rain yet," said Hatch.

"But those clouds are full of rain," declared Frank. "It will come later."

Arriving near the shore, they began casting, and in a few moments Hatch discovered that Merriwell could drop a fly most anywhere he chose and could cast a marvelous distance.

fishing with me often."

"I doubt if I will have many opportunities," smiled Frank. "It's liable to be a long time after this before I again see Lake Placid. My business will prevent it. make him smart for that piece of business. Of course I thank you just the same, Mr. Hatch, and I assure

no; that's too much. He wouldn't dare do such a "No favor at all. It's a pleasure. Ha! you have him."

> Merriwell had obtained a strike, and he soon landed a huge bass.

> Hatch hooked and captured another a few moments later.

While they were thus engaged they were a little surprised to hear a hail from the shore and, looking up, they beheld Old Gripper standing on the bank, smoking a corncob pipe as he watched them.

"Merriwell seems to be quite a fisherman," said

Scott.

"That's right," agreed Hatch. "He's the greatest fisherman I know. He's landed me this morning."

"How's that?"

"I am into that railroad deal clear up to my neck. Merriwell did it."

Something like a grim smile flitted over the face of Old Gripper.

"You don't mean to say he did it with that rod and tackle?"

"Well, practically so."

"If that's the case," said Scott, "I will never again make the statement that fishing is an idle occupation and waste of time."

After watching them a few moments longer, Old Gripper turned and disappeared into the woods, leaving a trail of gray smoke behind him.

The two fishermen continued to enjoy the sport until Hatch decided that they must get back to the cottage for breakfast.

Frank sent the boat flying down the lake.

The smoke was rising heavily from the cottage chimney as they came in sight of it. In the open doorway stood Sudbury Bragg, stretching his thick arms and yawning sleepily.

"You have both missed your beauty sleep," he declared, as the boat touched the gravelly bank with a grating sound. "I wouldn't be up now if Joe hadn't told me I'd miss breakfast."

Joe was Hatch's man of all work about the cottage, and he slept in a little low building near at hand.

"Don't tell us we've missed anything!" cried Hatch, holding up two of the finest salmon.

"But you've broken the law," declared Bragg.
"You've been fishing in closed time."

Hatch laughed and nodded with a cough.

"Don't talk to me about breaking the law up here," he retorted. "I fish any time I choose, and nobody makes a fuss over it."

"I should think some of those cottagers at the settlement down below might raise a kick."

"They never do. Send Joe out here and tell him we want fish for breakfast. If he's counted on feeding us with bacon and eggs or something like that, he'll have to change his bill of fare. Salmon right out of the water are poor enough for us."

Joe came hurrying down to the boat and received his orders from Hatch.

"Has Scott returned?" asked the owner of the cottage, as he and Frank sat down on the veranda.

"Don't know anything about him," answered Bragg.
"He was up before me and went out prowling around somewhere."

"Listen!" exclaimed Merry. "Did you hear that?" From a distance to the north came the distinct sound of a single shot.

"We saw Scott up that way," said Bragg; "but I didn't know he carried a pistol. He must have fired then. What's he doing? What did he shoot at?"

The shot gave them a topic of conversation, but after a while they began to wonder why Old Gripper did not return.

The sound of sizzling fat came from the cook room, and the odor of frying fish and boiling coffee made them ravenous.

"If Scott thinks we're going to wait for him he fools himself!" cried Hatch. "I will starve in another ten minutes. Always get a ravenous appetite as soon as I strike this place. In the city I can't eat anything.

A cup of coffee is all the breakfast I take, and Mrs. Hatch declares my food wouldn't keep a humming bird alive. Hey, Joe!"

"Yes, sir," answered Joe, from the cook room.

"Serve breakfast as soon as those fish are ready."

"All right, sir."

Five minutes later Toe called them to breakfast.

Although Merry ate heartily, his face wore a somewhat troubled look.

"I don't like this business," he finally declared. "I wish Mr. Scott would show up."

"He'll come pudging in about the time we finish," said Hatch. "Hold on, Bragg, leave something for me. I thought I had a good appetite, but yours is a wonder."

"Always eat well," grunted Bragg. "Good digestion."

Breakfast was over and still Watson Scott had not returned.

"I don't like this," Merriwell again asserted, as he stood on the veranda and gazed frowningly at the deep woods which lined the eastern shore of the lake. "Something may have happened to Mr. Scott."

"What could happen?"

"Perhaps he's lost his way. Perhaps that shot was a signal. I think I will answer it."

He drew the revolver given him the night before by O'Tool and discharged six shots in the air.

After this he listened long and vainly for an answer. "I think it's up to us to go out and look for Mr. Scott," he said.

"Not me," grunted Bragg. "I'll never flounder around through those woods."

Merry broke open his revolver and threw out the empty shells, refilling the cylinder from a box of cartridges he had found in the cottage.

"What do you say, Mr. Hatch?" he asked.

"Wait a minute till I get a gun and I'll be with you."

A few moments later Mr. Hatch reissued from the cottage, carrying a rifle.

"All right," he said; "come on."

"Is there another rifle or pistol in the cottage?" asked Merry.

"Yes; Joe has a rifle."

"Then call Joe."

Joe appeared in answer to his employer's call.

"Joe," said Merry, "in case we do not return within an hour, take your rifle and fire shots at intervals

from the veranda here. I am not expecting we'll get lost up there; but Mr. Scott may be wandering around somewhere, and the shooting may aid him in returning here. If he does return, shoot six time rapidly and we will know he's back."

"All right, sir," said Joe. "Depend on me, sir."

Not long after striking into the woods, Hatch found Merriwell making the pace altogether too swift.

"I am no rough-ground sprinter," he said. "You will have to ease up a little, my boy."

"I beg your pardon. In my anxiety I forgot about you, Mr. Hatch. We will go slow."

They finally came to the point on the shore where Watson Scott had appeared and hailed them. Merry surveyed the ground and soon discovered Scott's tracks.

"Here's where he turned into the woods," said Frank. "We will follow him."

"How are you going to follow him?"

"Leave that to me. I think I can do it."

Hatch shook his head doubtfully.

After a few minutes, however, his doubts began to vanish.

"See here," he said, "do you mean to tell me you're following Scott's tracks?"

"Yes, sir."

"How can you do it? I don't see any tracks."

"The fault is in your training or your lack of training," declared Merry. "The trail is here."

"I wish you'd point it out to me."

"See that bent bush?"

"Yes."

"It's not in a natural position. It has been pushed to one side, and did not spring back into its usual place. Yonder is a fresh-broken twig. Here on the ground you see a bit of moss that was knocked from this stone by a man's boot; and here on the top of this stone are some scratches made by the nails of a man's boot, which was planted on it and slipped as he stepped over."

"Great Cæsar!" cried Hatch. "All these things are as you say, but I swear I'd never see them in the world if you didn't point them out."

"Look here," said Merry, pointing to a soft bit of ground, from which the thick trees had excluded the warm autumn sunshine. "Here is the print of a man's foot. You can see the outlines plainly."

"I am convinced," confessed Hatch. "Go ahead,

Merriwell, and I'll follow you. Why, hang it! you're an Indian on a trail!"

"There's nothing so very difficult about it when one has learned the method," asserted Merriwell.

Three minutes later he stopped short, uttering a stifled exclamation. Putting out his arm, he checked his companion.

"Stand where you are," he said, in a tone of voice that startled Hatch.

"What's the matter? Is there any trouble? Any danger?"

"I want to find out what happened here."

"Why, what do you think has happened?"

"I will tell you in a few minutes," said Frank. "But I don't want you to destroy the signs."

They had reached a little opening that was surrounded by dense thickets. Merriwell advanced into that opening with the greatest caution, apparently taking pains to plant his feet carefully in order not to destroy certain signs he had discovered on the ground. Halting in a moment, he bent low, and his searching eyes ran over the ground, while Warren Hatch watched him in great surprise. Hatch saw the expression on the face of the youth change and harden. He saw Merriwell's jaws become rigid and set. He saw fire flash in the young man's eyes.

At length Frank straightened up and turned to his companion.

"Mr. Hatch," he said, in a tone of voice that told of the repressed excitement he felt. "There has been the devil's own work here."

"What is it? What is it?" palpitated Hatch.

"Mr. Scott was attacked here by four men. He was assaulted suddenly and struck down. The blow rendered him unconscious or helpless."

"What! what!" gasped Hatch. "What's this your telling me, Merriwell?"

"I'm telling you the truth, sir; nothing more."

"But such a thing is impossible! Such a thing couldn't happen!",

"It has happened."

"How do you know it? How can you tell?"

"The signs prove it. One of the men was hidden behind that thick cluster of bushes and sprang out behind Scott as he passed. He struck Scott over the head with a club. The club lies there where it was dropped. See it?"

"I see it."

"Two other men came from that side, and the fourth

was hidden yonder directly ahead of Scott, who would have stumbled over him had he kept on."

"I can't see how you make that out."

"The ground is soft enough here to show their tracks. Come here. You can see the footprint there."

"I see it; but it may have been made by Scott himself."

"No, Watson Scott wears number nine boots, at toed and broad of heel. This other footprint is that of a man who wears not larger than a seven, but has pointed toes and a narrow heel."

Hatch was quivering with excitement now.

"You're right," he confessed.

"And here are the marks which indicate two more sprang in from the opposite side. It may be you can't make them out, but here they are. The other came in on the run, for his toes pressed deep into the ground, while his heels scarcely made a mark. They flung themselves on Scott right here. You can see that a heavy body fell on this very spot."

"My God, Merriwell! this is terrible! How could anyone dare commit such a deed?"

"You must realize now, Mr. Hatch, that my enemies are desperate enough to do almost anything. Wait a minute until I look further. Yes, here is evidence that they lifted Scott bodily and carried him away. Their tracks show plainly, made more distinct by the additional weight each man bore."

Frank's wonderful eyes discovered something just within the edge of the bushes. With a bound, he reached it and caught it up.

"This is enough!" he said. "Here is the final piece of evidence. Here is Watson Scott's hat, with the crown crushed and torn."

"It's his hat beyond question," confessed Hatch, whose pale face was even paler than usual. "What can we do? What will you do?"

"We will follow those men!" declared Merriwell. "And pray Heaven your judgment was right about the weather and no rain falls to obliterate the trail!"

### CHAPTER V.

### THE SPORTSMAN MEETS HIS MATCH.

Between the east and west branches of the Ausable River and somewhat to the southeast of White Face Mountain, which rears its bold, gleaming dome, upthrust from its lower wooded slopes, to a height of

four thousand eight hundred and seventy-one feet, lies a wild and rugged region, thickly wooded and almost impassable in spots.

Through the thickest portion of a dense forest ran a few faint paths, which might have been made by deer or other animals, or possibly by human beings.

At high noon on a sunshiny day the shadows were dense in the thickets of these regions. Whenever it least. Here is his footprint. You can see it's square- was cloudy and overcast the gloom of the jungle-like forest could not be penetrated to any considerable distance by human eyes.

> On a lowery, cloudy day a man dressed in clothes which seemed to proclaim him an amateur sportsman stood beneath a thick pine near one of the paths which ran down into a small valley. Within reach of his hand a Winchester rifle stood leaning against the tree trunk. He was smoking a cigar, and his face wore an expression of impatience and disgust.

> "This is getting mighty tiresome," he muttered. "I am starving to death, and I am on my last cigar. It's long past noon. Why in thunder don't they send some one up here to take my place? This business of guarding the path is all rot anyhow. Who could follow us here? If they don't relieve me pretty soon, I'll quit of my own accord and go after a square feed. I have been expecting for the last two hours that it would rain. If they think I'm going to stand up here in the rain and get soaked, they are mightily mistaken. With the first sprinkle I shall prance down there and express my mind."

> Suddenly he paused and listened to a strange, mournful sound which came echoing through the woods from a great distance. There was music in that sound-music doleful, and yet thrilling.

> "Some one running a deer with dogs!" exclaimed the solitary man. "It's against the law, and the owner of those dogs is liable to get into a lot of trouble."

At first the baying of the hound was very faint, but for a brief time it grew more and more distinct, after which it seemed to recede again and finally died away until the listener could barely hear at intervals a faint murmur of it.

"Didn't know but the dogs were going to put that deer down through here," said the man. "Suppose I should have made myself liable if I'd shot the creature in front of the hounds."

He relapsed into silence and shivered a little, for the damp air was chilling and depressing. The foliage of the forest was moist almost to the point of dripping.

This moisture seemed to awaken and arouse the many pronounced odors of the forest, and at intervals the sportsman held his cigar to leeward and inhaled a deep breath.

It was very still and lonely there. No bird flitted through the gloom, and from out the depths issued no sound of chattering squirrel. The silence was somewhat wearing on the man's nerves.

Suddenly he started a bit, for his ears had detected a sound like the snapping of a twig. Reaching out quickly, he grasped his rifle and lifted it, stooping to peer into the dense shadows. He wondered what wild thing might be moving there.

Not a sound did he make, and for some moments he scarcely breathed.

Having stood there so long, his eyes had become accustomed to the gloom, and soon he detected a slight motion of the foliage and caught a glimpse of a dark, moving figure.

Pressing on the trigger to prevent a clicking sound, he cocked the gun.

A moment the dark figure seemed to pause, and then it came silently along the almost indiscernible path.

Directly the man with the rifle saw the figure plainly, and a thrill of surprise shot over him, for it was that of a man. This man was somewhat bent and round-shouldered, and in his hand he carried a rifle. His clothes were rough and serviceable, the trousers being thrust into the high legs of heavy boots. The old slouch hat he wore came down over his face, which seemed tanned and grimy with dirt, as if the man had not washed for many days.

"This must be one of the native deer slaughterers we hear about," thought the sportsman. "He's bound down into the valley. I have orders to keep anyone out of there."

With the rifle half lifted and held ready for use, the sportsman hailed the stranger.

"Hello, you!" he cried. "What are you doing?"

"Hey?" said the other, starting a little and turning toward the one who had uttered this question. "What be you doing?"

"Looking for deer," was the declaration, "and I came mighty near putting a bullet into you when you sneaked down the path."

"Oh, ye did, hey?"

"Yes, I did."

"I guess, by jinks, you're one o' them ere city fellers that come up here every year and shoot folks! They

oughter put the hull kaboodle of yer in a cage and keep firearms out of yer reach."

The stranger uttered these words in a tone of pronounced indignation.

"That's what you think," retorted the sportsman.
"But there are others who say chaps like you, who make a business of slaughtering deer, should all be sent to the penitentiary."

"Who you speakin' of now, mister?" demanded the man, with an expression of indignation, as he advanced.

He had a youthful face, yet it was most peculiar in its expression, the under jaw being twisted to one side, while the mouth was drawn down at one corner and up at the other. His eyes were partly closed, and they seemed dull and lifeless.

"Hold on!" commanded the sportsman, lifting the muzzle of his rifle a little so that it pointed at the breast of the other. "Stop where you are."

"Be keerful with that gun, mister!" snapped the new arrival. "I don't want to attend my own funeral tomorrer."

"Well, you may attend it if you try any funny business here."

"Who's trying any funny business? You're the one, if anyone is, by jinks!"

"What do you want?"

"What der you want? I was goin' along bout my business, and you stopped me—kinder held me right up short."

"What's your business?"

"That ain't none of your business, I vum!"

"Perhaps not; but you'll have to explain before, you get past me."

"Well, hey? Well, hey? I'll have ter explain ter ye, will I?"

The stranger seemed to be growing more indignant. His twisted jaw twitched a little and his eyelids narrowed to a thin slit.

"Yes, you will."

"I'd like ter know why I should. Do you own this country? How can you stop anybody from going where they want to? That's what I'd like ter know."

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"I can stop you because I happen to have the advantage."

"Yer think yer do."

"I know I do."

"Haow der yer make it out, mister?"

"My rifle is cocked and ready. I couldn't miss you at this distance if I tried."

"Dunno bout that. You city fellers generally miss, no matter what the distance is. I saw one over ter Jay last week that fired at a shingle on a barn and missed the whole broad side of the building. He shet both eyes tight and yanked so hard at the trigger that he mighty near shot off his big toe when he pulled the muzzle of his gun down."

"Well, you will find I don't shoot that way. Now will you explain your business? If you don't care to explain, you'd better turn your face and get out of here in a hurry."

"Think I'd better run, do you, Mr. Lord-of-all-creation? Think I'd better skedaddle, do yer? Now let's argue that p'int a leetle. Let's kinder talk it over. What right have you got ter tell me to turn round and skedaddle? I was poking along, 'tending ter my own business, when you up and stopped me."

Once more in the distance sounded the faint braying of hounds. The stranger cocked his head and listened, a queer expression of eagerness on his twisted face.

"Now I know what you are," said the sportsman. . rough fellow. "What do you take me for?" "Those are your dogs. You're dogging deer. That's a mighty bad business."

"You're jest right it is," admitted the other; "but I've seen city fellers who have come up here and done

"That's no excuse. If I were to enter a complaint against you, you would find the game warden hot after you."

"He! he!" laughed the rough chap. "I don't think you will enter no complaint. If my business happens to be dogging deer, mebbe your business is jest as bad. Naow can you honestly say that your business is square and legitimate? Kin yer say there ain't nothing unlawful brought yer and set yer watchin' this path?"

"What do you mean?" asked the sportsman, showing a trace of alarm.

"He! he!" laughed the other, once more, as he advanced another step. "I dunno jest what I do mean, but from your 'pearance I should judge I'd touched yer up some."

"I can't waste my breath on you. Stop, sir! You're coming too near. Just turn back on your tracks and dig out of this."

"If I don't-"

"If you don't you'll be sorry."

"I guess yer purty sot about that. I dunno as I keer abaout goin' daown this way no further, so it don't make much difference. But I'd kinder like a chaw of tobaccy."

"I have no tobacco."

"You have been smoking?"

"That was my last cigar."

"Say, I think yer a leetle bit tight with your tobaccy and cigars."

All this time the stranger had been edging nearer and nearer. He was holding his rifle carelessly by his side; but now, of a sudden, he made a spring, and with the barrel of his own weapon he knocked the muzzle of the other rifle to one side. In a twinkling he had the sportsman by the neck. With astonishing strength, he pinned the man against the tree trunk.

"Goin' ter shoot me, was yer?" he snarled. "Guarding this path, was yer? I guess I know why you was guarding it. I heerd yer dorgs over yender. You can't fool Seth Brown none, mister. I have ketched yer, and you will smart fer it."

"Let go, you lunatic!" gasped the sportsman, who found himself struggling in vain in the clutch of the

"I take yer fer jest what you be, one o' them chaps that come up here and dorg deer. Seth Brown don't make no mistakes."

"Are you Seth Brown?"

"That's my name, by jinks!"

"And you're the game warden?"

"I am the deputy."

"Then you're making a fool of yourself for fair. I am not dogging deer."

"You will have to prove it, mister. Where be the rest of your crowd? You ain't here alone, so don't tell me you are. You and your gang has been running deer with dorgs around here for the last three days. I heerd about it over to Jay, and I made up my mind I'd come purty nigh stopping it."

By this time the sportsman was satisfied that he had fallen into the hands of one of the game officials, and now he did his best to convince the man he was in no way concerned in the hunting of deer with dogs.

"You'll have ter prove it," said Seth Brown, grimly. "You take me daown to where you are camping. I kin tell if there's been any dorgs around there. smell um, same as a fox smells a chicken."

It was useless for the sportsman to argue and protest. He soon decided that his arguments and protes-

tations simply served to increase the suspicion of the deputy and make him more determined to carry out his investigations.

Brown took the sportsman's rifle and searched him for other weapons, finding only a gun and hunting knife.

"What's your name?" he asked.

"John Ridgeway."

"Well, Mr. Ridgeway, jest you march ahead of me daown this path, and don't try no funny business. If you should jump and run I'd have to shoot you in order to do my duty, and Seth Brown allus does his duty, by jinks! I am goin' daown ter see the rest of your fellers, and there hadn't better none of um make a fuss. If you're all honest abaout this dorgging business and you ain't doin' any of it, there won't be no trouble. So the best thing for you to do is to be soople and submissive."

By this time Ridgeway had decided that it was indeed best to submit. He was both ashamed and disgusted because he had been tricked and captured single-handed by the deputy, but there was nothing for it now save to obey orders.

low; but you won't find any dogs with them, and have trouble." you're making an ass of yourself."

"I kin afford to. I'm paid to do my duty, and I intend to earn my pay. Go ahead."

So Ridgeway led on down the path into the valley, with Seth Brown at his heels.

### CHAPTER VI.

### THE HUT IN THE WOODS.

Down in the darkest part of the valley, near a crystal-clear spring, stood an old log hut. Apparently the hut had been constructed many years before and had long been abandoned.

Ridgeway's two companions, Porter Doyle and Jordan Sears, were at this hut when the captive sportsman came walking shamefacedly out of the thicket, with Seth Brown at his heels, bearing both rifles.

"What the dickens does this mean?" exclaimed Sears, who was standing in the doorway to the hut. "Look here, Doyle-see this!"

He stepped aside and Doyle appeared.

"Great blazes!" exclaimed Doyle. "Who is that fellow with Ridgeway?"

"Tough-looking chap, and he has both revolvers."

Doyle reached back into the hut and picked up his own rifle, stepping out quickly with it in his hands.

As he did so, Seth Brown thrust the muzzle of one of the weapons he carried over the shoulder of Ridgeway, with it pointed straight at Doyle's heart.

"Jest drop that gun, mister!" he cried, sharply and commandingly. "If you get frisky, I will drop you!"

He was protected by Ridgeway's body, and Doyle could not shoot without endangering his friend.

"What's the meaning of this, Ridgeway?" demanded Sears.

"It's all right," Ridgeway hastened to say. "This man is a game official. He thinks we've been dogging deer, and he's here to investigate. I fancy we can soon convince him of his mistake, so put down your rifle, Doyle. There's no need of trouble."

Doyle hesitated only a moment. With a short laugh, he turned and stood the butt of the rifle on the ground, leaning it against the hut.

"If that's what he's after, he's making a jackass of himself."

"Exactly what I told him," agreed Ridgeway.

"If you fellers is so mighty innocent," said Brown, "All right," he said. "I have some friends down be- "there ain't no reason in the world why we should

> Still he seemed prepared for trouble and keenly on the alert as he advanced. In case they were bluffing, he was not to be taken off his guard.

> "He has your rifle, Jack," said Sears. "How did he get possession of that?"

> . "I didn't want to shoot him down," Ridgeway hastened to explain, "and, therefore, I let him get too close. He jumped at me and caught me off my guard."

> "Mighty bad business if he had been some one else," muttered Doyle. "It's a good thing he's only a game warden."

The three men were indignant, but they repressed their feelings and invited Brown to go ahead and investigate as much as he liked.

Brown asked them a lot of questions. He led them to state that they were there for the purpose of shooting, caused them to tell how long they had been in the woods, where they were from and a host of other things.

All these questions were answered by Sears, who seemed rather more quick-witted than his two friends.

"Well, boys," said Brown, "you tell a purty straight yarn and mebbe I've made a mistake. If I have there ain't no damage done, I guess. P'rhaps I've dam-

aged Mr. Ridgeway's dignity, but if I have I'm sorry. I'll jest poke round a leetle and see if there's any traces of dorgs."

As he began to "poke round" his nose took on a peculiar wrinkle, and he seemed sniffing the air, as if he were able to smell "traces of dorgs." After a few moments, he entered the hut.

Barely had he disappeared when Sears hastened to whisper to his two companions:

we're really sportsmen and nothing else. When he finds we have no dogs, his suspicions will come to an end and we can get rid of him in a short time. We must avoid further trouble with him."

To this the others agreed.

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Pretty soon Brown came sauntering out of the cabin.

"I guess that's all right, boys," he said, with a peculiar, twisting grin. "I made a mistake. There ain't been no dorgs around this place, but you don't seem to have much provisions here. Is this where you're making your headquarters?"

"For the present," answered Sears.

"Be you three all there is in the party?"

"Well-no-not exactly. Of course, we've a guide."

"Who is he?"

"Joe Davis."

"That so? I know Joe. Where is he now?"

"He's gone to bring in our outfit. Expect him back by nightfall. Two of our party are with him."

"Well, that's all straight and satisfactory," said Brown. "I guess sure enough that it's another party that's dorgging deer. Well, they won't do much more of it to-day, for she's beginning to rain now, by ginger!"

It was true raindrops were pattering overhead.

"It may be only a shower," said Doyle.

Brown shook his head.

"I am afeared it's going ter be a reg'lar downpour, gents. This thing has been coming on all day, and naow she's come."

"You're liable to get wet."

"It wouldn't be the fust time, but I guess I'll hang up here a while. Of course, this may be only a shower, though I'm afeared it's set in for a good, long spell of weather."

The three men exchanged glances. Brown was not a welcome addition, but they thought it would not do to appear too eager to get rid of him.

The rain came on more heavily. All retired into the hut, which had only one room. Brown sat down on the ground near the open door.

"I kinder thought them dorgs I heerd a while ago was goin' ter run a deer daown this way," he said, "an' that's how I was clippin' in to head 'em off. I'd a let them gone and watched for their owners. Well, jest hear that! So help me, they are running naow. I swanny I don't understand it if it's raining over yen-"Better be friendly with this fellow. He thinks der, for they can't keep it up long arter the ground gits damp."

> From far away came again the faint baying of hounds on the scent.

> "That makes it seem like this is a shower," said the deputy. "Mebbe the rain cloud is over us and it doesn't reach very fur."

> Brown continued to listen, with his ear cocked toward the open door, until the sound of the dogs again died away.

> By the way of making conversation, the three sportsmen questioned him about his business, and he seemed to answer them freely. He told how he had captured a well-known and dangerous poacher a week before.

"That was a clever piece of business," said Sears. "A man like that wouldn't hesitate to kill an officer." .

"Not a dinged bit more'n he'd hesitate ter kill a fly," said Brown, as he rose and changed his position.

He stumbled over and upset a jug.

"Look out!" cried Doyle. "We don't want to spill that stuff."

"Hey?" said the deputy, pricking up his ears and regarding the jug with interest. "Got a leetle something ter drink, have yer? Well, I should think you'd be polite."

Sears laughed.

"Help yourself," he invited.

"Thank yer," chuckled Brown, grasping the jug and taking a new seat on the ground, with his back against the wall. "Don't keer if I do."

He withdrew the stopper and smelled of it, a comical look of satisfaction coming to his distorted face.

"You city fellers generally have good stuff," he said. "Here's lookin' at yer."

Just as he flung the jug over his arm and started to lift it the baying of the hounds seemed to break forth with distinctness. All three of the sportsmen turned toward the door and listened.

"They do seem to be coming this way," said Ridgeway. "You may find your oportunity yet, officer."

As they turned back Brown was lowering the jug from his lips, which he wiped on his coat sleeve.

"Ah-h-h-h!" he said. "That's all right. I won't git no chance if this rain doesn't let up purty soon. Everybody have something on me now."

He passed the jug, and the others tipped it in turn, each taking a little.

That drink seemed to unlimber Brown's tongue and make him very loquacious. He chattered away in a peculiar manner, relating story after story and pausing between each one to reach for the jug.

"That's what you might call nerve," muttered Ridgeway. "He seems to think he owns that stuff, and he even invites us to drink."

Sears shifted his position and found an opportunity to whisper to Ridgeway, while Brown was relating an anecdote.

"Let him drink," said Sears. "It will dull his wits and fix him so there will be little probability of trouble from him. It will be a good thing for us if he gets well soaked with the booze."

After that Ridgeway encouraged the deputy to resort to the jug, and Brown seemed to need very little encouragement.

Three or four times the baying of the dogs was heard by the men in the hut, but the animals seemed to draw near and then recede.

Rain continued to fall steadily. It dropped from the trees and pattered on the roof of the hut, soon discovering a spot through which it percolated, finally running in a tiny stream.

"Mighty good thing I found you fellers," said Brown. "If I'm goin' ter get wet ter the hide outside, I want ter be good and damp inside. Here's lookin' at yer ag'in, boys."

Up went the jug. It was tilted scientifically on the man's arm, and from his throat came a gurgling sound, while his twisted face wore an expression of dull satisfaction and his eyes were closed.

"A little more of that," said Ridgeway, "and he'll be loaded to the guards. He'll never get away from here to-day."

"In which case," whispered Sears, "we'll leave him here to snooze it off as soon as the others show up.

Del Norte should be here now."

Brown seemed to feel very happy. He invited them to sing, and when they declined he offered to do so himself. In a strange, cracked, unmusical voice he sang "Sweet Rosy O'Grady." Toward the end of it he faltered and his head began to droop. He seemed to forget the words and finally came to a mumbling halt, while he lurched to one side.

"'Cuse me, gents," he said, thickly. "Been tramping las' three days. Almighty tired; almighty sleepy.

Leetle nap'll do me good."

Fumblingly he pulled on his hat, promptly dragging it down over his eyes.

A moment later he rolled over on his side and lay there, breathing heavily, his crooked mouth open. The expression on his face was little short of idiotic.

"Down and out," said Doyle. "He's dead to the world."

"Any hard bread and cheese left?" asked Ridgeway.
"I am about starved. Why in blazes didn't one of you come up and relieve me? Didn't you know I was hungry?"

"We've been waiting for Del Norte. Thought he would be back before this."

Ridgeway opened a package and secured hard bread and cheese, which he ravenously ate.

"This rain is a good thing," said Sears.

"How do you make that out?" asked Ridgeway, his mouth full of food. "If there's anything more lonesome and desolate than this place in a rain storm, I don't want to find it."

"The rain will spoil Merriwell's chance of following us."

"Following us?" laughed Doyle. "I never reckoned he had much chance of following us in this wilderness."

"Del Norte said he might. Del Norte seems to think Merriwell can follow a trail."

"I don't believe there's a white man living," said Doyle, "who could follow our trail through these woods. What's Del Norte's game? Does he think he'll force Old Gripper to—"

A shout outside caused them to start, and, seizing a rifle, Sears leaped to the open door.

Two rain-soaked men issued from the jungle-like woods and advanced toward the hut. One of these men was marching in advance, while behind him came the other, holding a gleaming revolver in his hand.

The three sportsmen uttered exclamations of astonishment, for they recognized the man with the revolver.

"Hagan!" cried Sears.

"Hagan!" echoed Doyle. "And by the living gods, he's got that treacherous Irishman, O'Tool."

Behind them in the hut Seth Brown snored loudly.

The two men advancing were indeed Bantry Hagan and O'Tool. Plainly the latter was a prisoner.

"What does this mean?" asked Sears, in astonishment.

"It means, my boy," answered Hagan, "that I found this snake prowling in the woods, and I took the trouble to bring him here that we might properly reward him for his faithful service."

"Begorra," said O'Tool, "ye might have saved yersilf the trouble, an' nivver a bit would Oi've been disapp'inted. It's divvil a reward were Oi lookin' fer."

"Well, certain it is you'll get all that's coming to you," growled Hagan. "Get inside there out of the rain, you spalpeen, and we will talk with yer a bit."

O'Tool was marched into the hut before the muzzle of Hagan's revolver.

# CHAPTER VII. A RASCAL'S END.

Bantry Hagan was soaking wet and growling like a dog over a bone.

"Where did you find this fine chap?" asked Sears, glaring at the fugitive.

"I was watching the path at the other end of the valley when what should I see but this fellow sneaking along it like the snake he is. In a minute I had my revolver pointed at him, and, I says, says I, 'Stop where ye are, O'Tool, or I'll drill a hole in you.' He stopped. Then a few questions I asked him, while he held his

hands above his head at my command. I searched him and found a pistol on him, which I have in my pocket. Next I marched him down here for the rest of you to inspect. Take a good look at him and see what you think."

"It's impossible for me to say what I think of him," declared Doyle. "There are not words enough in the dictionary."

"And ye have not brains enough to invent any, me bhoy," grinned O'Tool.

"Don't grin at me, you treacherous whelp!" snarled Doyle. "Wait till Del Norte returns and you will get your medicine."

"And is Dil Noort not here at all, at all?" inquired the Irishman. "I wondered pwhy he didn't spake up and let me hear the music of his voice."

"He's saucy and insolent as you please!" cried Ridgeway, frowning at the captive. "What was he doing sneaking down that path?"

"Oi were jist goin' ter look fer yez," declared O'Tool. "Av ye'll remember it, it was mesilf what told yer where ter foind this hut. It was mesilf what proposed bringin' Merriwell here. It was mesilf thot spake of the Well Cave and what a foine place it would be ter drop Merriwell into, for divvil a bit could he ever git out by himsilf, and he moight stay there twinty years, hollering the top of his head off, without making anyone hear a sound, unless the person were within tin feet av the cave. It's all this Oi did fer yez, and now yer point a loaded pistol at me and threathen to shpill me blood. Yer trate me indacent. Ye called me names and insulted me dignity."

"Why shouldn't we call you names, you treacherous sneak!" burst forth Sears. "Didn't you go back on us? Didn't you help Merriwell escape from us?"

"Pwhat?" cried O'Tool, with a great expression of astonishment. "Did Oi do thot? Oh, Saint Patherick and all the rest of them, were a man ever so misunderstood! Didn't Oi kape him all quiet and shtill on the ground till Dil Noort returned from chasing thot bhoy? Didn't Oi turn him over to Dil Noort and howld the horse? Thin, as Oi were patting the b'ast on the neck, didn't some one jump out behind me, give

me a divvil of a whack in the neck and sind me flying inter the ditch, after which he went scooting down the road astride that horse? Thin didn't yez run away from me and leave me there, without wance lookin' ter see if I were dead or alive? And now yer call me a snake! Ye call me a traithor! Och hone! Sorry the day Oi ever lived ter see me friends go back on me!"

"Why didn't you wait for us to return?" demanded Sears.

"Did Oi know yez would return? Did ye shtop ter tell me yer would return? Didn't Oi think it were tin chances ter wan Merriwell would r'ach Newman and turn the whole place out lookin' fer us? Did ye expict me ter wait there till twinty men came tearing up thot road, wid guns and pistols ready to shoot anyone consarned in the business? It's me own hoide Oi think something of, an' Oi lost no toime in taking to the woods. Oi've been kaping moity dark since thin, but Oi thought mebbe me friends moight come here, and so Oi came ter foind yez. This is pwhat Oi git fer me trouble."

"It's a clever liar you are, O'Tool," sneered Hagan; "but yer can't fool us. Here, boys, get hold of him and make him fast. Tie him good and solid, and we will keep him till Del Norte shows up. We'll let Del Norte decide what's best to do with him."

In vain O'Tool protested his innocence. Intimidated by Hagan's pistol, he was compelled to submit, and they bound his hands behind his back, following which his feet were securely tied together. Then Hagan himself kicked O'Tool's feet from beneath him and dropped him prostrate beside Seth Brown, who snored on, regardless of all that was taking place.

"Lie there!" said Hagan.

He then made inquiries about the drunken game official and expressed regret that Brown was there.

"He wouldn't know it if lightning struck this hut," said Sears. "It's likely Del Norte will be in for moving at once and leaving him here to sleep off his load. I don't understand why Del Norte hasn't returned before this. What in the world is he doing?"

"Still trying to bring Old Gripper to terms, I fancy,"

said Hagan. "It was a good load the old boy was, but together Del and I managed to lower him into the Well Cave. The rope was twice long enough for the job, and so we cut it and let half drop down with him. He'll have to make some right fancy promises before he gets out of that trap."

"But it's not like Del Norte to remain out in this rain," declared Doyle.

"Perhaps he thinks the rain may bring Old Gripper to terms in a hurry, for you know a long storm would make the water rise in the well and drown the old boy."

"It's mighty dangerous business—mighty dangerous," muttered Ridgeway.

"But never a bit could Old Gripper swear who did it," grinned Hagan. "The tap on his head put him to sleep, and he was nicely tied and blindfolded when his senses returned. His eyes have seen no one of us."

O'Tool was somewhat interested in this conversation, and he was listening to every word when he was startled by a peculiar occurrence. His back was toward the supposed-to-be game official, whose snoring did not let up for a moment. Suddenly he felt a hand touch his wrists, and a moment later he was aware that a set of nimble fingers were working at the knots of the cord which bound him.

At the same time, in a slight break of the snoring, he heard these words whispered:

"Don't move! Be still!"

"Howly Saints!" thought O'Tool. "Pwhat does this mane?"

Fortunately he obeyed the command and remained motionless.

Those fingers continued to work at the knots, and after a time the wondering Irishman felt that the strain of the rope about his wrists was becoming slacker.

"Oi don't know who ye are," he thought; "but av yer set me free and give me a chance fer me loife, it's much obliged Oi'll be."

In a short time he felt that a good strain at the rope would enable him to free his hands.

Then he heard the man behind him whisper again: "Draw up your feet so I can reach them."

O'Tool obeyed.

The movement attracted Hagan's attention, and he glanced toward the captive.

"Don't be wiggling round too much, you thief of the world!" he growled.

"Mebbe you'll let me move a bit to get away from the wather thot's running down in a stream on me legs!" exclaimed O'Tool, in a resentful manner. "It's wet enough Oi am already."

"It will make little difference to you how wet you get," declared Hagan.

While the attention of the men was drawn toward them, Seth Brown did not wiggle a finger. The moment they relaxed their attention and again became absorbed in their talk, he commenced on the knots at O'Tool's ankles.

A peculiar whistle in the forest outside caused Hagan and his companions to utter exclamations of satisfaction and hastened to the door.

"Here comes Del Norte," said Sears.

From the gloom of the dripping thicket issued the Mexican, bearing on his arm a coil of rope. As he drew near the hut, he cursed the rain and the bad luck.

"Let the old fool drown in that hole!" he exclaimed.

"It may be a good thing for us, as without him Merriwell's project will fall through."

"It's nothing you could do with him at all?" questioned Hagan.

"Not a thing," answered Del Norte. "I waited until I fancied he'd be ready to come to terms, but when I called down to him after getting wet in this manner, he retorted by applying epithets to me and swearing he'd live to see me hang. Then I left him."

He entered the hut and flung down the coil of rope. As he did so his eyes fell on O'Tool and Brown.

"Whose there?" he cried, in a startled manner, the deep gloom within the hut preventing him from at once recognizing the Irishman.

"It's mesilf mishter Dil Noort," answered O'Tool.

"An' moighty glad Oi am ye've come. It's niver a bit of reason could Oi b'at into the heads of the bhoys.

You know Oi'm yer friend. Yer know Oi told yer all about this place and how ter foind it. It was mesilf ye paid to act as guide fer yez."

"You vermin!" snarled the Mexican, all the music gone from his voice. "It's a fact that I paid you well, but you betrayed me."

Then he turned to his associates.

"How does he happen to be here?"

Hagan hastily explained.

"Then," said Del Norte, "we'd better get out of this as soon as possible, for it's certain he must have been leading Merriwell and the others here to find us. Every minute we remain we place ourselves in greater peril. But who's that other man?"

Again they explained, and the Mexican's nervousness and alarm increased as he listened.

"It's for moving at once I am," said Hagan. "But what will we do with the traitor?"

Feeling that the time to struggle for his life was approaching, O'Tool gave a twist with his hands and drew one of them free from the cords.

At the same instant a revolver was thrust into his grasp and Seth Brown whispered:

"Be ready! I'll back you!"

"We'll take him with us," declared Del Norte, viciously; "and, like Watson Scott, he will disappear forever. His tongue must be silenced. Are his feet tied? Well, I will set them free so he may walk."

Drawing a knife, Del Norte started to bend over the Irishman.

O'Tool's heart leaped into his throat, for he saw a deadly light in the man's dark eyes, and something told him that it was not Del Norte's purpose to cut the cords at his feet, but to sink that knife between his ribs.

As the Mexican bent forward, O'Tool flashed the pistol round and fired with the muzzle less than three feet from Del Norte's head.

The Mexican seemed knocked backward by the concussion, and he dropped flat and outspread, blood streaming from a wound near his temple. He lay still, apparently death-stricken.

The man's horrified companions stood like beings turned to stone.

The pungent smelling powder smoke rose heavily and revealed O'Tool on one knee, with the revolver ready for further use.

They saw more than that. Seth Brown was up, and his hands clutched two of the rifles left leaning against the wall. He flung them into a corner, at the same moment producing another pistol.

"Be quiet, me bhoys!" cried O'Tool. "Fer, ter defend me loife, Oi'll send more of yez ter join yer mashter down below."

"Up with your hands, every one of you!" cried a clear, ringing voice, which issued from the lips of the supposed deputy game warden.

It happened that John Ridgeway was close to the open door. With an electrified bound, he shot through it and started on the run for the shelter of the woods.

O'Tool fired twice, and the heavy air within the hut caused the smoke to hang thick before his eyes. Under the shelter of that smoke Bantry Hagan ventured to make a break, and he was followed by Doyle and Sears.

O'Tool fired once more, but this time his arm was seized and the muzzle of the pistol held toward the roof of the hut. Through the smoke he saw Seth Brown had clutched him and thus destroyed the possibility of his hitting one of the fugitives.

"Pwhy did yez do it?" gasped the astonished Irishman.

"Because we're not here to take human life, but to save it," was the answer. "Do you know where the Well Cave is? You heard them speak of it. Can you lead me to it?"

"Oi kin."

will stop until he's far away. They'll do their best to get out of this as soon as possible."

"It's roight Oi think yez are," chuckled O'Tool. "There lays the chafe whelp of the bunch, and widout him they'll not shtop running as long as they have a bit av breath left."

Brown knelt beside Del Norte and made a hasty examination of his wound. He next felt for the beating of the man's heart, but could discover no pulsa-

"You fixed him, O'Tool," he said. "This ends the career of Porfias del Norte. He is dead."

# CHAPTER VIII.

THE RESCUE OF OLD GRIPPER.

"It's sorry Oi am Oi had ter do it," declared the Irishman, his usually florid face being pale and his hands shaking a little. "Whin he shtooped wid thot knife, Oi saw murther in his oyes. Ter save mesilf Oi shot him."

"It was a clean case of self-defense, O'Tool, and I will give evidence for you when you have to answer."

"Oi'd loike ter know where Frank Merriwell and the rest of them are," muttered O'Tool. "Oi suppose the others are waiting fer me to return, but this Merriwell we lost hours ago."

"I know where he is," declared Brown.

"How the divvil do you know?"

"I know a great deal," was the answer. "I know that after Watson Scott was ambushed by those rascals Merriwell found the spot where he was attacked. I know he returned to the cottage of Warren Hatch, to arm himself and obtain assistance in following the trail. I know he found you, O'Tool, and several persons from Newman, at the cottage. Frank Merriwell's boy guide had told how he was attacked on the road near Newman. That brought a number of indignant men to the cottage, and you turned up at the same "Then let those running curs escape. They've left time. I know the whole party started out, led by their rifles behind, and its' certain not one of them Frank Merriwell and yourself, to trail Old Gripper's captors. I know the party divided into two squads to approach this valley from opposite ends, you leading one squad, while Merriwell led the other. Merriwell's party came upon some hunters, who were camping a few miles from here just over the ridge. It was there that Merriwell exchanged clothes with one of

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the guides of that party and disguised himself. He urged the others to keep back until he could come down here and find out if the villains were in this valley. He is here."

"Pwhere?" asked O'Tool, looking around.

"Right here," was the answer, as the man who was known as Seth Brown flung off his old hat and permitted a natural expression to return to his begrimed face.

"Howly Saints! a miracle!" gasped the Irishman, as he nearly collapsed, his eyes bulging from his head in astonishment. "It's two men ye are! Niver did Oi see anything loike that before!"

Indeed the change had been most astounding, and before O'Tool stood Frank himself, recognizable for all of his clothes and the grime upon his face.

Merry had played his part to perfection from the moment he assumed the disguise until there was no further reason why he should keep up the deception. He had deceived Ridgeway, Doyle and Sears with ease and had led them to believe he was drinking heavily from the jug, although not a drop of liquor passed his lips. Repeatedly, as he was about to tip the jug, he had turned their attention from him by means of his ventriloquial ability. After he entered the hut, the sound of baying hounds was produced by Merriwell.

Frank gave O'Tool little time to wonder over the amazing things which had taken place. Like Merry, the Irishman had cautioned his companions to stay back while he slipped down into the valley to investigate, and thus he had fallen into the hands of Del Norte's gang. Merriwell now urged him immediately to lead the way to the Well Cave, at the same time picking up a coil of rope Del Norte had flung down.

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The rainfall had begun to slacken when they left the hut.

They pushed through the forests as rapidly as possible, and soon came to a slope, which they mounted a considerable distance.

"Here it is, me bhoy," said O'Tooi.

They had reached a little level piece of rocky ground, where the timber was thinner.

O'Tool pointed to a wide, well-like opening before them.

Hastily approaching this opening, Merriwell dropped on his hands and knees, with the coil of rope at his side. Looking down into the darkness, he called:

"Mr. Scott, Mr. Scott, are you there?"

From the depths came a joyful answer:

"I am here, Merriwell! For God's sake, get me out somehow! I am up to my waist in water and nearly perished."

"We will have you out directly," declared Frank, in delight. "Just make one end of this rope fast under your arms, and we will pull you up."

He lowered an end of the rope into the natural well, but not until almost its entire length had been exhausted did Watson Scott shout for him to stop paying it out.

O'Tool held the end of the rope, while Merriwell again knelt and called down to the man below, urging him to take every precaution in making the rope secure about his body.

"It will be slow work getting you up," cried Frank; "but depend on us and don't be afraid."

As soon as Scott spoke the word, they began the task of hoisting him.

It was in truth a long and tedious piece of work, but, in order to make sure no accident should happen, Frank had O'Tool give the rope a turn about the tree trunk, taking up the slack and making it secure each time they pulled.

Rain had ceased falling when at last, dripping with water and covered with dirt, Watson Scott was drawn from that hole. He was quite exhausted, yet he managed to grasp Frank's hand with his clammy fingers and give it a pressure that was expressive of his unspeakable gratitude.

"I will never forget this, Merriwell!" he declared.
"I owe you my life!"

"You owe O'Tool as much or more than you owe me," asserted Frank.

"But it's not this debt I wish to pay first," grated Old Gripper, after a few minutes. "It's that wretch, Del Norte, I propose to settle with without delay."

"O'Tool has saved you the trouble."

"How is that?"

valley.

"Take me down there," urged Scott, rising to his feet. "I want to see the carcass of that dog. Not till I see him dead at my feet will I be satisfied."

His strength returning rapidly, he followed them lonely hut.

"You will find him in there, lying dead on the ground," said Merry.

Watson Scott entered the hut.

"Where is he?" he demanded.

Frank had followed, and a cry of surprise came from his lips, for the body of Del Norte was not to be seen.

"He isn't here," said Merry, wonderingly.

"Niver a bit av it!" gasped O'Tool. "Begorra, this is the foist toime Oi ever knew the dead to rise and walk."

"Some of that gang returned here," declared Frank. "See, O'Tool, the rifles are gone. They returned and carried Del Norte's body away."

"It's roight ye are, me lad," nodded O'Tool. "Thot's jist pwhat's happened."

"Then they may be watching for us," said Old Gripper. "We must keep our eyes open."

"Little liability of that," asserted Frank. "It's my opinion they'll do their prettiest to get out of this region. If they attempt to leave this valley by either of the natural paths, they'll run into our friends and there'll be trouble sure."

"They can get out some other way?" questioned Scott.

"They kin," nodded O'Tool; "but it's a path they'll have ter make fer themsilves, and no 'asy job it'll be."

Evidently the rascals made their own path, for none of the searchers caught a glimpse of them that day, nor was it possible to take up and follow their trail, for at a later hour the rain once more descended in torrents, and the storm continued unabating until long after nightfall.

As he sat before the open fire in Warren Hatch's Frank related what had occurred in the hut in the cottage that evening, Old Gripper turned suddenly to Merriwell and again grasped the hand of the young man.

"I made no mistake in you, my boy," he said. "From the start I knew you were made of the right stuff. I owe you a heavy debt, and you can depend down into the valley, where they finally arrived at the 'on Old Gripper to back you as long as he has a cent in the world. With Del Norte out of the way, your path to still greater success and to untold wealth is straight and smooth. You are destined to become one of the mightiest forces in the financial world."

THE END.

The Next Number (449) Will Contain

# FRANK MERRIWELL'S JEOPARDY;

OR,

The Wolves of the Woods.

# THE ABDUCTION OF INZA.

The Wounded Man on Horseback—The Search for a Doctor-Porfias Del Norte-His Wonderful Escape. The Masked Ball—The Wolf Masks at the Dance. Inza Talks to One of Them-Her Alarm-She Disappears—Bruce Browning's Laziness, and How He Happens to be Paddling Across the Lake-What He Sees There, and What He Thinks of It-The Pursuit—O'Tool and the Indian—The Irishman's Courage—Frank on the Scene—Knife to Knife with Del Norte-The Landslide.



## NEW YORK, November 12, 1904.

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STREET & SMITH'S TIP TOP WEEKLY,
238 William St., New York City.

# APPLAUSE.

I have been a constant reader of your Tip Top ever since it started. I always look over your Applause column. Yours sincerely,

CARL L. HILLM. N.

Knoxville, Ill.

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We hope you enjoy it.

As I have not seen any writing in your paper from our town, I thought I would write you a letter. I must say I like all the fellows and girls in your paper, as I think they are all true blue. We have a fellow in our town like Arlington. His name is William Leinberg. He is a good ball player, but he wants to be the whole thing. We are starting a football team called "Frank Merriwell's Own," and hope to be as successful as he was. Here is our line-up at present, and our substitutes also.

Line-up, Frank Merriwell's Own: Left end, Willie Smith; left tackle, Bennie Joggerst; left guard, Willie Casey; center, Can. Ehresmann; right guard, William Femberg; right tackle, Veazie Havens; right end, Monte Wood; right half-back, Harold Vortigern; left half-back, Fred Jackson; fullback, Willie Jackson. Mascot, Floyd Mains. Substitutes, Willie Wagner, John Putts and Peter Hooker. We might say here that our substitute, John Putts, is noted about here for his sprinting. We strive to do as Frank does and are making great success. The following men are trying to enter Mercersberg Preparatory School: John Can, Ehresmann and Willie Jackson. Your paper is always on our tables. I remain, yours truly, Willie Smith, Manager.

Enter "Frank Merriwell's Own," the first registered Tip Top football eleven of the season. Good luck to you and yours, captain.

I have read the Tip Top Weekly for a long time, and think it the best weekly in the world. Now that is a rather broad assertion, but I believe there are many who will agree with me. Frank and Dick are "the best on earth." Brad is also there with the goods. He is just my kind. I would like to see Arlington get his just deserts, viz., get thrown down by everyone for just a little while, so that he can learn a lesson that will show him just where he stands in the world and make him straighten up and live a straight life. With three rousing cheers for Tip Top, its author and publishers, Frank, Dick and their friends, I am, Linton, Ind.

A. B. C.

So this is the way they feel on the banks of the Wabash, is it?

I have read your king of weeklies for over three years, so I thought I would tell you how much I appreciate it. I like Brad the best, next Dick, and then Frank, and all their friends. I am in favor of a correspondence club. Would you please send me Prof. Fourmen's address? I will close with three cheers for all friends of Tip Top, Street & Smith and B. L. Standish, Wilson, Ellsworth County, Kan. A Kansas Jay.

Prof. Fourmen's address is care of Street & Smith.

I have only seen one letter from this city, so thought I would send a small contribution. I think Tip Top is just swell, but I like Dick and his friends best. I don't see why everyone is so down on Chester A. Every day you meet more boys like him than you do like Dick. Now, I am not a friend of Chet's, but I don't like to see him blamed for such a common failing. For my part, I prefer a boy with a little wickedness to a "goodygoody" one. As to the girls, I like June best, but will leave the love affairs to Burt L. He settled Frank's to my satisfaction, so perhaps he will Dick's. I hope you won't call this waste paper. With three cheers and a tiger, I am, a loyal girl reader of Tip Top,

MAYOUREEN.

Topeka, Kan.

Sensible, very, and a pretty letter.

In looking over the Applause column, I fail to find any letters from Austin, Tex. I would like to say I am a constant reader of Tip Top, and think it a very interesting weekly. I only wish they would publish more a week. As for Brad Buckhart, I like him pretty well, but he has got a little too much to say. Frank and Dick for me. As for Chester Arlington, I like to read where he and Dick are on good terms. Of the girls, June Arlington is the best, and I hope Chester reforms for her sake. I will close, with three long cheers for Dick, Frank, Chester, Brad, Burt L. S. and S. & S. Yours, PAUL SIMMS.

Very sensible as to Arlington. It shows a peace-loving spirit.

Having read your celebrated weekly, called the Tip Top, for a few years, I take the liberty to write you a few lines.

Of the boys, I like best Bart, Frank, Dick, Ted, Tubbs, Brad,

and in fact all the others except Chet.

Having looked over the Applause column in No. 438, I see "something" that wrote a letter and signed itself as "I. M. A. Mistake." Anybody looking at it could tell it was a mistake. I hardly blame it, 'cause I hardly believe it is responsible for what it says—same as a phonograph. If Chet should be the hero, well, "Good-by, Tip Top, I must leave you," for me. Calling Brad hot air, I think that phonograph must be running by hot air.

I think Tip Top is the best book ever published, for it has

kept me from all bad habits.

I like June, Doris, Elsie and Inza.
With best wishes for Burt L., S. & S., Dick, Frank and the whole "gang." I remain,

Chicago, Ill.

"A GIT UP AND GIT."

If he is a phonograph, he will have to have a new impression eventually. Perhaps it may please you.

We kickers, as some people see fit to call us, had an urgent invitation, in No. 437, from A Wisconsin Girl, to crawl into our holes, but I hope the advice will not be followed. It seems to me that it is Chester who has gone wrong, and is more in need of our sympathy than Dick or the rest. It is a pretty mean man who is all bad, and for that reason Chester has some good qualities left in him. I am inclined to agree with him when he says that it is Merriwell's luck that wins for him, at least part of his victories. What would have happened to him in No. 435, when he was in great need of a pitcher, if Bold had not happened along just in time, and it seems to me that Bart saved the game in No. 438 by happening along just at the critical time. If my space were not limited. I could mention scores of victories that he gets the credit for which have been gained in a like manner. I am not Dick's enemy, instead I admire him very

much, and admit that he possesses wonderful abilities which, coupled with his phenomenal luck, make a team hard to beat. Bart, Brad and Hal are my favorites, and are good specimens of the American youth.

If "An Indian Girl," of Ardmore, Ind. Ter., cares to send me her address, I will correspond with her. WILL C. FAIRPLAY.

113 South Robey Street, Chicago, Ill. Courage, Chet! Here's another ally.

I have been a constant reader of Tip Top ever since it was first published, and I think it is about time I was showing up.

I think Dick Merriwell and his crowd are "it." I hope Chester Arlington will become a second Bart Hodge, as I admire him very much for his persistency. Of all Dick's friends, I like Earl Gardner best, then Hal, Ted and Obediah, in the order named.

As for the girls, I hope Dick will get June, and hurry up about it. Doris would make Chester Arlington an ideal wife, while

Felicia should marry Earl Gardner.

I like Frank and all of his flock, but I don't think they can ROBERT WRIGHT. compare with Dick and his. Yours truly, Ft. Dodge, Ia.

With more such encouragement, who knows but Chester may yet prove himself a hero.

I will not write much, as I cannot say any more than has already been said. I have read Tip Top from No. 1 to 156, and 171 to 264, and 399 to date.

I send you the money for Tip Top Quarterly, No. 13, which

makes my set complete up to No. 264.

Would you please to tell me if I could buy the weeklies in quarterly form after No. 264? Would like to hear from some readers who have back numbers of the Tip Top, or other boys' papers they would sell or exchange.

Good luck to Burt L., Street & Smith, and last but not least, WM. F. HARTMAN. Tip Top.

Box 101, Dansville, N. Y.

Yes, you can buy the weekly in quarterly form.

I open my letter with three loud cheers for "King Tip Top" and the Merries. I have long been a reader of this paper, but never thought to write. I like all the girls and boys but Chet Arlington. I would like to ask a question about Frank and Dick. Where are they? Mr. Standish, have you got a catalogue of all the numbers of Tip Top? I want to order some books. Wishing B. L. S. good luck, and same to S. & S., I remain, WILLIAM G. yours, Buffalo, N. Y.

Frank is in New Mexico and Dick is at Fardale. We have, but the first three hundred numbers are out of print. Send your full address.

As I have been a constant reader of the Tip Top Weekly for three years, I would say that it is one of the best books I have ever read. As a moral book for boys and girls, it can't be beat. I like Dick and all his chums, and hope some day that he and Chester will be friends, as Frank and Bart. I don't think that it is his fault as much as it is his mother's. I have just finished the latest number, and I think it is fine. If I were Brad, I would go on the warpath and fix Fernald's clock for him, for doing such a dirty trick. Well, I was glad that Hobson was there to take his place—I mean Bart. I am always waiting for Friday, as it is the time we get them here. I send my best wishes to all the boys and girls, and to Brick. I think that he is all O. K. Hoping this will not take up too much space, and Brad will be in the game next week, I will let up for this time. Tell Ted, "Hello," FRED T. for me. Your constant reader, St. Louis, Mo.

For your good wishes, thanks.

I will begin by begging your pardon for taking your valuable time with this letter, but I have a suggestion to make. It is this, that since there are no more pictures of baseball games on the outside cover of "Tip Top Weekly," only of players in different parts of the field, I propose that a picture of "Frank Merriwell" be printed on the cover, a large picture taking up the whole outside cover, one week, and then of all Frank's friends in order each week, then of Dick and his friends. I am sure they would be greatly appreciated. Hoping you will excuse this poor writing, and also the writer, I remain, yours truly, Amesbury, Mass. STEPHEN G. BURKE.

Shortly we are going to publish a Tip Top album, containing full-page pictures of Frank and Dick, with other characters.

Inclosed you will please find stamps to amount of fifteen cents, for which please send me Nos. 431, 432 and 434 of Tip Top.

While I am sending for these books, I am going to send some of my thoughts as to the characters of "Tip Top." Here they are: I hate Hammerswell. He is the lowest person I have ever read or heard of, and I guess I have read and heard of a good many low people.

Here is a bet, that Hammerswell will die in public disgrace. I love Dick and Brad and Bart. I don't know much about Frank, but Dick is the best type of manhood, while Brad is not exceedingly smart when he thinks he is in the right. I don't think the whole world, without Dick, would make him think different. I certainly do love Brad "a whole lot." "Do you hear me gurgle?" With good luck to S. & S. and Mr. Burt L. Standish, I remain, a Tip Topper by the name of

2602 Thompson Avenue, Ft. Wayne, Ind. DAVID VESEY.

You think he will die in public disgrace? Fearful!

Please don't file this until it has seen the composing room. I wish others to know my ideals.

I have tried to study each one of your models. I find they are all human beings, and should be treated as such by the readers; that the one fault of your critics is believing Dick and Arlington angel and devil.

The Good-natured Crank has some ideas. I hope to hear from

her.

Dear old Tip Top, I read year in and out With joy, and never stop, It's food, that makes us stout.

My grandmother reads your weekly, and she's a crank at that. I say you ought to be proud.

I am, yours to be advised, EDW. F. BATCHELOR.

803 East 147th Street, New York. Good for grandma.

Having been a constant reader of the Tip Top for quite a while, we have never sent you a word, to let you know how much we like it. In 415, Coraolo Floyd tells us to "ginger up," which is no more than right, for girls as well as boys know whether a book is good or not, and I like Tip Top best of any book I have ever yet read, and am always waiting for Friday, so I can get another book.

I think Frank and Dick are just lovely, and their friends I admire very much. June is my favorite, and I hope her Brother Chester will some day become a man to be worthy of such a sister.

With three cheers, we wish everlasting success to the Tip Top and Street & Smith.

Can I get the first numbers, or if not, what are the first numbers I can get? Please answer in Applause. Ashland, Wis.

It is such gentle reproaches as Theosida's that have most weight. You can get all but the first three hundred numbers.

Some time ago, having occasion to go to my bookseller. I noticed on one of the shelves several copies of your weeklies. I took three, and was too delighted with them. I was then induced to buy more of them, and the only fault I find is that none are of early date.

I have read with pleasure the Applause columns, and heartily

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agree with most readers, that Frank and Dick possess a name similar to the book, viz.: "Tip Top." As for Chet Arlington, Mr. Paravicini's description of him is scarcely bad enough.

Trusting that some plan may be formed to deliver the books earlier, and hoping to see this in print when it arrives, I remain, forever,

A MERRIWELL ADMIRER.

Bendigo, Victoria, Australia.

We welcome our new friend in far-away Australia.

I have been reading your book a very long time, but as yet I have seen no letter from our town. I would like to hear more from Frank and his friends, as I think they are better than the present stories. But Dick is all right, and so are all his friends. I would like for Dick to marry June, as I am sure they would make a very good match. I have seen some poetry printed in your book, and I would like to have you publish this little piece one of my friends wrote about our baseball club.

A. D. HOLCOMBE, JR.

New Jersey and Marine Streets, Mobile, Ala.

The poem was very good, but too long for publication. Try again on a shorter one.

By reading the Applause column in Tip Top, I received a hint that you publish bound books of the Frank and Dick Merriwell's stories. Can those books be secured, and what is their price? I have been reading Tip Top for two months; but I would like to read them all from No. 1.

Being unable to secure many back numbers, I have to rely

upon the bound volumes. Sincerely yours,

Reardan, Wash.

THEODORE BOEHME.

You can secure bound numbers in the Medal Library. Ten cents each.

I have been reading the Tip Top for about two years, and I like it very much. I admire very much Owen Bold, Brad, Teddy, Tubbs, Bob Singleton, Cap'n Wiley, Bradley, Jolliby and last, but not least, dear old Dick. I like Tubbs' talk about pies, because I like pies myself. I would like to have a chance to take I. M. Kicking and some others down and sit on them. I would not have the Tip Top changed for anything. I think some of the letters in the Applause column are simply grand. I have not been paying much attention to the Applause column until lately. I saw Theodore S.'s letter. I think it is humbug. I think he ought to take a back seat. I would also like to punch his noodle. Veazie and Ollie Lord are as crazy as they make 'em—don't even know a calf from a bear, ha! ha! I have no use for Chester, although I think June is the girl for Dick.

I have no time to write any more, so I remain, yours truly, Cedar Vale, Kan.

A JAY HAWKER.

If Theodore S. is wise he will keep his noodle out of A. Jay Hawker's reach.

That it is hard to keep the good down has been demonstrated many times and in many different ways, I think, most forcibly through Tip Top. I remember how the fellows used to criticise me four years ago for reading "that novel," as they called it. Lately I have had my chance to tell them about it, as I saw the same fellows so deeply interested in the book that all else was forgotten, so I say it is hard to keep a good thing down. It is with real pleasure that I note the popularity attained by the constant efforts of Mr. Standish. He deserves great credit for the success he has attained. I have many pleasant hours that I have spent reading his book to thank him for, as I think there is no other person could write such snappy, and at the same time sensible, stories.

I have been traveling around for the past two weeks, and could not get the books, as I was most of the time in the country and had no chance after I arrived here last night, so I am a little back as to the progress made toward starting the correspondence club. There are enough in favor of it, I think, for us to start. Life isn't so very long that we can put this off, if we wish to enjoy it. For a suggestion, I will say, suppose all that wish to correspond send their names to Mr. Standish and

let him publish them. If I have offered any other person's suggestion please excuse me. Let us get started. I am sure that there is a great deal of pleasure in store for us if we do, and then we can learn much by keeping our correspondence up with those in different parts of the country.

I for one think that I. M. A. Mistake has correctly named himself, if he is anything at all worth mentioning. If he would trade some of his riches (?) for some poor lad's sense he would find that up-to-date folks are fast getting to be back numbers—I mean of the class to which he belongs, viz.: blow heads. He is rather far gone, but there is a little chance for him to learn some principle yet. I cannot think that he has any if he was sincere when he wrote the letter; but we are here for a purpose—even the animals with long ears—so let us hope that you are serving yours as well. The only thing I can say for you is that you are a good judge of literature, as you acknowledge Tip Top the best. Your letter makes you look very small in our eyes, so after reading this and knowing the readers' opinion of yourself, brace up and try to be a man.

There are so many good things said about Tip Top that I shall not attempt any more than to say, the best anyone has said

does not do it justice.

If An Indian Girl will write and send her address, I shall be pleased to answer her letter, and if any others wish to write they will receive prompt reply.

Hoping to see this in print, I will close with best wishes for all concerned in this publication. Yours truly, VERNE MILEY.

520 Rebecca Street, Allegheny, Pa.

I. M. A. Mistake seems to be faring badly. He must rally to his own defense.

I was pleased to see my letter enter Tip Top, which gives me

courage to write again.

In No. 438, I see some "cross-grained" brute has signed his name as I. M. A. Mistake. He said Brad is all hot air. I'll show him who's all hot air if I ever get a chance to lay my claws on him. The one who interferes with Brad interferes just as much with this "chick." And he also said that Dick got the swell-head. What do you mean? you old skally-wagged skinflint. And then he says Chet should be the hero! Say! I'll tell you, Mr. Mistake, do you know what I would not give for Chet? If you don't know I'll tell you. I would not give a used one-cent stamp for him. That shows what he's worth. Now don't ever say anything about these two chums of mine again, if you don't want to get a bunch of bones if we meet. I guess this will keep your mug shut for a while. Sending my best regards to Burt L. Standish, Street & Smith and all my Tip Top friends, except this old skally-wagg, I am, a full-blooded Tip Topper, HERMAN OLSEN. Iron Mountain, Mo.

I. M. A. Mistake now knows his market value.

I am a little boy, eleven years old, and have been a Tip Top reader—oh! I mean a reader of the Tip Top—for four years. My brother, who is two and a half years older than myself, used to read it to me before I could master the hardest words. We read Tip Top, Pluck and Luck, Buffalo Bill, Old and Young Broadbrim, Brave and Bold and Golden Hours. We also read the Medal Library—Frank Merriwell stories.

When I am out playing and get into a row, and about to lose my temper, I would stop and think, what if Dick or Frank were in my place, what would they do? Why, the answer soon shows itself in great big letters. If I do that, I come out better than if I had done what I was tempted to do.

Mamma and papa think that it is better for us to read these books than to run the streets, learning to smoke, and so on.

We read the Medal Library books which good old Burt L. Standish writes. I don't think you can read this, for it's my first attempt at anything like this. Well, I guess it's time for me to hush.

H. D. M. ROAN.

2735 Morgan Street, St. Louis, Mo.

Dick and Frank have not lived in vain if they have inspired one boy to control his temper. He that ruleth his temper is greater than the mighty.

# QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS PROF. FOURMEN

Prof. Fourmen: Being a constant reader of Tip Top, I will take the liberty of asking you a few questions. I am 5 feet 9 inches tall, 16 years of age and weigh 155 pounds. Whenever I get hot everything goes from my sight. Have very weak ankles and pain in my side when I run. The least jolting gives me a pain beneath my heart. I am very strong for my age I have out-pulled nine common men, one at a time. Please tell what is good for my trouble? A Tip Topper forever, JNO. DAVID. Atlanta, Ga.

You probably have some nervous affection. It would be best to see a physician. For the ankles, try skating. The pain in your side can be overcome by mild exercise.

Prof. Fourmen: Being a reader of Tip Top, I would like to ask a few questions, which I hope you will answer in the next issue. My measurements are: Age, 16 years; height, 5 feet 5 inches; neck, 13 inches; thighs, 19 inches; biceps, 11 inches; arm, 10 inches; chest, normal, 29 inches; expanded, 34½ inches; wrist, 6½ inches; waist, 28 inches; hips, 30 inches; calves, 13 inches; ankles, 9 inches; weight, 115 pounds. 1. How are they? 2. What are my strong and weak points? 3. How can I develop into a fine baseball catcher? 4. Is it best to catch the best pitchers while practicing? My records, for this year, are: Batting, .583, and fielding, 1.000. I have been catching a professional pitcher.

Hoping to see this in the next issue, I remain, a Tip Top reader,

F. B. C. KIKER.

Americus, Ga.

I. Good.

- 2. Chest is your strong one. Waist, weak one. You are too large there.
  - 3. By practice.
  - 4. Yes.

PROF. FOURMEN: As I am a reader of the Tip Top, I take the liberty to ask the following questions. My measurements are: Age, 15 years 9 months; height, 5 feet 41/2 inches; weight, 1171/2 pounds; neck, 13 inches; biceps, 9 inches; forearms, 91/4 inches; chest, 30 inches; expanded, 331/4 inches; wrists, 61/2 inches; waist, 261/2 inches; thighs, 191/2 inches; calves, 121/2 inches. I. How are my measurements for a boy who has never gone in training? 2. I am left-handed in most everything I do, especially in throwing. I can't throw far or straight. Would you advise me to keep on throwing left-handed or practice to throw with my right hand? 3. At what time of day, and how long, should a person swim in fresh water? 4. When a person rubs down, is it with a wet sponge? 5. I wish you would set down some rules for me to follow in general training. 6. Is soda OWEN W. GILLESPIE. pop healthy? Yours truly,

Helix, San Diego County, Cal.

1. Fair. Your biceps need exercise.

2. It is a good thing to practice with your right, because it

will give you an even development. It is not probable that you will ever be as good with your right as your left.

- 3. In the morning. Ten minutes is plenty long enough.
- 4. With thick, rough, dry towels after a bath or shower.
- 5. Go in for outdoor exercises and natural physical health. Play all the games that you know which involve exercise—handball, baseball, football, skating—anything that will get your blood to circulating and make you breathe deeply. Sleep in a clean, well-ventilated room. Go to bed early and get up early, and do it on a given hour. Take a little dumb-bell and breathing exercise as soon as you get up and then take a three-seconds dip in cold water. Dry thoroughly, chew your food and quit any foolish habits that you may have. Breathe deep and you will enjoy good health.

6. No.

Prof. Fourmen: I am an old reader of the Tip Top, and I would like to ask you a few questions. I am 15 years old; height, 5 feet 3 inches. I. How much ought I weigh? 2. What is the best breakfast food? 3. Is oatmeal or shredded wheat biscuits as good as any? 4. What size dumb-bells ought I use? 5. When is the best time to take a long walk? Thanking you in advance, I will close. Yours most sincerely, G. Y.

- 1. 105 pounds.
- 2. A dry wheat or corn preparation.
- 3. Yes.
- 4. Three pounds.
- 5. In the morning.

Prof. Fourmen: I take the liberty of asking you a few questions. My measurements, stripped, are: Age, 17 years; height, 5 feet 10 inches; weight, 160 pounds; chest, normal, 35 inches; expanded, 37 inches; waist, 30 inches; hips, 36 inches; thighs, 20 inches; calves, 15 inches; ankles, 9½ inches; biceps, 12 inches; forearm, 11 inches; wrist, 7½ inches; neck, 14½ inches; reach, 72 inches; shoulders, 41½ inches. 1. How are my measurements? 2. What are the weak points, and how can they be strengthened? 3. How am I built for a boxer? 4. Am I too heavy? Hoping to see this in print as soon as possible, I remain, respectfully yours,

J. R. M.

Hamilton, Ont.

- t. Good.
- 2. You have no noticeable ones.
- 3. Very good.
- 4. No.

Prof. Fourmen: I have been following your advice as to physical culture, and have developed into a baseball player, and have the ability to throw a ball into a sixteen inch hole, nine

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PR and follow pound 271/2 inche forea 81/4 in times either side a is that hall bell a contract of the side a contr

bell e all da furnis so as such weigh price times out of ten; that is, a straight ball. But I do not know how to curve a ball at all. As you have given such information in an article in Tip Top Weekly some time ago, I wish you would publish the number of Tip Top in which you wrote that article entitled, "How to Curve a Ball." Thanking you in advance, I am, Norman Kirk.

New York City.

No. 366.

Prof. Fourmen: I have been reading Tip Top Weekly for three years, and I would like to ask a few questions regarding my measurements: Age, 15 years 11 months; height, 4 feet 10 inches; weight, 85 pounds; chest, normal, 28 inches; expanded, 30½ inches; waist, 25 inches; width of shoulders, 14 inches; forearms, 8½ inches; wrists, 5¾ inches; thigh, 16¼ inches; calf, 12 inches; ankle, 8½ inches; neck, 11½ inches. Standing broad jump I can clear 6 feet 7 inches. 1. How do these measurements correspond? 2. Can I jump good? 3. What exercise will I take to grow larger? All my muscles are hard. I remain, yours truly,

Philadelphia, Pa.

I. Very well. Your chest is not quite as large as it might be.

2. Yes, for your height.

3. If you mean in height, none, that I know of. You have ample time to grow, however. Don't worry about it. Go in for general exercises and avoid any strain in lifting.

Prof. Fourmen: As a reader of Tip Top, I should be pleased to have you answer a few questions. I am 16 years old; weigh 133 pounds; 5 feet 5 inches high; chest, 33 inches; expanded, 36½ inches; waist, 31 inches; hips, 35 inches; thighs, 19 inches; calves, 14 inches; biceps, 10½ inches; wrist, 7¾ inches; neck, 13½ inches. I. Are my measurements good? 2. Where are my weakest points? I remain, yours respectfully, John Parran.

Waco, Tex.

I. Yes.

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too.

2. Waist is a little too large. Straighten up and exercise your will on it. You can draw it in and make it smaller.

Prof. Fourmen: As a reader of Tip Top, I take the liberty to ask a few questions. My age is 15 years; height, 5 feet 41/4 inches; weight, 117 pounds; neck, 131/2 inches; shoulders, 17 inches; chest, 31 to 341/2 inches; waist, 29 inches; biceps, 11 inches; forearms, 93/4 inches; wrists, 61/2 inches; thighs, 181/4 inches; calves, 13 inches; ankles, 83/4 inches. I can run the hundred-yard dash in 13 seconds; jump 7 feet 10 inches in the standing broad jump and 13 feet 2 inches in the running broad jump. I. How are my measurements, and what are my weak points? 2. How are my records, and how do they compare with those of other boys of my age? Hoping to see this in print soon, I remain, a Tip Top admirer, L. H. B.

1. Good. You have no marked ones.

2. Very good.

Prof. Fourmen: I have been reading Tip Top for some time, and wish to ask you for some advice. My proportions are as follows: Age, 18 years; height, 5 feet 3½ inches; weight, 122 pounds; chest, contracted, 30 inches; expanded, 34 inches; waist, 271/2 inches; neck, 13 inches; wrist, 63/4 inches; right biceps, 10 inches; left biceps, 91/4 inches; right forearm, 10 inches; left forearm, 91/2 inches; thighs, 18 inches; calves, 13 inches; ankles, 81/4 inches. I. How are my measurements? I can chin twelve times and dip fifteen times. 2. How are these? I can, with either leg, take the toes of one foot in the hand of the same side and touch the floor fifteen times without stopping. 3. How is that? 4. Is it harmful to take about twenty minutes' dumbbell exercise before retiring at night, after working on a farm all day? 5. Can you furnish me, or tell me where I can be furnished, with a book of instructions of how to correctly use, so as to gain the best results, all kinds of gymnasium apparatus, such as dumb-bells, Indian clubs, traveling rings, bars, chest weights, etc., and price of same. Also a book of wrestling and price of same? 6. What weight dumb-bells and Indian clubs should I use? Hoping you will excuse all the questions, I remain, yours truly, R. V. L.

Woodfield, Md.

I. Good.

- 2. Fine. Don't overdo them.
- 3. Excellent.
- 4. Five minutes of deep breathing would do you more good. Your farm work ought to be enough.
  - 5. Write to A. G. Spalding & Co., 16 Park Place, New York.
  - 6. Three pounds each.

Goldsboro, N. C.

1. It may be. You do not state your height.

2. Can't tell without knowing your general measurements.

3. It shows that you need to practice deep breathing. You ought to go in for general outdoor exercises.

Prof. Fourmen: My measurements are as follows: Age, 18 years 3 months; weight, 100 pounds; height, 5 feet 71/4 inches; neck, 1134 inches; chest, normal, 26 inches; expanded, 281/4 inches; waist, 253/4 inches; shoulders, 133/4 inches; forearm, 8 inches; wrist, 6 inches; thigh, 161/4 inches; biceps, 121/4 inches; calf, 1034 inches. I. How are these measurements? 2. What are my weak points and how can I eliminate them? 3. What should my weight be, and how can I gain it? 4. I am a senior of the high school of Toledo, Ohio, and expect to try for the track team this year. The gymnasium in our school, formerly used by the boys, has been taken away from them and given to the girls. Hence I have neither a place to train nor an instructor to help me. Could you suggest a course of training for me? I have access to dumb-bells, Indian clubs, punching bag, boxing gloves and horizontal bar, and ride a bicycle. 5. What advice can you give me in regard to diet? I drink but one cup each of tea and coffee per day, but am a fiend in regard to ice cream and soda. 6. I have very weak eyes at times, and again they are all right. I can find no reason for this unless it be from reading—Tip Tops—by lamplight Can you explain this to me? 7. Two years ago I broke my collar bone, and since then I have not been able to throw a baseball across the diamond. How can I remedy this? 8. Please tell me in what issue of the Tip Top began your articles on physical culture and athletics, and throughout how many issues it continued? If you can furnish a list of them, please send it to me.

Thanking you in advance for your kind answers, and trusting you will pardon my long letter, I am, respectfully yours,

WM. CAMPER.

1. Not very good. You are underweight.

2. Chest, abdomen and biceps.

3. 130 pounds. Out-of-door work. You are working too much inside.

4. Punch the bag in the morning and run a given distance in the afternoon. Out-of-door exercise, such as rowing, swimming, playing baseball, handball, football and the like, beats all the gymnasiums in the world.

5. Stop drinking tea and coffee. Eat meat and vegetables in the proportion of one to three—that is, for every pound of meat eat three of vegetables. Chew your food well and drink plenty of hot water. Also observe regular hours.

6. It may be caused by catarrh.

7. By exercising very gently the parts affected.

8. Nos. 372 and 375.

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# FOOTBALL CHAMPIONSHIP OF AMERICA

Five Hundred and Fifty Footballs...

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Tip Tip Championship Pennant

Given away as prizes to the best Amateur Clubs and Scholastic Football Teams. INE UP, BOYS! The football season of 1904 has opened with a rush and every manager wants to get his team entered in the contest as soon as possible. The team making the best score get the All-American Championship Pennant. A first rate Spalding football goes to every member of the fifty teams making the best showing. Managers are requested to read the fol-

Managers are requested to read the following directions for entering the contest.

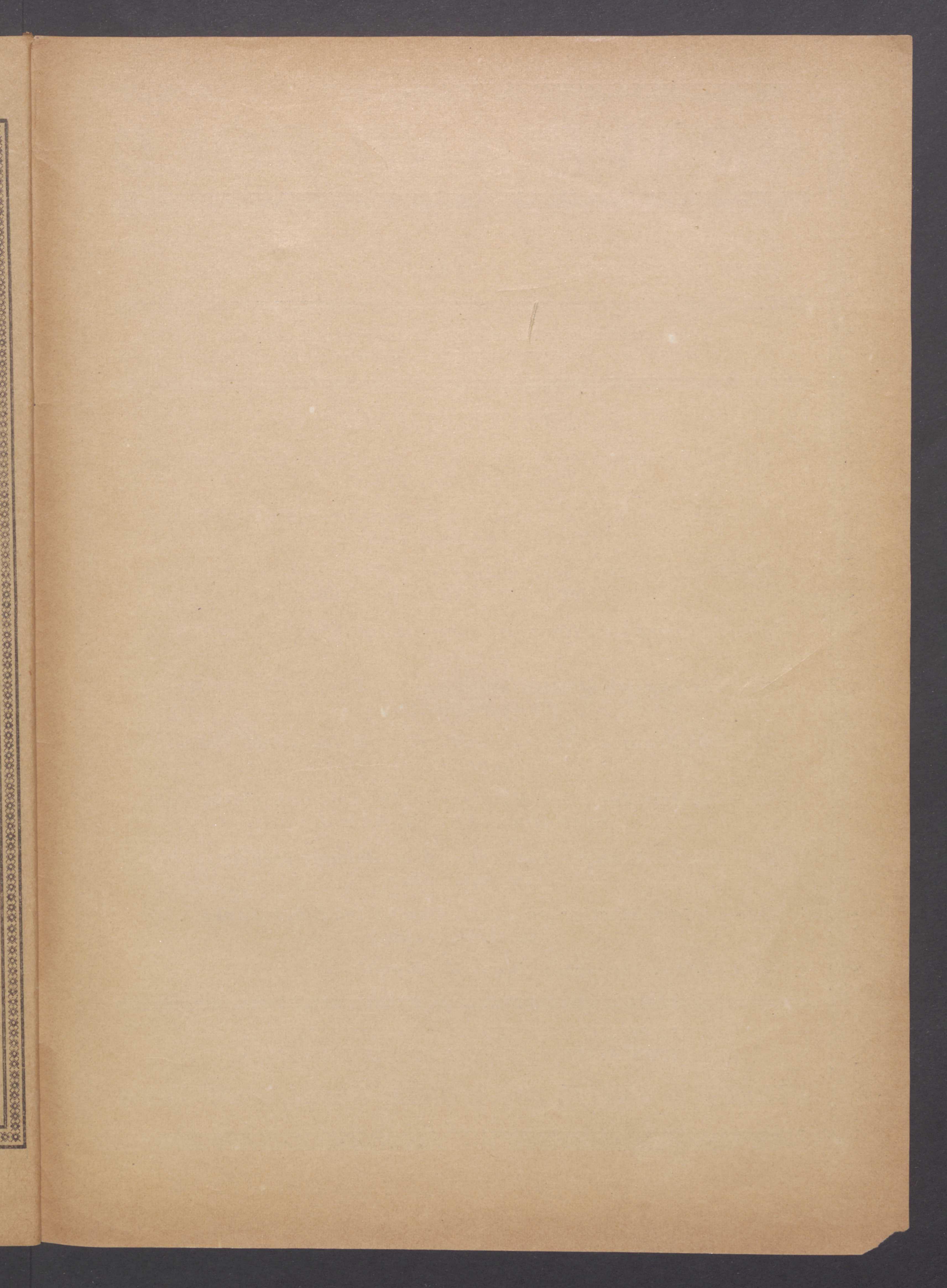
Those teams having the best scores at the close of the season will be declared the winners. The team having the best record will be declared The Tip Top Championship Team of 1904, and in addition to regular prize will receive an All Silk Pennant bearing the legend which announces their championship. All Official Scores will be published in Tip Top Weekly. The contest will be decided on the scores published in Tip Top. Don't miss a single game! A coupon for every game!

For Making Out Score Coupons: The Manager of each competing team after every game should write the names of his players in the left-hand column of coupor in such a manner that the position of the respective players are indicated by the letters in the middle column. He should then write the names of his opponent's team in the right-hand column. In case score coupons of more than one game are to be sent in at the same time, only the coupon of the first game should have the names of the manager's team. In the left-hand column of the remaining coupons, the manager should write "Regular Team." Be sure to give the name, town and State of both teams.

SCORE COUPON FOR TIP TOP FOOTBALL CONTEST.

(Cut Out on Dotted Line.)

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