

FRANK MERRIWELL'S FAITH



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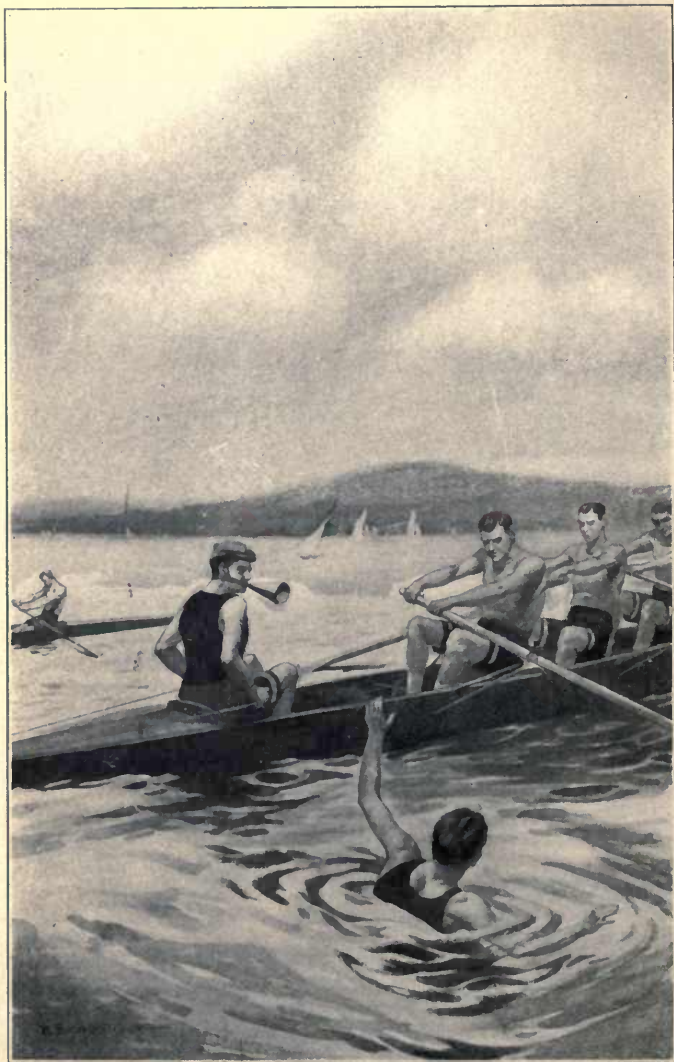
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IN MEMORY OF
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Then Merriwell went over the side of the shell, clearing it well, and coming to the surface almost instantly, shouted:

"You can win yet! Pull, fellows! Pull!"

(See page 79)

FRANK MERRIWELL'S FAITH

BY

BURT L. STANDISH

AUTHOR OF

"Frank Merriwell's School Days," "Frank Merriwell's Chums,"
"Frank Merriwell's Foes," etc.

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Frank Merriwell's Faith

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FRANK MERRIWELL'S FAITH.

CHAPTER I.

IN TRAINING AT NEW LONDON.

To one in whose veins runs the good red blood of youth, few things are prettier or more attractive than a boat's crew of strong, athletic, lithe-limbed university men speeding their cranky shell, their bodies bending, and the oars rising and falling with machinelike precision.

Such was the sight beheld by Frank Merriwell, as he stood on the float and looked out across the shining water at the boat which was shooting toward him with splendid speed.

The waves were dashing against and gurgling round the boat, and out where the boat sped they were running high enough to fling a jet of spray now and then over a rower.

"The men are getting into fine form!" thought Merriwell, as he watched the work of the crew. "But they will need to do their best to beat Harvard this year! I fancy the race will be for blood."

Reports of the training and skill of the Harvard crew were not lacking at Yale. It was known that

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for months the Harvard men had been working like galley-slaves to put themselves in condition for the boat-race at New London. But Yale had been working as hard or harder. No toil had been spared by the Yale eight to prepare themselves for their great battle against the Crimson.

Frank felt a thrill of pride as he watched the rowers. They were handsome, manly fellows, with brown, muscular bodies, clothed only in sleeveless shirts, short trunks, and heavy, loose-fitting socks. The little coxswain who so deftly guided the shell and encouraged the crew with his words was not prouder of them than was Frank Merriwell.

On one person in the shell Frank's eyes were fixed with more earnestness and pleasure than on any other. That was Jack Diamond, who by pure merit had won the important position of stroke for the varsity eight. The supple grace which concealed the tremendous power which Diamond threw into his stroke appealed strongly to Merriwell's sense of beauty. Diamond had indeed developed into a fine oarsman, and the perfect rhythmic sense which made him a skilled musician made his stroke as unvarying and regular as the beat of a pendulum.

The voice of the coxswain came musically across the water:

"All together! all together! Now! now!" keeping time to Diamond's stroke.

The sunshine flashed like silver on the dripping blades, while here and there the waves frothed silvery white along their plashing crests. But for the breeze which ruffled the water, the day was perfect, and the sky was an azure-blue.

The varsity eight were now at New London, and had taken up quarters at Gale's Ferry, on the Thames. The Harvard eight were also at New London, but some distance down the river.

The training and practise must go on, but the college examinations could not be skipped for that, and a proctor had been sent down from Yale to supervise the examinations of the crew. The examinations and the training together made hard work, but the picked eight were standing up to this double duty in a manly way.

"I don't believe Harvard can get together eight men who can beat them. That shell is simply flying, and they move like one man. Diamond is a splendid stroke."

It made Merry's heart warm to feel this. Then he thought of Inza, as he always did when he beheld the crew at their oars.

"To be the mascot of a crew like that is worth while! The crew is worthy of the mascot, and the mascot is worthy of the crew."

Merriwell had run down from New Haven on this afternoon to witness the work of the crew, and was to return that night. New Haven was pulsing with en-

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thusiasm for the Blue, but he had found New London very much divided between the Blue and the Crimson. In New London he had also encountered Paul Rains, and Rains was a Harvard enthusiast.

"The scalp of Yale will swing at the belt of Harvard this year!" Rains had declared, and Rains evidently believed it.

There were many others in New London who were just as confident that Harvard would win the race. More than that, Frank had discovered that the betting men of New London were favoring Harvard.

The betting fraternity usually has a keen scent for the strength and weakness of competing crews and teams, as Frank knew, and the knowledge which he had gained of their attitude made him watch the work of the crew with a keener eye than common.

If there was any apparent weakness he wanted to see it, so that he might suggest its correction to the coach. But though he earnestly searched, he saw so little to criticize that his confidence of success grew. With leaps like a greyhound, the shell drew near the float, then glided alongside of it. Scarcely a minute later the crew were on the float and were lifting the shell from the water.

When the shell had been housed, the crew rubbed down, and Jack reappeared in his ordinary clothing, the Virginian came straight up to Merriwell, his fine face flushed with pleasure.

"Glad to see you down here, Merry!" extending a hand. "Of course, you're loaded down with all the news of Yale? I didn't know that any one could so miss the old quadrangle and the crowds and the fence! We're hard at work here, and the fellows are a lively lot, but for all that I've felt like Crusoe on his island!"

Frank stepped into an ordinary rowboat that was bobbing against the float. The coach came walking from the boat-house toward them.

"No objections if we row out along the course?" Frank asked.

"None at all, Merriwell! You saw the work just now?"

"Yes, it was splendid. I suppose Harvard is shaking into fine shape, too?"

"But they can't beat us!" the coach beamingly declared.

"You're making a good stroke, Diamond!" Frank remarked, when he and Jack were afloat, with Frank at the oars.

Diamond's tanned face brightened.

"Glad you think so, Merry! I'm resolved that if we don't win the race it won't be because I didn't do my best. How are the fellows feeling about it?"

"Yale and all New Haven are sure we will win! I think so myself, but we must not become too confident, you know! I think I never saw a shell go over the water more smoothly than yours did just now."

“And the river might be smoother!”

“Yes, and it may be just like this, or worse, on the day of the race!”

Then, seeing that Jack was anxious for the college gossip and news, Merriwell gave him a running account of such things as he knew would be of interest.

“This Robinson Crusoe work down here has set me to thinking more than ever!” said Diamond, with a grave face.

“It must be good, then, if it makes people think! I’ve heard it argued that college sports have just the opposite effect.”

Though Merriwell smiled, Jack did not.

“It has brought home to me more strongly than ever what it will mean to be separated from the men who have been my friends at Yale for four long years!”

Frank’s face also grew sober. The thought was not pleasant, though recently he had often been forced to entertain it. These were the closing days of June, the final examinations were under way, and commencement was at hand. Then the seniors would go away from Yale, never to return again as students, with the exception of the few who would take post-graduate courses. The hand of fate was soon to hurl the seniors out into the field of the world as a sower broadcasts his grain, where their qualities would be tested, and it would become known whether they were merely weeds

or wheat. Those latter days of June were indeed serious days, but the anxiety of the examinations and training, the plans for vacations and home-going, and the thousand distractions that come to a student at such a time kept many from realizing what commencement really meant.

"We can always be friends, Jack!" said Merriwell, resting on his oars as he looked into the serious face of his friend—that friend whom he had learned to love as a brother. "The Yale friendships need never be broken!"

"Of course, we will always be friends, and I shall always think of the time at Yale as the happiest of my life, and shall value the old Yale friendships more than any other. But it's the separation!"

Perhaps it was a dash of salt spray that reddened Diamond's eyes, and that same salt spray seemed to thicken his voice when he spoke again.

"If Yale loses to Harvard, it won't be because the stroke doesn't put into the race every ounce of strength he has!"

The subject had suddenly changed, and Jack was again talking of the crew.

"We are sure of you!" said Merriwell, who knew that Jack Diamond, the splendid Virginian, could be depended on to pull his heart out, if necessary, to win the New London boat-race for Yale.

The breeze died at the approach of evening, and the

waters became smoother, while the whitecaps vanished from the harbor. Diamond looked at his watch. The time had sped more rapidly than either he or Merriwell had dreamed.

“We must be getting back. I’ll have the proctor and the coach both after me. They stick as close to a fellow as bad luck!”

There was a white sickle of a moon in the sky, and another in the water of the Thames, but foggy clouds soon swung in from the Sound and blotted out both. Almost before Jack and Frank were aware of it, the river began to grow dark.

“I’ll take the oars now!” said Diamond. “You must be getting tired.”

Merriwell was not tired, but he permitted Diamond to take the oars, and the rowboat was turned toward the float and the boat-house. Diamond feathered the oars so neatly and pulled with such a clean and beautiful stroke that Frank found pleasure in watching him. But the increasing darkness soon marred this pleasure. A fog-bank was chasing the clouds up the river and making its presence felt.

“Can you find the boat-house?” Frank asked.

“I don’t know, but I think so. If we listen we’re likely to hear some of the fellows there. We can’t see their light, but some of them will bellow through the megaphone, or shout to guide us.”

There was not much talking after that, for each

anxiously listened for any sounds that might direct them. Diamond stopped rowing at intervals, and at all times endeavored to subdue the thump of the oars in the rowlocks.

"Boat coming!" he said, as he stopped and poised the oars and left the boat drift on.

"Can't be any of the crew?" Merriwell inquired.

"No, I don't think so."

"They're not making much more noise than you were!"

"Perhaps they're listening for some sound to guide them!"

"If they come near enough we'll hail them!"

"Rains went down the river to-day in a rowboat with two fellows," said Diamond. "I thought they were probably trying to get a look at the work of the Harvard crew."

Without any particular reason, he spoke in low tones. He fairly stiffened on the thwart as he finished the sentence.

"Rains——"

The other boat was much nearer than Jack had thought, and this seemed almost to come in answer to what he had said. The sentence which seemed to begin with Rains' name died away, however, in indistinguishable words, and again the thud and thump of the rowlocks drowned the talk in the other boat.

Merriwell always disapproved of eavesdropping, but

he could not scold Diamond when the latter let his boat drift and strained his ears to catch what further was being said.

"I'm ashamed of that!" Jack admitted, when the boat had passed on and he again dipped his oars. "But when they said 'Rains' I felt sure it was something that Yale ought to know, and I listened. It wasn't honorable, I suppose!"

"Rains is betting against Yale in New London," said Frank. "I heard that among the first things when I struck the place. He is sure that Harvard is going to win, and he is backing up his belief with the hard cash!"

"Perhaps something of that kind was what the fellows in the boat were talking about. Likely they're sporting men, who have been out trying to study the work of Yale and Harvard, and were talking of Rains' bets."

"That seems very probable."

Again Jack stopped rowing.

"The megaphone! Can it be from the float? Doesn't seem to come from the right direction."

"It's from the float, I think," Merry answered, and Diamond, who had unknowingly been pulling diagonally across the river, pulled now toward the Sound, sending the boat on with such speed that the float was soon reached.

As Merriwell returned to the station to take the

train for New London and New Haven he continued to think of what he and Jack had heard in the boat. Suddenly he stopped, with the queer sensation of one who feels that he has been blunderingly oversuspicious.

"Rains? Why, to be sure! What a guy I am! Those fellows were probably talking about the weather. They may have been fishermen. They may have said, 'If it rains we'll do so and so.' And because we were thinking of Paul Rains we supposed they were thinking of him, too! I guess I'd better go out somewhere and kick myself! I'll have to write to Jack about that."

Notwithstanding this very satisfactory explanation, Merriwell had not been seated in the station long when he heard that word again in the same voice which had sounded in the boat on the river. Some men were sitting out behind the station close up against the wall, talking in subdued tones. But Frank was so convinced that they were conversing about the weather that he did not pay much attention to them nor try to move away.

Then these words came to him:

"Justin Lake is steering the syndicate, I think. Rains is betting free. Oh, there can't be any doubt that we'll throw Yale—and that means about \$50,000 to be divided among us. We've got three plans, and one or the other will do the trick."

Though Merriwell was opposed to eavesdropping,

he felt that here was something he ought to know. It revealed the fact that certain men were in a plot to bring about the defeat of Yale in the interest of a gambling syndicate. It was his duty to defeat that if he could. There came a warning from one of the men to the speaker, and the tones were instantly subdued. But Merriwell heard these words:

“Mascot.” “Syndicate.” “Great scheme.” “Bound to do the trick.” “Can’t fail.” “Paralyze the stroke.”

The words did not reach him in any connected way.

“I’m going to see who those fellows are!”

As he rose he heard them get up. Then he heard the scratching of a match.

“Most time!”

This evidently referred to the time of the train’s departure.

Merriwell moved toward the door for the purpose of getting a look at the men who had been talking behind the station. As he did so he heard them talking again. They were walking round the station, and soon were in the circle of light streaming from the ticket-seller’s window.

There were three of them, and as soon as his eyes fell on them Frank set them down as professional sports and betting men. The one revealed by his voice as the man who had spoken of Rains in the boat and again behind the station was clad in loud plaids, and a

big diamond glittered in his shirt-front. One of his companions wore a silk tile, a gaudy vest, and patent leather shoes, and the other had somewhat the look of a pugilist, and swung a heavy cane. They stared unpleasantly at Frank as they beheld him, and their manner showed they did not know he was in the station, and were not at all pleased with his presence.

Merriwell vacated the waiting-room and walked out on the platform. From what he had heard, the "syndicate" was aiming blows at the mascot and at the stroke—Inza and Jack Diamond. It seemed plain that Paul Rains and Justin Lake were members of the syndicate. Yet these men did not know all about the syndicate's plans, apparently, for they seemed not to be sure that Lake was "steering it."

"Lake is a dangerous fellow! He is the possessor of abundant money and no scruples. Rains has plenty of money now, too. He can be quite unscrupulous at times. But I shouldn't have thought he would lend himself to such a scheme!"

The more Frank thought of the possible danger to Inza and to Jack Diamond the more it seemed his duty to learn all he could concerning the plans of these men, and he walked round behind the station, thinking that other scraps of conversation might float to him.

"That's Frank Merriwell!" he was astonished to hear one of the men say. "We've got to look out for him."

“If he comes nosing round, I’ll open his head with this club!”

“Couldn’t buy him into the thing?”

“Might as well think of buying the coach!”

“Hope he didn’t hear anything.”

“Where is he now?”

“If we could only buy him into the thing! The stroke is his friend, and we’d have a dead-sure thing.”

“Wouldn’t do to speak to him. Ruin the whole business. Dead-sure thing now! Trust to Lake!”

They moved away, and Frank walked on round the station.

CHAPTER II.

JOKERS ALL.

"The next time I select my parents I shall pick out millionaires. This thing of limping through the world with a crippled purse isn't as funny as it might be!"

This was Danny's comment, after Merriwell had told the story of what he had heard, and had spoken of Justin Lake's connection with the "syndicate."

"Thinking of Lake's yacht?" asked Bruce. "It's great!"

"Greg Carker has something better than a yacht," Bink declared.

"How is that?" Carker queried.

"He has a revenue cutter that is a regular clipper!"

"Nothing of the kind!" said Greg.

"I mean the scissors with which you clip off your coupons."

"It mum-makes me worried abub-about the mascot!" stuttered Gamp.

"Because she looks as pretty as a yacht when she sails down the street?" questioned Harry Rattleton.

"Thinking about that sus-sus-syn——"

"What sin?" Bruce drawled.

"The masc-ought to be able to take care of herself!" Danny chirped.

"When a yacht sails——"

"You've seen a yacht sale?" cut in Danny.

"Yes, and I've seen a cake walk!" said Rattleton.

"And a cracker box, and a worm fence, and a board slide, and a tobacco twist," chirped Bink. "Oh, yes. we've seen every old thing!"

"Everything except common sense in your chatter!" groaned Dismal.

"Awhile ago I asked Bink to bring my watch down from my room," said Carker, smiling.

"And, of course, he brought it?" Merry asked.

"No, the rascal! He said if I'd wait awhile it would run down!"

"You scoundrel, I had that joke patented!" Danny howled, scowling severely at Bink.

"You two fellows are like the man I read about, who was born in Brooklyn and afterward moved to New York!" Bruce grumbled.

"How was that?" Bink queried.

"Simply going from bad to worse!"

"Yah!" taking out a cigarette. "Give me a match!"

"I'm your match!" Danny boasted.

"Oh, your head is fiery enough! But it doesn't need to be scratched to make it light."

All were in Merriwell's room.

"If this keeps up I shall have to do like the trees," Frank declared.

"Put out the green things?"

"Leave!"

"And if it keeps up I shall have to whip Bink Stubbs," said Danny.

"Your great reputation as a fighter is spreading!" sniffed Bink. "Man at the post-office told me he wants to hire you."

"For what?"

"To lick stamps!"

"I don't see how you fellows can enjoy this sort of chatter!" Greg Carker grumbled. "This world is a serious place, and the news that Merriwell has brought is serious news. Why can't you sober down once?"

"As the temperance orator said to the drunkard!" piped Bink.

Carker faced toward Merriwell with a shrug of disgust.

"We can never expect anything but trouble to come out of these outcasts!" he earnestly declared. "The whole thing is wrong, and a wrong tree is known by its fruits as certainly as a good one."

"We'll pick out the right kind of trees to sit under when we go on our vacation!" Danny mumbled.

"Then they will be chestnut-trees!" said Dismal.

"Those are the kind for you and Bink."

"And a spruce will do for you!" Bink retorted.

"Why?"

"Because it's ever-green!"

"The whole system of contests is wrong!" insisted Carker, who, though he was rich, was a pronounced socialist. "If we win, the other crew is beaten; and if they win, we are beaten. There is heartache and disappointment somewhere. These things must all be done away with before the era of the true brotherhood of man can come into existence. When the world is a great cooperative institution, and every man's gains and losses are just the same, then there will be no temptation drawing men to organize gambling syndicates to throw a boat-race, for there will be nothing to be lost by one set of men and won by another. You can see how evil the tree must be when it can yield such fruits!"

Danny sighed wearily.

"Which would you rather be, Rockefeller, or his coachman?" Bink queried.

"There will be no such distinctions when civilization becomes a cooperative brotherhood. To answer your question: I shouldn't want to be either Rockefeller or his coachman."

"One million is enough for you, eh?"

"I think ten thousand would make me happy!" said Joe Hooker, who up to that time had said nothing.

Carker gave Hooker a strange look.

"I'm surprised to hear you say that, Hooker. I've really been envying you. Think what it means not to have a lot of wealth to worry about! You are always

afraid you may lose some of it, or that some investment will fail or bank cashier run away. You are encumbered with business cares beyond anything most men dream of. A poor man has none of that! He doesn't have to see lawyers and have suits——”

“I think I should be glad to have a few suits!” said Hooker, with a meaning glance at his worn clothing.

Danny gave a yell.

“That would suit me!” chirped Bink. “I've always wanted to be arrayed like the grass of the fields which——”

“Oh, you're verdant enough now!” Danny asserted.

“I went to church once,” said Bruce.

“You astonish me!” Bink interrupted.

“Went to church once,” Bruce repeated, “and the choir was singing that anthem about the lilies. You know how it goes? Pretty! The bass bellowed like the heaving sea, ‘Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed!’ Then the tenor sang, ‘Was not arrayed!’ And the alto came in, ‘Was not arrayed!’ Then the soprano climbed up into the top of the choir gallery and squealed, ‘Was not arrayed!’ After which they all howled together, ‘Was not arrayed!’ Just then a drummer from Kalamazoo who was sitting behind me bent forward and whispered, as the choir gripped its breath for a new start, ‘Let's take up a collection and get Solomon some clothing!’”

"It's of no use to try to talk sense to men who haven't enough sense——"

"My trouble exactly," said Hooker. "I haven't enough cents!"

"You haven't enough sense to be serious. You laugh at me now, but just as sure as socialism doesn't have its way, there will come such an earthquake as the world has never dreamed of."

"You might hasten that leveling process a little bit," said Hooker. "If you are to divide up with me, I'll transfer some of my experience with poverty for some of your hard cash. That ought to hasten the dawn of the millennium—for me!"

Carker turned on Hooker with a look that was almost envious.

"Hooker, to do a thing of that kind would be a crime! You don't know how happy you are in your present condition. The poor man who has enough to satisfy his wants is the happiest man in the world. If you had ten thousand dollars you would want a hundred thousand, and then a million, and then a hundred millions! If there is a man in Yale whom I have envied, Hooker, that man is you!"

Notwithstanding that he had joked lightly with the jokers, Frank Merriwell's thoughts were serious enough when his friends took their departure, and he began a mental survey of recent events.

He had given much thought to the words he had

heard while on his trip from the headquarters of the boat crew at Gale's Ferry, and he had been forced to the belief that a great conspiracy was on foot to defeat Yale in the interest of a gambling syndicate. The men whose conversation he had partially overheard were of a type who would not stop at anything to gain their ends, and experience had shown him that Justin Lake was quite as unscrupulous.

"There is one thing, and only one thing, to be done before the race. I must find out just what is back of that talk, who the dangerous men are, and what their scheme is. I shall have to speak to Inza about it, too, so that she may be on her guard. If she was not thoroughly brave and courageous, I shouldn't dare to do that. But she will need to be on her guard. The syndicate will strike at her in some way, and it will also strike at Jack. I must write him a letter."

Thereupon Merriwell got out his writing-materials and penned a letter to Diamond, warning Jack of the dangers he feared, and giving him a description of the men he had seen and heard at the station. When he had this finished, Merriwell went down and dropped it into the nearest letter-box. As he turned to go back he encountered Hodge.

"Just making my way to your room with a bit of news," said Bart. "Rains is in town!"

"He has run over from New London, then?"

"Yes. I saw him down by Traeger's awhile ago.

He is offering bets on Harvard. He seems to be dead sure that the Crimson will take the whole bakeshop this time."

"I shall try to get a talk with him if he stays," said Frank.

"Looks as if he were in that syndicate?"

Three men were coming up the walk. Merriwell plucked Bart by the arm.

"Get a good look at those fellows as they go by, without appearing to do so. They are the three I overheard talking."

The three men came slowly on. They appeared to be closely scanning their surroundings and making a study of the buildings. When they beheld the two youths, they stopped this and hurried on.

"Something suspicious about that!" said Hodge. "Looks to me as if they are preparing for some kind of a raid. Perhaps they're planning to kidnap you, Merry!"

"Why should they want to do that? I'm not one of the crew. If Diamond roomed up there, I should agree with you. But Diamond is at Gale's Ferry."

"I shall know them when I see them again!" growled Hodge, as if he desired to take the rascals by the throat and summarily punish them for venturing near the campus and the college buildings at night. "They're here and Rains is here. We'll see Justin Lake next!"

They did see Justin Lake the very next morning. He was walking with Paul Rains, too. Rains and Lake passed Merriwell and Hodge on the street some distance from the campus.

"Hello!" called Rains. "Glad to see you!"

Then he excused himself to Lake, who passed on, and came over as if for a talk with Merriwell and Hodge.

"I suppose you know that fellow?" Hodge growled.

"Justin Lake? Yes, glad to say I do. Leading New York family, you know. Lake's got a barrel of money."

Since he had come into possession of "money to burn," Paul Rains had been making a great effort to break into the society of moneyed people, and he was evidently proud of his acquaintance with Lake.

"He's a scoundrel!" said Hodge.

Rains laughed.

"If Merriwell had said that, now, I shouldn't have been surprised. Lake was telling me of the way he tried to get Frank and some others out of the way, so that California would be sure to beat Yale, and he would be a big bet winner. But the thing didn't work."

"Bart is right. Lake is a scoundrel."

"We have been talking of the chances in the coming boat-race," Rains placidly went on. "I'm willing to

lay money on the Crimson, and Lake is doing the same. But, of course, we expect to win honorably!"

"Don't know so well about that!" Bart snarled.

Hodge was not in a pleasant humor, and he did not like Rains. He would have welcomed an excuse to "thump Rains a few" at almost any time.

"Oh, there won't be any need to try trickery to beat Yale this year! Yale has not any show whatever. I've closely studied the thing. Of course, my sympathies are naturally with Harvard, but I haven't let that blind me. Harvard has the better crew, the better method, the better coach."

Merriwell was not talking much, but he was closely watching every word spoken by Rains, in the hope that if Rains were in the syndicate, or knew anything about it, that fact would leak out. But as far as any such knowledge was concerned, Rains seemed as guiltless as can be imagined.

"Just a deep game of his," said Hodge, as Rains went on. "Rains is in that syndicate, sure as fate!"

After walking a short distance, he turned and gripped Merriwell by the arm and pointed down the street.

"There is the proof of it!"

Rains had rejoined Justin Lake, and the two were walking away with the trio of scamps seen by Merriwell at Gale's Ferry.

CHAPTER III.

MOVEMENTS AT GALE'S FERRY.

Jack Diamond was strolling on the shore late in the evening, when the letter written by Merriwell was delivered to him by one of the boat's crew.

"Same fellows!" he gasped, as he read the letter.

A few minutes before he had seen the three men mentioned and described by Merriwell. They were then also strolling near the river. During the afternoon Jack had seen them in a boat, and it was believed that they were watching the work of the Yale and Harvard crews.

"Tell the fellows that I will return by and by," said Diamond, speaking to Wilson, who had brought the letter and who was No. 4 of the boat's crew. "There are some things I want to look after up here."

The "things" Jack had taken a sudden notion to look after were the three men mentioned by Merriwell. Jack did not approve of eavesdropping any more than Merriwell did, but when the welfare of his friends seemed to be involved in a plot of villains he did not consider that it was eavesdropping to try to gain knowledge of that plot.

Though the men had disappeared, Jack followed on in the direction they had taken, and finally discovered

them seated in a secluded hollow near the path. They seemed to be talking and smoking.

Believing he had not been seen, Diamond dropped into some bushes, and when the darkness was heavy enough to conceal his movements he continued quietly on along the path. He knew that to thus dog these men was a perilous business. They wanted to strike at the man who pulled the stroke-oar, and Jack felt that they would probably welcome such an opportunity as would be afforded by the darkness and the isolated character of the place. Hence he redoubled his efforts to keep his presence and movements concealed.

When almost opposite the grassy hollow, he heard the men rising as if to leave. Again Diamond dropped down, sure that his form in the darkness could not be distinguished from the black shadows.

"If we steal the mascot——"

Though Diamond could understand no more, these words were enough to fill him with anxiety, for they seemed to portend some great danger to Inza.

"I must get a letter to Merriwell as quick as I can!"

He rose and softly followed the men. They had evidently continued along that path, but he was not able to come up with them again. He was moving with the greatest caution, and as they were not forced to move thus slowly he believed they had distanced him.

By and by Diamond turned back.

"They will not bother round here any more to-night! I'll write to Frank at once, and get the letter out in the first mail to-morrow."

But Jack Diamond was deceived. The men had not left the place.

An hour later they were at the water's edge, seated in a rowboat, which they pushed out into the river. One of the men rowed and another steered, and the boat's bow was turned in the direction of the Yale boat-house and float, of whose position they seemed as well assured as if the night were bright and moonlit instead of dark and foggy.

The oarsman rowed cautiously, and by and by the men ceased altogether to talk. And in silence the boat drew up at the float. A light was shining to show the float's position, though the fog had not enabled them to see this until they were near. In spite of this, one of the men left the boat, and, going to the boat-house, he took some wax out of his pockets, and with much care and skill secured an impression of the lock.

"No trouble to get in there when we're ready!" he whispered, as he came back to the boat and entered it.

"If only the night will be dark enough! Wish we could do the job to-night!"

This was growled in low tones by the man who wore the shiny silk tile.

"More than one string to the bow!" was the an-

swer, as the boat was softly shoved away. "If we slip up on this, we won't slip up on all."

"You bet we won't fail!" chimed in the oarsman. "There's too much boodle back of this for it to fail. If we do the handwork as well as Lake does the headwork, the thing is a sure winner."

"Oh, we'll do our part!"

"Sure!" said the man of the silk hat, who was now steering. "Not so much talk and more work. Give way there!"

The rower dipped the oars, and the boat softly glided away.

Notwithstanding the fact that appearances were against Paul Rains, Frank Merriwell was reluctant to believe that he was concerned in the plot against Yale. If the plot succeeded, Rains would profit by it, of course. But so would Harvard. And Frank knew that no Harvard man had any knowledge of the conspiracy.

Merriwell's discovery of the existence of a "syndicate" was the one thing that promised to defeat the plans of the conspirators. But the evidence was still hazy, and it continued to be exasperatingly so almost up to the time of the race.

The words heard by Diamond, indicating the character of the danger to Inza, the mascot of the crew, caused Frank not only to warn Inza, but to throw around her so many safeguards that it seemed impos-

sible for the scamps to carry out this part of their plot.

"If Inza should be spirited away at the last moment, it would have a bad effect on the crew," Merriwell admitted to his friends.

"Why, they are not superstitious children!" said Bruce.

"We are all just a little superstitious!"

"Nothing of that kind would ever affect me!" Bruce lazily drawled.

"Then, why didn't you buy that opal ring that you so much admired the other day? You told the jeweler that you liked it, but that you wouldn't take it because opals were said to be unlucky."

"I didn't say that I believed they were unlucky, did I?"

"No, but you let the beliefs of other people influence you, and you wouldn't take the ring. Just so it will be with the crew. They really don't believe in the influence of mascots, but it will affect them if the mascot should strangely disappear. But I was thinking of Inza more than of the crew. Whether the crew believe in anything of the kind or not, those betting men do. Nearly all gamblers and betting men are superstitious. They no doubt think that if the mascot could be spirited away their chances of winning would be greatly increased by that fact alone. And for that reason they will try to kidnap Inza."

"Take her away on Justin's yacht?" asked Bruce.

"I only wish I knew what their plans are."

Merriwell was having this talk with his friends the night before the boat-race. Every possible precaution seemed to have been taken. Faithful Yale men were guarding the Lee residence, where the mascot was staying. Faithful men were watching that no harm came to Diamond or any member of the crew.

Nevertheless, at that moment, the three men whose mysterious actions and words have been to some extent chronicled were dropping down to the boat-house in the rowboat, shielded by the darkness. A better night for their purpose could not have been found, and no member of the boat's crew dreamed of the blow that was about to be struck.

The float and the boat-house were gained without discovery. In fact, so careful had the three men been in their movements that afternoon and night that no one knew they were near Gale's Ferry or anywhere in the vicinity of the river and boat-house.

The man who had taken the wax impression of the lock of the boat-house door was now prepared with a key. He had also an oar that seemed the exact counterpart of the oars used by the Yale crew. With these he disappeared in the darkness, for the lantern at the float gave out not enough light to make great his danger of discovery. When he returned to the boat he seemed to carry the same oar he had taken with

him. It was not the same, however, but it was Jack Diamond's oar.

He was careful to make no noise as he reentered the boat with this oar, and the boat was then pulled swiftly and silently away, for the oars were muffled, and made no sound in the oar-locks.

The men did not return to the point from which they had come, but disembarked in a small, wooded cove, disappearing in the woods, and soon after entering a tumble-down house which sat so far back from the river that its presence was undreamed of by most people who fancied themselves quite familiar with the river and its shores.

Here a lantern was lighted, and the man with the silk hat produced a tiny, thin-bladed saw and deftly sawed into the oar.

"No trouble about sawing into wood," he remarked, in a grim sort of way. "I've sawed through iron in my time! Last time I was in hock I sawed through an iron bar that was nigh about as big as this oar."

He was very careful in his work and sawed into the oar only a little way—just enough to weaken it. Then he produced some sort of material resembling putty, only it was of the same color as the oar, and worked a portion of it into the cut. After that he used a coloring liquid. When done, he surveyed his work by the light of the lantern.

"No matter which oar the stroke gets he'll be liable to break it!" one of the men remarked.

"If he pulls hard enough! This oar will stand a heavy strain now. But if the race is tight, as it probably will be, the stroke will lay back on that oar with all his might—and it will go! It's sure to knock the crew out!"

"But if they break it in practise in the morning?"

"We've another string to pull, Reddy! Don't worry! If it's broke, it'll be broke. But I don't believe the stroke will pull hard enough in any practise rowin' to break this. I want him to break it when the race comes."

Having "fixed" the oar to their satisfaction, the men returned to the river and to the boat, and again rowed to the float and the boat-house.

There the other oar, which had also been "fixed," and which had been left to deceive any one who might chance to enter the boat-house, was brought away, and Diamond's oar, apparently not changed in the least, was left in its usual place.

There was some practise rowing on the river the next morning—the morning of the great race—but sharp as were Diamond's eyes, he did not discover that the oar had been tampered with, and the oar did not break. The crew returned to the float, with the approval of the coach, who had followed them in a launch, bellowing at them through his megaphone.

The little coxswain was pleased, too. The crew had never seemed to row in finer form. He was especially satisfied with the work of the stroke, and was liberal in his words of approval to Diamond.

"If Harvard defeats us to-day, it will be because she has the best crew she has ever put on the Thames," said the coach, speaking to the captain.

Harvard's crew pulled over the course that morning, closely watched by their competitors. But Harvard evidently did not do her best, and the fact that watches were held on the time was of no material advantage to Yale.

"If Harvard does no better than that!" said Diamond.

"Harvard will do a great deal better than that," said the coach. "Harvard can beat that time easy enough, but I think we can beat Harvard without any trouble!"

But when the coach made this statement he knew nothing of the rascally work of men who cared nothing for the races, but were resolved to throw the race to Harvard in the interest of the bets which had been so heavily laid on the success of the Crimson. If the coach had known, he would have trembled for the fate of the Blue.

CHAPTER IV.

TREACHERY!

Yale woke in a fever of excitement on the morning of the great boat-race. That is, a portion of Yale awoke. Another portion had not gone to sleep. Indeed, there was not any too much sleeping during those last days of excitement that were crowded into commencement week. Commencement week was practically ended. Yet there was one more great event to stir the blood of Yale. That was the boat-race at New London, and every one was going.

"Glad I've something to take my mind off my trouble!" said Bruce Browning, strolling into Merriwell's room, where several members of the flock were assembled.

Browning did not appear to be very much troubled, for he was placidly pulling at his pipe. Yet Browning, who ought to have graduated with the other members of the senior class, had failed in the examinations and been turned back a year. Having loafed into the room, Browning lazily inquired when the train for New London would be ready, then lazily loafed out again.

"That fellow will never graduate!" said Dismal. "He's just too lazy to study. Another year at Yale,

when really the fellow ought to have gone out a year ago!"

"I don't think it's troubling him much, though," said Bart.

"Dud-dud-don't anything tut-tut-troubles him!" stuttered Gamp.

"Just so he gets enough rest!" said Jim Hooker.

"That fellow!" said Rattleton, straightening up, for he had been stooping over a chair tying a bundle. "That fellow! He failed on purpose—I mean he failed purposely. He didn't want to graduate—couldn't have been hired to graduate!"

"Why?" asked Diamond.

"Because he wants to stay here another year with Merry!"

"Gug-gug-gug-goshfry! Dud-do you s'pose so?"

"Do I suppose so? I know it. Troubled? That fellow is as happy as a clam at high tide."

"And as lazy," grunted Bart.

New Haven seemed to be quite as much excited as Yale. The college blue was seen everywhere, in flags and streamers and ribbons, in buttons and badges and hatbands. The excursion-train at the station was packed with Yale enthusiasts long before the time for its departure, and from almost every window there fluttered the familiar blue.

In a coach set apart for college men, Merriwell had by previous arrangement secured seats for himself and

friends, including Elsie and Inza, who was to go to New London as the mascot of the Yale crew.

"If the girls aren't careful they will be late!" said Rattleton, as he looked at his watch on arriving at the station, and saw that the time for the train to leave was near at hand.

Merriwell had been thinking the same.

"Girls are always slow about such things!" growled Bart.

"Well, I don't want this train to go without the mascot!" Diamond remarked.

Jack Ready had been sent to the house with a carriage to bring the girls down to the station.

"There they come!" cried Rattleton, as he saw the carriage approaching. "Now we're all right!"

Ready stepped out of the carriage and assisted Elsie to the ground. It was seen that she was much excited, and Ready seemed to have lost his usual assurance. Seeing that the carriage did not contain Inza, Merriwell and the others hurried forward.

"The masc-ought to be here!" chirped Ready, with assumed levity. "But she isn't. And you may take my head for a football if I know where she is!"

"The servants say she received a telegram and left the house more than an hour ago," Elsie explained. "I was out at the time, but I can't understand why she didn't write me a note. We haven't the least idea what

has become of her. I was trying to hope that she was here."

Merriwell looked at his watch and saw that the train would start within less than two minutes.

"Who will stay here and make a search for Inza?" he asked.

Every member of the flock volunteered.

"I want to stay myself. But I must go through to New London and Gale's Ferry to see that everything is right there. The scoundrels have struck at Inza! The next blow will be at Jack. Bart and Harry will remain here and begin a search for Inza. If you can find her in time, charter an engine and bring her through!"

The departure of the train was being announced.

"Perhaps you'd better get Dirk to help you. Good-by. We must go now."

The discovery that Inza was missing cast a feeling of gloom over the flock. Merriwell did not believe that Inza would be harmed in any way, for he fancied that behind this was the clever hand of Justin Lake, and Lake was too shrewd a fellow to entangle himself very deeply in the meshes of the law. The chances were that some crafty trick had been used to draw her away, and that she would be detained by deceit rather than by force. None was more distressed and anxious than Elsie.

"We'll keep this from the crew as long as we can,"

Frank warned. "We'll say nothing about it to any one. If Bart and Harry succeed, they will get her to Gale's Ferry in time, and no one but ourselves need to know what has been done until after the race."

It was a two hours' trip to the Thames, and those two hours were filled with anxiety for Merriwell. He sent a telegram to Jack, warning him to be on his guard, without informing him that Inza had disappeared.

But the crushing crowd that filled the cars was jovial and happy. It believed implicitly that Yale would win. It sang, it shouted, it waved flags and banners, and it told innumerable stories. It talked, too, of the gaieties of commencement week and of the solemnities of graduation.

At New London the blue hue of everything became streaked and spotted with the Harvard crimson. New London was filled with Harvard adherents. A Harvard train was there, and in that train everything seemed to take on the Harvard hue. Crimson flags and hats, crimson ribbons, buttons, and shirt-waists.

"I'd rather belong to the Blue," said a pretty girl, conversing with another pretty girl in blue. "It looks so much cooler! Those girls over there look as if they would melt in those hot, crimson things!"

"But if you want to paint a town red, crimson is just the thing!" remarked a pale young man with a crimson necktie, standing near the girl who had spo-

ken. "If Harvard wins, everything will be crimson to-night. Fireworks, bonfires, rockets—all those things lend themselves to the jolly crimson color at such a time!"

"But Harvard isn't going to win!" declared the girl.

"Perhaps not!" the young man admitted, crushed by this confident rejoinder.

The sun beat down with fury as the steaming crowd sought to find something cool to eat and drink before hurrying over to the observation-cars. Merriwell went to the telegraph office, hoping for a word from Bart and Rattleton, or from Diamond. Nothing had come. He knew by this that Inza had not been found, for in that case Bart would have wired him at New London.

"We will win this race!" he declared, as he set his teeth in grim determination. "Inza was to have gone on the referee's boat, right behind the crews, and of course the crew is bound to know she isn't there. But they're sensible fellows, with an infinite lot of pluck. This won't throw them—though, of course, I wish the mascot were here! Now, if Jack only watches to see that he keeps out of danger! I can't imagine what they can do to him!"

Merriwell's certainty that Yale would win in spite of anything the opposition could do served in a large measure to restore the confidence of his friends. So, though they were anxious about Inza, when they went

over to the observation-cars for the run to the racing-waters, they were in a much better frame of mind concerning the outcome than they had been.

The observation-train in motion resembled a long, moving grand stand. It consisted chiefly of flat-cars, on which seats rose in tiers, facing toward the river; and its purpose was to run along the shore from the starting-point to the place of finish, keeping even pace with the contesting boats, thus enabling all who were fortunate enough to have seats to view the entire boat-race. There was a great scramble for seats, and those who had not secured them in advance found it almost impossible to obtain them now.

The train started at last with a jerk, and the people on the cars began to yell. They were away for the boat-race, and they were wild. Some of the cars of this moving grand stand were solid masses of blue, others masses of crimson. On other cars the blue and the crimson were mixed together in dire confusion. Often in a car there would be an area of blue, showing where Yale sympathizers were bunched together, and near-by a bunch of crimson, outlining a knot of the friends of Harvard. Everywhere blue and crimson parasols were waving, blue and crimson handkerchiefs were flying, blue and crimson ribbons were fluttering, blue and crimson flags were streaming in the breeze.

Merriwell's party was not in one of the grand-stand cars, but in an ordinary coach near the head of the

train. In another ordinary coach ahead of that rode a number of the friends and stanch adherents of Harvard. The shouts for Yale from one car were flung back from the other with cries for the rival crew. In one of the grand-stand cars a group of young ladies in crimson shirt-waists were singing "Fair Harvard."

Merriwell was not paying much attention to these things, for his mind was given to thoughts of Inza and in trying to determine the particular line in which danger would come to Jack Diamond. He hardly heard the jests and quips of his friends, and replied in monotonous and short sentences when addressed. Elsie was much distressed, and could think of nothing but Inza and wonder what had befallen her. At length Merriwell rose from his seat and strolled through the car. By and by he left the car to enter the one forward. As he did so, he came on a sight that staggered him.

On the platform of the forward car Jack Diamond was struggling fiercely in the grip of a rough-looking man, who seemed determined to hurl him under the train.

How did Diamond come to be there? Merriwell could not guess, and he had not time to inquire. The man with whom Jack was struggling looked as rough and coarse as a tramp, but when Merriwell saw his face he recognized him as one of the three conspirators he had seen at Gale's Ferry and in New Haven. The

man had, by a change of clothing, almost completely altered his appearance.

The fellow held Diamond by the throat and was pushing him back against the railing. He was a stronger and heavier man than Jack. Nevertheless, the Virginian was making a tremendous fight, and struggling to break the choking grip of his antagonist.

The train was not running at high speed, but there were some curves along the river, and it was jerking round these in a way that threatened to pitch both Jack and the man under the cars.

"Help!" Diamond called, when he saw Frank. With a spring, Frank placed himself at Diamond's side. The door was banged shut by the swing of the train, and the three were there between the cars engaged in what seemed a life-and-death struggle.

The cars were not vestibuled, and at a sharp turn Merriwell was flung outward so suddenly that he only saved himself from being pitched from the train by grasping the railing. Jack was clinging also to the railing with one hand and trying to beat the man off by heavy blows with the other.

"I'll kill ye both!" the man snarled, swinging heavily at Merriwell, with a blow which, had it landed fairly, would have knocked Frank into a state of insensibility.

Frank cleverly dodged it, and came back with such a

jolting lick that the man's grip of Diamond's throat was shaken loose.

A heavy ale-bottle came out of the man's pocket, flashing like a drawn weapon, and descended with crushing force on Diamond's head.

Jack staggered and blindly put up his hands, and would have tumbled between the cars, but for Merriwell's outstretched hand, which caught and saved him from a fatal fall. Then Diamond pitched heavily over on the platform of the car and lay in a heap.

"Curse you!" the man snarled, again lifting the ale-bottle and striking at Merriwell.

Frank was hampered, for he had put out a foot to keep Jack from the peril of a fall down the car-steps. But he warded off the blow from the bottle, and, catching hold of it, tore it from the hands of the man and flung it from the car.

"Curse ye!" the man grated again, lunging this time with his fist. The engine whistle screeched, showing that the train was approaching a crossing. The roar of the train had kept the sounds of the struggle from being heard.

Merriwell knocked aside this blow, but the man came at him again so fiercely that Frank was forced to remove the foot from Diamond's side and fight for his life.

The combat that followed was of a desperate char-

acter. The man seemed to realize that he was fighting for his liberty, if not for his life, and he closed on Merriwell with a bearlike hug, to escape the blows which Frank began to rain in his face. Merriwell felt the breath almost squeezed from his body under that tremendous pressure. The man had a grip of iron!

"Curse ye, I'll kill ye!" the man panted, as he and Merriwell waved to and fro between the bouncing cars.

The man swayed toward the left, and Merriwell tried to trip him, but failed, and again they staggered back and forth, each moment in danger of tumbling from the cars to their death.

"I'll kill ye!" the man hissed, tightening that terrible pressure.

Again Merriwell tried that tripping trick. This time he succeeded. The man not only fell, but he shot over the railing of the car and seemed about to fall between the cars to the track. As he fell he uttered a cry of alarm, which changed into a shriek. But his fall was almost instantly checked, for Merriwell caught him as he descended and held him thus with his muscular right hand.

The man had swung outward as he fell. Now, as his body dropped downward, it was pinched between the cars, but still upheld by Merriwell's ironlike grip. The horror written in the man's face as he looked upward into the eyes of his foe cannot be pictured. It

was the despairing expression of one who expects to be instantly ground to pieces.

But Merriwell's iron hold was not broken. The color began to come back into the man's white face.

"Save me!" he panted.

"I ought to let you go!" Merriwell hissed.

Then that dangerous laugh came to his lips. "You scoundrel! It would serve you right if I should drop you between the cars and let the train do its worst!"

The words were panted, rather than spoken.

"Save me!" the man begged.

"You have killed Diamond!"

"Save me!"

"You tried to kill me!"

The wretch gurgled his appeal, while his eyes rolled wildly. He was being painfully pinched between the swaying cars, and he felt that his end had come.

"You and your pals have lured Inza away! Where is she? Will you tell me? Will you tell the truth about that conspiracy, if I save you? Quick!"

"Y-es!" the man gurgled.

Merriwell tried to lift him up. But he could not.

"Save me! Oh, save me!" the wretch wailed.
"Save me!"

But it began to seem that it was not in Merriwell's power to save him. The man's big body could not be drawn up between the cars, for the cars came

too near together, and Frank's strength was not sufficient to swing the man bodily outward and so release him.

Twice Merriwell put forth every ounce of strength in an effort to do this, and failed. He called for help, but the whistle was screeching again and no one heard him. Still, he did not despair, and he did not let go his hold. Again he called for help when the scream of the whistle ceased. Jack's senseless body seemed about to slip down the steps and bounce to the ground.

Merriwell was about to call again, when Browning stumbled through the doorway. He had come forward looking for Frank, but had not heard the call. Instantly he took in the situation, and as quickly his look changed. With a bound, he crossed the intervening distance.

"Just a minute! Hang on to him, Merry!"

Bruce was not one to lose his head. Diamond's peril looked to be greater than that of the man whom Merriwell was holding, for Jack seemed about to bound off the platform. Bruce grasped Jack and drew him up to a safer place, noting as he did so that Diamond seemed to be stirring into life—a thing which had probably helped him to slip toward the steps.

Bruce turned from Diamond and came to Merriwell's assistance. His big, strong hands went down; and, taking the man by the shoulders, he swung him outward and upward almost as easily as if the man

had been a child. The rascal was white and shaking, but he staggered at once to his feet.

"Look out for Jack!" Merriwell cautioned, moving to lay a hand on the man's shoulder. "We are to have an explanation out of this fellow!"

The man stumbled backward as if to escape that outstretched hand—and fell from the train! Merriwell saw him strike the embankment and roll down into the ditch, but whether he was seriously injured or not he could not tell.

The whistle screeched again, and the train began to reduce its speed. Browning was helping Diamond to his feet, and Jack was opening his eyes. A trickle of blood had run down from under his hair and stained his face. The ale-bottle had delivered a terrible blow.

"We'll get him back there into the car!" said Browning. "He needs attention. How did this happen? And who was that scoundrel? We ought to have let him go under the train!"

The sight of the injury received by Diamond brought this bloodthirsty speech to Bruce's lips. Browning picked Jack up in his strong arms and bore him tenderly into their car, Merriwell opening the door to let him through. Their appearance created a sensation. Several sprang up to help Bruce, and two car seats were quickly turned into a cushioned lounge. Everybody was asking questions.

Merriwell hastened away to ascertain if a surgeon

could be had on the train and to report the fall of the man to the conductor. He did not want the man to escape, feeling that by threats and questions the whole secret of the conspiracy against Yale could be laid bare.

CHAPTER V.

A GLOOMY OUTLOOK.

"That was what brought me!" said Diamond, taking a telegram from a pocket and handing it to Bruce.

The train had stopped. It had reached the end of its journey shortly after the man stumbled backward from the train. Jack had been taken from the car and was now resting quietly under a big awning beside the track. His head was bandaged, and it ached furiously. The skin had been lain open, but the skull had not been fractured, though the blow from the ale-bottle had seemed to fall heavily enough to break the head of an ox.

This was the telegram:

"Meet me at New London. Important.

"MERRY."

It was addressed to Diamond, and it had been sent from New Haven.

Elsie was wetting a cloth to apply to Jack's head. Bruce passed the telegram over to her.

"I'm sure Merriwell never sent that," said Bruce. "He would have spoken of it if he had. If he had expected Jack to meet him at New London he would have said something about it. It's a fraud!"

Jack Ready looked at it.

"The fellow who sent that was immensely clever. I fancy it would be hard to make a case of forgery out of it. It isn't signed with Merriwell's name, you see. If we could find the very man who sent it, he could find a hole in that big enough to slip through. I thought all the cleverness was in Yale, but I see that it isn't!"

"There won't be any left there when you leave college!" said Danny.

"But I shall be spared to Yale for three whole years yet. When this cheering fact was made known to the faculty yesterday they passed a vote of congratulation."

"I showed that telegram to the captain and the coach, and they said that I would have time to meet Merry at New London, if I came right back on the observation-car," Diamond explained.

Dismal looked dolefully down his nose.

"But you won't be able to row! You will not be fit to sit in a boat and pull an oar for a week!"

"And that was what the fellows planned—just to knock me out!"

Diamond was looking quite as serious as Dismal. None of the party was in a jocular mood. Even Bink and Danny were as solemn as a pair of little screech owls. Once or twice they tried to raise a laugh, but their spirits were not equal to it. They felt that with

the mascot gone, and Diamond, the stroke, unable to put hand to oar, the chances of Yale were very wobbly, to say the least.

"I couldn't find you people at New London, the crush was so great. And I couldn't get a seat, for all the seats had been taken in advance. So I climbed on the engine, and learning, after the train started, that your party was in one of the closed cars, I made my way back over the tender and through the cars. When I started to pass to your car, that villain assaulted me. I don't know whether he wanted to throw me under the car or not, but he was determined to beat and choke me half to death. I think he was stealing a ride, I guess I should have gone under the car all right, if Merry hadn't appeared."

"The fellow had been following you!" said Dismal. "No doubt about that, I guess. The wicked triumph and flourish like a green bay-tree!"

"And bounce down embankments like rolling stones!" said Ready. "Glad I'm not wicked!"

"I'm just worried to death about Inza!" Elsie exclaimed. A messenger boy appeared with a telegram for Merriwell.

"He's coming right there!" said Dismal, pointing down the track with his long forefinger.

Merriwell had gone back with Gamp and some of the trainmen to ascertain what had become of the trampish-looking fellow who had fallen from the train.

They had not found him. But in the spot where Merriwell half-expected to come on his crushed and mangled body, they discovered bloody marks on the soil, which showed that the man had been injured. Though the indications were that his injuries were serious, he had been able to crawl away and conceal himself so that he could not be found. Merriwell was much disappointed, for he had hoped if the man were living and conscious that the story of the conspiracy against the Yale boat crew could be obtained from him in its entirety.

Jack Ready hurried to Frank with the telegram.

"From Bart," said Merriwell, as he tore it open and looked at it. "'No trace. Making no headway. Dirk puzzled.' That boat-race will have to go on without the mascot and without the stroke!"

"And that means defeat!" said Ready.

"No. We will win, anyway. We must win! These scoundrels shall not triumph!"

A look of admiration came into Ready's round face.

"Whatever Merry says gug-gug-goes!" stuttered Gamp, with beaming countenance. "We're gug-gug-gug-going to b-bub-beat 'em, anyhow!"

"Determination is the war balloon that lifts us to the top of the kopje. If you say it can be done, Merriwell, I'm bound to believe you. But it has seemed to me that we're up against something tougher than a Boer laager!"

"If we only had some lager!" murmured Dismal, who had joined them.

"I suppose you'd take it in the nek?" Ready questioned.

"You'd take it any way you could get it!" Dismal retorted.

"Sir, I am a temperance advocate. But you can bet there's always a hot time when the Boer is in the laager and the lager's in the nek! For further particulars, ask the British!"

"We must beat those fellows!" Merriwell again declared. "We can do it anyway, and we will! How is Jack?"

He was walking on again.

"Jack is a Diamond of the purest water! He would try to pull that stroke-oar though he can hardly hold his head up; but the doctor said it would be suicidal for him to attempt it, and I've braced up the doctor's opinion with one of my own to the same effect. Yes, Diamond got it in the neck—and unless you've some beautiful plan to pull us out of the hole the boat's crew will get it in the same place. But I'm tying to you, Merriwell, tying to you—as the tin-can said to the tail of the dog when it was under the manipulations of the small boy's fingers. No offense when I compare you to a dog—there are various kinds of dogs!"

"Looks as if we're knocked out now!" said Bruce,

as he loafed out to meet Merriwell, concealing his deep anxiety under a placid show of indifference.

“Not a bit of it! Take a brace, Bruce! We must win against those fellows. We can do it yet, and we must!”

“I’m willing!” said Bruce. “Just show us how!”

* * * * *

What had become of Inza Burrage, the Mascot of the Crew?

A telegram had come to her, purporting to be from her father. It was sent from a small village beyond New Haven, whither Bernard Burrage had gone the day before on a visit to some friends. This was the telegram:

“Your father stricken down with shock. Come at once.
SUSAN ANSELM.”

Susan Anselm was the wife of the man whom Bernard Burrage had gone to visit. Burrage had long been an invalid, and something of the kind that now seemed to have befallen him had been at times much feared by Inza. She did not stop to question the genuineness of the telegram. Elsie had gone out into the city, and Winnie was away with Buck Badger, her husband, on a short wedding trip.

Wildly anxious to hasten to the bedside of her father, Inza had written a note to Elsie, which she

left on her table, explaining everything and telling Elsie to hurry the news to Frank. Then she had hastily thrown a few things into a little traveling-bag and had left the house, hurrying at once to the station to take the first train which would rush her to her father's bedside. If that note had been received, much anxiety would have been spared her friends, but it was not received. The butler, who had assisted Justin Lake on another occasion, contrived to get the note and destroy it, and Elsie was deprived of all knowledge of Inza's plans.

On arriving in the village and hastening to the home of her friend, Inza found that she had been deceived. Her father was in his usual health, and was immensely surprised when he learned why she had come.

Inza's quick wit saw through the trick at once.

"They have side-tracked the mascot out here!" said Burrage, laughing.

"But she isn't going to stay side-tracked!" Inza declared. "There is a train back for New London soon. I believe I shall have time to catch that observation-car yet!"

Thereupon she kissed her father good-by and hurried back to the station to catch the train for New London. Before the train came in she found time to send a telegram to Frank in New Haven.

When the train pulled into New London, the ob-

ervation-car had pulled out. She was in despair. The boat-race would begin near Gale's Ferry on the river almost as soon as the observation-car reached there. She knew that.

"If I were a millionaire!" she sighed, as she stood in the New London waiting-room and racked her brain for a plan. "If I were a millionaire I'd hire a special train to take me up the river; but being only a common mortal, I shall have to wait for the next train—or walk! I wonder if Frank received that telegram?"

She had hoped that Frank would have some one at the station to meet her, or that he would be there himself.

"He didn't get the telegram, I know, and he has now gone on in the observation-train. Oh, dear! what shall I do? I think I'll send him another telegram!"

Merriwell had not received the telegram, for he had left New Haven. However, it was taken to his room for delivery, and there fell into the hands of Bart Hodge and Harry Rattleton.

"It's strictly against my principles to pry into people's mail or telegraph matter," said Hodge, after he had receipted in Merriwell's name for the message, a thing that any member of the flock was privileged to do when a telegram came for one of the number in his absence. "It's against my principles, but I feel, some way, that Merry ought to know what is in this. Prob-

ably it is so important that we ought to resend it to him at once."

Rattleton had the same feeling, and after discussing the matter and becoming more and more convinced that under the circumstances this was what they ought to do, Bart opened the message and found that it was from Inza.

"Whoop!" shouted Rattleton. "And she is on her way to New London! We'd better trake a rain—take a train for New London, too, as soon as we can."

"And forward this right on to Merry!"

Thereupon they hastened to the station, rewired the message and found a train leaving for New London. It was a regular train, and not an excursion-train, however.

"Oh, if I were a millionaire!" Inza sighed, as she walked up and down the waiting-room, after sending that last message to Frank, and wildly wondering how she could get on to Gale's Ferry. "I must get up there before the race begins."

Going to an official, she questioned as to the departure of other trains for the scene of the boat-race. No others were going soon. A train had rolled into the station, but it gave her no hope.

"It must be almost time for the race to begin!" she thought, as she looked at her tiny watch. "And the mascot is here, when she ought to be there! If I could only hear from Frank! I must get up there,

somehow! I'll see that official again. Perhaps the distance isn't so great but that I can get there in a carriage or cab. Why didn't I think of that before? I must get up there before that race begins!"

Frank's iron determination seemed to be reproduced in Inza's character. In truth, his unbending will and unconquerable energy, which had so often plucked victory out of the jaws of defeat had been so impressed on all of his friends that difficulties which would bring despair to others only stimulated them to greater activity.

As she turned about for the purpose of again consulting the official, a small hand-car, of the spidery kind known as a railroad velocipede, was wheeled out of a shed at the side of the station and placed on the track. It was a mere framework of a car, with three light, iron-bound wooden wheels, intended to be run at a high rate of speed. Inza turned toward this car, wondering if it would not furnish the means she sought.

"Would it be possible to hire this car and some one to take me up the railway to the boat-race?" she asked.

"Already hired!" said the man who had brought it out of the shed, and who did not seem pleased. "Something I never knew to be done before, too! This ain't built for an observation-train!"

Inza's heart sank.

"Is there another here?" she anxiously questioned.

"No, miss!"

"Could I get there in a carriage and——"

"Whoop!"

A familiar shout sounded almost in her ears. She turned and saw Harry Rattleton and Bart Hodge. Harry's face was beaming with delight.

"The mascot!" he screeched. "Whoop! We'll beat 'em yet!"

The man looked at Harry as if he fancied he had gone crazy; for Harry was not only whooping, he was dancing about like a lunatic. A smile also rested on the dark face of Bart Hodge.

"We knew you were on your way!" he said. "We received the message you sent to Merry. He's on the observation-train."

"Been hunting for you all over New Haven," Rattleton explained. "Couldn't find you, and here you are. Now we'll hit the track!"

"Can't three ride on this car!" the man grumbled, seeing that it was the intention of these young men to take Inza on the car with them.

"If we had time we would try to get an engine!" said Hodge. "But it will take time to do that, and we might fail in getting one, after all. We've hired this and we'll have to try to get through on it."

Rattleton was looking at the little car with sobered face.

"Say!" he suddenly exclaimed. "That thing will go a good deal faster with only two on it. I'll stay behind, Bart, and get through the best way I can, while you take Inza. That will be better! I can howl for you and wish you success!"

"And miss seeing the race?"

Rattleton's face was very grave.

"That's all right, Hodge. You can pull that thing through faster than I can. There isn't room for three. I'd give a million dollars to see that race, but I'll stay, just the same. We want to win, you know, and we've got to get the mascot there! I'm willing to stay! Just so Yale wins! Tumble on there, and I'll give you a shove!"

"It's too bad!" said Inza.

"That's all right!" Harry cried. "No time for talk! No time for argument! If you're going, you must go!"

All knew that this was true.

"Just get there, Hodge! That's all! You can do it!"

Hodge dropped to the seat and put his hands and feet on the levers. Inza took the one seat forward. There was literally no room for another passenger.

Harry Rattleton gave the velocipede a push and sent it spinning along the rails. Hodge began to pull and push on the levers and the speed of the spidery car increased.

"You must get there, old man! Get there! You can make it! Now, drive her! Drive her!"

The little car shot away from the station and up the track, with Rattleton unselfishly waving his hat and yelling his encouragement.

The last words that floated to them from him was the old yell that had so often thundered over the waters.

"Hooray for the Mascot of the Crew!"

"We'll get there!" Inza exclaimed, looking again at her tiny watch, while her bright eyes sparkled.

"Sure!" said Bart, with grim determination, while the levers seemed to fly. "We've got to get there!"

CHAPTER VI.

YALE AGAINST HARVARD.

The time set for the boat-race was almost at hand. For hours steamers from New Haven, New York, and Boston, crowded with spectators, had been arriving and slowly working their way to favorable points on the river. Steam and sailing yachts, with red and blue streamers flying, plowed the waters, maneuvering for good positions. Smaller boats skipped about like water-bugs.

The long observation-trains from New London were drawn up opposite the starting-line.

With bandaged head and pale face, Jack Diamond sat in the observation-train with Elsie and other friends, looking out upon the Thames.

"Take my opera-glass," said Elsie.

Jack took the glass, adjusted it, and looked at the Yale boat-house and float.

"It makes me sick to think that I can't be there!"

"If you cuc-cuc-could have taken the mum-mum-mascot's pup-place!" stuttered Gamp mournfully, addressing Elsie.

"But Frank didn't think it best, you know! He hasn't given up the hope that she will come yet."

"Tut-tut-too late now!" Gamp declared.

Bruce was walking up and down the aisle.

"Merry says we mustn't give up, but everything looks pretty blue!" he grumbled.

"The Yale blue!" chirped Danny.

"Wish it were the Yale blue!" moaned Dismal.

"Thought you never worried about anything?" Bink flung at Bruce.

"I never said so!" Bruce flung back.

"He isn't worrying, he's just wondering!" Danny explained.

A boy came into the car with a jump and put a note into the hands of Diamond, whom he singled out by his bandaged head. It was from Merriwell.

"I have been chosen to take Jack's place as stroke. Harvard isn't ready—cracked oar, I believe, and we have agreed to hold back the race twenty minutes. I still have hopes of Inza. Telegram rewired at New Haven says she is on the way. Bart and Harry are also on the way somewhere. Keep your courage up. The crew still full of hope. We will win this race yet. Haven't time to write more. Tell Bruce to be ready.

"MERRY."

Jack read this aloud to the throng that crowded round him. A little cheer went up. Bruce made his way out of the car and went to a single-seated buggy which was drawn up near with a driver in the seat.

"I guess you fellows won't find any need of this,"

the driver remarked, with a smile, as he flicked at a fly that was troubling the horse.

"Dunno!" Bruce admitted. "Merry thinks so!"

"I bub-bet Yale was gug-glad enough to hold bub-back the race tut-twenty minutes!" Gamp mumbled.

If Joe could have read the heart of Frank Merriwell at that moment he would have known how glad one member of the Yale crew was that the race was being delayed. Merriwell had intended to make a fight for time, when the request for a delay came over from the Harvard crew. Some of the Yale men began to grumble.

"But it's just what we want!" Frank had assured them. "I believe that Inza will get here. This twenty minutes is all in our favor!"

The Yale men would have scouted the idea that they were superstitious; yet they would have felt relieved if they could have been assured of the coming of the mascot of the crew in time. Merry's words encouraged them, and the reply was sent to Harvard that the request for a delay of twenty minutes had been granted.

"We'll make it, if she doesn't come!" Merriwell declared, as the minutes dragged their slow length along. "But I want her to see us win the race. I wouldn't have her miss it for anything!"

There was a noticeable stir at the Harvard position across the river.

"I think they're getting ready to launch their boat!" one of the men observed. "Time's about up. Glad we haven't any broken oars to trouble us. That's a worse hoodoo than the loss of the mascot."

The Yale oars, the shell, everything, had been carefully scanned and examined, and the treacherous work of the man who had sawn into the oar of the stroke and weakened it had not been discovered.

"Some excitement up there at the train!" one of the crew remarked.

"Oh, they've been wild ever since they came!" was the answer.

Merriwell took a glass and trained it on the observation-car. His face changed.

"Fellows!" he exclaimed, taking the glass from his eyes. "I believe the mascot has come!"

How his voice thrilled! But the joy that thrilled him was not greater than that in the usually placid breast of Bruce Browning, as he bodily lifted Inza to a seat in the waiting buggy and bounded in at her side.

Bart Hodge had won the race! How the Yale crew yelled! Their mascot had arrived.

"Right up here!" said the captain of the launch, as he assisted Inza aboard.

"And you, too!" he said, grasping Browning by the shoulder.

Bruce had not expected to go on the referee's launch, though he was glad enough to do so. A place had

been assigned to Inza, and now Bruce was to go, too, through the favor of the captain.

There was no time for protests, if any one cared to make them. There were a number of people on the launch, some wearing the crimson of Harvard and others the blue of Yale. For the main part, these were officials representing the two crews.

The Yale crew yelled again and again when Inza stepped to the side of the launch and fluttered her handkerchief in their direction. Bruce was at her side.

"Bart was almost exhausted," she said. "But the noble fellow wouldn't admit it nor let me help him. He came like the wind! I don't believe a railroad velocipede was ever sent at such speed before. On some of the curves I thought sure it was going off the track! But Bart brought me through on time."

"None grittier!" Bruce admitted. "Sorry Rattles couldn't come!"

The Harvard men were in their shell and moving toward the starting-line. The crimson was fluttering everywhere, and the Harvard sympathizers were howling themselves hoarse.

Then the Yale crew were seen carrying their shell out on the float. What a pleasing thing it was to see them in their light racing-suits of blue, as they raised the shell with a dexterous swing above their heads and laid it gracefully upon the water. Inza's handkerchief

fluttered again as she noticed Merriwell. What a handsome fellow he was, truly! He seemed a demigod of the sea.

The crew stepped gingerly into the cranky shell, oars were adjusted, and the boat moved away from the float.

"Frank is a splendid stroke!" Inza exclaimed.

"You bet!" Bruce grunted.

"And see how finely they pull together! How straight their backs are! And how they come forward together, so smoothly, as if they were only one man!"

"We've a big show to win this race!" Bruce declared.

"We're sure to win it, Bruce! The mascot is here, and Frank is the stroke! We can't lose it!"

"Accidents sometimes happen!" grumbled Bruce. He did not know of the weakened oar of the stroke, and he did not mean this as a prophecy.

Both boats were moving to the starting-point. The referee's launch began to swing round to get into position. The friends of Yale afloat and ashore were trying to drown the yells of the adherents of the Cambridge college. Flags were shooting up and down the halyards of some of the yachts. Some of the smaller boats laden with spectators began to move nearer to the racing-waters.

As the Yale and Harvard shells came up to the

starting-point, the cheers broke forth again. The referee's launch was moving toward the boats as they backed up to the line. The two shells, held by their sterns, were allowed to swing down the current. The oars were lifted and swung back together and remained poised over the stream. The crucial moment had come—the race was ready to begin!

Inza's eyes were fixed on the Yale crew and especially on Frank Merriwell.

"It isn't the mascot!" she thought. "I am glad to be their mascot—the mascot of such a noble crew. But success will come through Frank, not through the mascot!"

The wild cheering on the river and on shore partially subsided. Inza plainly heard the question of the starter, and the answer:

"Are you ready?"

"Yes!"

"Go!"

The sixteen shining, dripping oars dipped as one blade; sixteen muscular fellows straightened back on the sliding seats; and the two shells, representing Harvard and Yale, leaped from the starting-line, as if endowed with life.

And were they not endowed with life? The sixteen men who propelled them were filled and thrilled with the strong, rich life of youth. Every fiber of their beings tingled with the exultant quiver of that strange,

indefinable thing which we call life, and whose absence is death.

Side by side the shells shot away, the blue and crimson lines of men swaying backward and forward with machinelike motion, while the oars flashed and glistened and dripped silver.

The yells on the vessels and on the shore were renewed. A hoarse bellowing came from the observation-trains, which were also beginning to move, three-fourths of a mile distant from the racing boats. The powerful steam-launch of the referee swung in behind the shells, and away all went, in wild excitement.

For a moment Inza turned her opera-glass on the train which held her friends. She fancied she saw Elsie's face at one of the windows of the closed car, and fluttered her handkerchief. Elsie had a glass trained on the launch, and the flutter of her handkerchief came as a signal that she saw Inza.

"They can see everything!" was Inza's joyous thought. "I wish they were here, though! But I wish more than all that Harry Rattleton could see this race! The faithful fellow deserves to see it! But he will be as happy as the happiest if we win. And we will win, of course! With Frank as stroke, we are sure to win!"

"Our fellows are going along in fine shape, but the Harvard men are doing about as well!"

Bruce Browning was speaking. The shells seemed

to be flying along side by side. Neither had obtained an advantage at the start, and neither was now leading.

"It will be a close race!" said the referee.

"Very close!" added the captain.

"Harvard is increasing its stroke!" announced a man who was studying the dial of a watch. "They've already gone up two strokes to the minute."

"Beginning to spurt!" said another.

"By George! gaining, too!" cried a Harvard sympathizer, as was shown by the ribbons on his coat. "Mighty hard to beat Harvard!"

"Mighty hard to beat Yale!" said Bruce.

"With Frank a member of the crew!" was Inza's thought.

She heard the comments, though her eyes were fixed on the Yale crew. She had passed the glass to Browning. The launch was plunging on so rapidly that it was keeping well up with the racing boats, though not near enough to interfere in any way. Now and then Inza was sure that she saw Merriwell glance up toward her. His position as stroke brought him nearer the launch than any other man in the Yale boat except the coxswain.

Whenever any of the crew seemed to look toward her or toward the launch, Inza waved her handkerchief encouragingly, proud and happy in the fact that

she was there to help them as much as she could by her presence.

“Yale’s stroke moves as steady as a clock!” the man was saying who held the watch. “He hasn’t varied the fraction of a second!”

“Merriwell!” said another. “Their regular stroke got knocked out in a fight with a tramp! Said to be about the best oarsman in Yale.”

“You bet!” answered Bruce, with swelling enthusiasm. “Merriwell is a whole boat crew himself!”

CHAPTER VII.

THE BROKEN OAR.

The wind commenced to breeze up, and the water, which had been as smooth as a mill pond, began to roughen. Yet the racing-shells moved on as steadily as before, slicing through the waves like chopping knives.

“Yale is increasing the stroke!” said the man with the watch. Harvard had gained a trifle, but Yale was recovering this.

How beautiful it all was! The flash of the oars just before the catch, the clean finish, the sway of the bodies! It was the poetry of motion. And how bright, too! for the vessels were gaudy with flags and streamers, the observation-trains' dense masses of crimson and blue—everything a flutter of color! All rimmed in by the green of the shore; while beneath and behind and before, the Thames rippled and plashed and threw up fringes of foamy lace along the crest of the waves.

But it was not quiet; for men bellowed themselves hoarse, and whistles screeched, and students yelled and sang.

“Yale's stroke has pulled up to thirty-four!” said the man with the watch. Yale had recovered the distance lost. The mile flag had been past. A fourth

of the race was done, and the boats were still almost side by side.

"Yale is in the lead!" said Bruce. "Hurrah for Merriwell!"

The men in blue continued to gain, until they were a boat's length ahead. Then Harvard began again to spurt. The lead of the Yale boat was decreased to half a length. Those on the referee's launch could plainly hear the Yale and Harvard coxswains encouraging their men. The two-mile flag was passed, with Yale still in the lead. Yale's stroke had dropped back to thirty-one, but the shell was maintaining the lead.

The three-mile flag was passed. Harvard was hanging to Yale with grim determination. Harvard was spurting again, too. The half-length lead seemed about to be lost. Some of the oarsmen were seen to be painfully laboring. The pace had been terrific, and the crews so evenly matched that the outcome was in great doubt.

"Yale increasing stroke again!" announced the watch holder.

The stroke went up to thirty-four. Inza could see that Merriwell was dipping deep and strong, though with rhythmic regularity. She fluttered her handkerchief encouragingly.

"Pulling ahead!" gasped Bruce, who had seemed to be holding his breath for almost a minute. "Got 'em, I believe! Yale's going ahead!"

A great bellowing like distant thunder rolled across from the observation-trains.

"Pull!" Yale's coxswain was heard urging. "Pull. Break your backs! Pull! All together! Now! now!"

"Gaining!" Bruce cried, becoming fairly shaky in his unwonted excitement. Yale was a boat's length ahead, and still gaining. Soon she was two boat lengths ahead!

"We win!" said Bruce. "We win!"

"Hello!" cried the referee. "Something is the matter!"

Truly, something was the matter. Merriwell's oar had snapped short off, and the blade was trailing in the water, impeding the progress of the Yale boat. The water spurted over the motionless oar.

"Beat!" groaned a Yale man.

"With victory in sight—with victory won!"

"We are not beaten!" Inza excitedly exclaimed.

Merriwell was reaching out and unlocking his rowlock to set the oar free, that it might no longer impede the progress of the shell.

The seven oars in the Yale shell were still rising and falling, and the little coxswain's voice rose in encouragement. But Yale's chances seemed to be gone. The Harvard boat was decreasing the distance rapidly. Its bow oar passed the stern of the Yale boat. Foot by foot it pulled up, though Yale's crippled crew were making a dauntless effort.

Merriwell succeeded in freeing the dragging oar and threw the two pieces into the river. He saw the cut and knew that treachery had been at work, but he could not hold on to the oar even to use it as evidence.

Suddenly he rose upright in his place.

"He's going to leap overboard!" Inza fairly shrieked.

"That's all right! That's the stuff!" cried Bruce.

Merriwell was indeed preparing to spring from the shell. He saw that the seven oarsmen might still have a chance to defeat Harvard if the Yale shell were freed of the superfluous and useless weight of his body.

"Yes, he's going over!" a Yale man exclaimed. "I suppose he can swim all right?"

Bruce had moved with an agility that was simply wonderful, and was going over the side of the launch, suspended by a rope snubbed round a cleat and held for him by a Yale sympathizer. He saw that he could probably help Merriwell, after Frank plunged into the river.

Then Merriwell went over the side of the shell, clearing it well, and coming to the surface almost instantly, shouted:

"You can win yet! Pull, fellows! Pull!"

The launch was almost upon him. But, as the lightened Yale boat leaped on, Browning, swinging down

from the launch, reached out a hand to his friend and drew him half out of the water, and out of danger.

The Yale boat was holding its own against the Crimson, and again men were howling like lunatics. The finishing-line was just ahead. The line was crossed, with Yale a half-length in advance.

Then the cannons boomed and the blue fluttered victoriously.

* * * * *

Over on the observation-train the members of Merriwell's flock and their friends were wildly cheering. Gamp was stuttering his joy, and Danny and Bink seemed to want to stand on their heads in the aisle of the swaying car. The train slowed down almost to a stop, immediately after the signal flags had announced the victory of Yale.

"I'll dream of this for a week!" shouted Danny.

"And I'll seam of it all drummer—I mean I'll dream of it all summer!"

Harry Rattleton had climbed up the steps and bounded into the car.

"Just got here on another train, fellows!" he exclaimed, while his honest face shone with delight. "But I saw the end of the race! It was great! Hooray for Yale!"

The train came to a stop, and Bart Hodge walked to the door. On the platform he encountered Paul

Rains, whose coat was fairly covered with crimson flags and ribbons.

"I've heard about that conspiracy!" Rains said, as soon as he saw Bart. "And one of your friends had the gall to tell me that I was in it. But I wasn't! I knew nothing at all about it. I put my money on Harvard simply because I didn't believe that Yale could beat her. But I did not do any dirt."

"Is that straight?" Bart asked.

"You needn't believe it, if you don't want to! But I'd like Merriwell to know that I had nothing to do with it!"

Bart saw that Rains was speaking the truth.

"But Lake did!"

"Perhaps!"

"And Lake has again been beaten by Merriwell!"

CHAPTER VIII.

IN THE ADIRONDACKS.

The boat-race had constituted a magnificent climax to the term's successful record in sport, and the college men had gone to their various homes in the highest of spirits. Some had gone West; some South—some to the Adirondacks. Let us take a peep at some of these sturdy Yale supporters, enjoying their well-deserved rest; a number of Frank Merriwell's party being there, bent on pleasure.

“Carry this up for you?”

“You cuc-cuc-can't lift it!”

The scene was the platform of the station of Wabeek, in the Adirondacks, and the first speaker was a young fellow who did a little of everything, from logging in the winter to acting as guide to tourist parties in the summer. The other speaker was Joe Gamp. Gathered about Gamp were members of Frank Merriwell's party. The train which had brought them had just steamed away, and Merriwell and Hodge were inside the station talking to the ticket-seller.

The carriages and trunk teams from the Wabeek Hotel, which was distant from the place a mile or so back in the mountains, had not arrived; and Ben Romine, the young man mentioned, feeling very strong

from the effects of a few drinks which he had taken, had offered to carry the heaviest trunk to the hotel. Romine was thick-set and muscular, with gnarled and knotty hands and a neck like a tree.

"There are gold bricks in that, young man!" Jack Ready airily declared. "It would take an elephant to lift it!"

"I'm elefant enough to lift it and carry it to the Wabeek. If there are any gold bricks in it an' you'll gimme the chance, I'll carry it out o' the county!"

"I dud-dud-don't believe you cuc-can lift one end of it, young feller!" Gamp solemnly declared.

"Certainly he can!" Bink Stubbs asserted. "I could lift that thing myself, if I'd a little strengthening plaster inwardly applied."

"Sure!" chirped Danny Griswold. "I wouldn't make any job at all of lifting that, if I were strong enough!"

"Hoist it up and I'll make a picture of you!" urged Greg Carker, taking up his camera. "We'll call the picture, 'The Elephant of the Adirondacks and his Little Trunk!'"

"Anything in it?" asked Romine, with a grin.

"Gold bricks, I told you!" said Ready.

"There's where Carker carries his wealth," chirped Bink.

"Anything in it for me? That's what I mean."

"Is there anything in it for him, Greg?" Ready

blandly asked. "I really don't know just what is in it, aside from the gold bricks!"

Having discovered that the trunk was Carker's, Romine turned to him.

"Anything in it for me?" he asked of Carker.

Greg looked bored.

"What is it worth, young feller, if I h'ist that thing to my shoulders? Enough to make it interestin', you know! No use liftin' for you. I feel's if I could throw the danged thing over the station. Feel strong's a moose this mornin'! Fine air we've got up here—finest manufactured! You fellers'll have muscles like hosses in a month, 'f you stay up here. What's it worth, governor, if I h'ist it?"

"I don't care whether you hoist it or not? What good will that do me?"

Though Greg Carker was the prospective heir of millions, he never threw away any money foolishly, except on himself. Now and then, for his own gratification, he could "burn money" as recklessly as any man who ever struck Yale. But these periods were remarkable for being few and far between, as well as for the recklessness with which Greg then flung around his cash. Greg was said by his friends to be "near"; but he insisted, in the lectures which he sometimes distributed with a more lavish hand than he did his wealth, that economy was the road to riches and only fools walked in any other highway. Hence he

did not intend to give anything to Romine for doing so foolish and unnecessary a thing as lifting the heavy trunk. Greg Carker was a socialist, but a socialist who took care that if there was any distribution of wealth to the toiling masses it was the wealth of some one else which was distributed.

Romine was chewing gum; so that, whether talking or not, his jaws were industriously working.

"Thought maybe you'd like to see me do the strong-man act. Oh, I'm feelin' soople this mornin'! Something in the atmosphere I s'pose. Greatest air up here you ever see."

"Air is invisible," corrected Carker, glad to get Romine on another string.

"You bet it ain't invisible up here on a frosty mornin' in the winter. Can see a man's breath then a mile away."

"And some other times I presume that a man's breath might be smelt a mile away?" queried Ready, who did not fancy Romine's appearance.

"Sure!" Bink warbled. "Strong enough sometimes to lift that trunk by itself!"

"Nobody's making any insinuwations?" asked Romine, glaring around. "That mightn't be healthy, even if this is a healthy country!"

"Certainly not," said Danny. "Mr. Romine has simply been talking about the strength of a man, not the strength of his breath."

Romine seemed hardly to know whether to take this as an offense or as another fling at his slightly intoxicated condition. He concluded to accept it as friendly, after looking the little joker over.

"Shake!" he said, giving Danny's hand an awful squeeze. "There ain't nothin' out of the way about you but your hair, and hanged if I ain't seen some that's redder!"

Greg Carker was breathing more freely. The subject seemed to have been successfully changed. But suddenly Romine came back to it.

"Any gent got something that asks me to do liftin' or any old thing? I'm feelin' good this mornin', and I'm out fer dust!"

"You'll git a-plenty of it as soon as the wind kicks up!" remarked a bystander.

"Gold-dust, I mean!"

"There's a man who can outlift you, or throw you down, or beat you at any old thing!" Bink declared, pointing to Joe Gamp.

"Nun-nothin' of the kind!" Joe declared. "I cuc-cuc-can't lift nothin'!"

"That cornstalk?" sniffed Romine, sizing up Gamp. "I can throw him down and not half try. Why, I can put that thing onto his back with my hands tied!"

A queer gleam came into Joe's eyes.

"Why, he is one of the champion wrestlers of Yale!" Danny insisted.

"And he lifted a heavy mortgage on a New Hampshire farm last year!" Ready chipped in. "They said it was a heavier thing to move than the ledges."

"That thing?" sniffed Romine. "You don't mean to say that thing has ever been to Yale? I've seen Yale myself!"

"Graduate?" demanded Harry Rattleton.

"Graddiated in the physical branches. Walked into the gymnasium and walked out again. I left New Haven last year."

"I knew you did!" said Ready. Romine looked at him keenly and suspiciously.

"How did you know anything about it?"

"Why I knew you left it. It's there yet! You didn't take it away with you!"

Romine seemed immensely relieved. He grinned, then forced a laugh.

"Ho! ho! ho! That's a good un. Didn't know I'd struck into a ringful of funny clowns, but I see I have!"

"Tell you wh-what!" said Gamp, who seemed to have been closely studying the thick-necked, muscular woodsman. "I cuc-cuc-cuc-can pup-pup-put you on your bub-back and not half try."

Romine stared at Gamp as if he could not believe his ears.

"Gamp didn't just walk into the gymnasium and walk out again!" Bink declared. "He took a thorough

course, and then had a lot of extra lessons from Buster Kelley, the pugilist."

Romine's eyes opened wider.

"I know Buster Kelley," he admitted. "Great man."

"Cuc-cuc-can put you on your bub-bub-bub——"

"On your little spinal column, he means!" said Bink. "He's often taken that way just before he gets dangerous. It's a bad sign when he stutters."

Romine's champing jaws worked even faster.

"On your bub-bub-back!" said Joe, coming again.

"Nothin' of the kind!" asserted Romine, throwing his hat on the ground. "I'll throw you quicker'n a wink."

"When the gladiator of the Adirondacks meets the wrestler of Yale——"

"You'll think they arena row!" punned Ready, interrupting Bink.

Danny seemed about to fall in a fit.

"Are in a row!" he gasped. "Somebody fan me! To be hit by a pun like that!"

"It's worse than being in a row!" squealed Bink. "Danny, my friend Ready is intruding on our exclusive territory. We'll sue him for breach of copyright!"

Romine looked round, not understanding this chaff, while his jaws worked furiously. He half-fancied jokes were being cast at him.

"I'll throw you quicker'n a wink!" he repeated, again facing Joe Gamp. "Shed yer togs!"

"Yes, throw off your linen!"

"Shed your stripes, as the snake said to the convict!"

"I would shed——"

"Oh, don't tell us about the wood-shed!"

A half-dozen seemed talking at once. Joe calmly put his hat on a truck and deliberately peeled off his coat.

"I'm gug-gug-going to throw you!" he declared. "I've heard as mum-mum-much of this as I cuc-cuc-cuc-can stand!"

Ben Romine quickly threw off his coat and piled it on top of Joe Gamp's. Then he stood with hands down and fists clenched, while his jaws worked like a steam chopping-block. Merriwell's party, with the loungers about the station, gathered in a little ring about Gamp and Romine.

"I'm coming fer ye!" Romine howled, while the veins in his bull neck seemed to swell.

"Cuc-cuc-cuc-come on!" Joe invited.

The stuttering appeared to result from a nervous chattering of the teeth, and the gawky New Hampshire boy seemed really about to bolt from the spot. But Gamp had no such intentions.

Romine bent his knees and squatted, then sprang up with a wonderful bound and launched himself at

Joe. It was like the uncoiling of some thick-bodied serpent when it strikes; but Gamp was ready for the woodsman. His long arms appeared to welcome Romine to their embrace, then closed in a bearlike hug. The next moment the two youths were struggling and swaying back and forth, each straining every nerve to throw the other.

It was plain that for all the disparity in their looks, Gamp and Romine were very evenly matched. Gamp was possessed of immense strength, even though his appearance might not suggest it. His long arms were muscular, and his legs were as strong as mountain saplings. Romine was short, with a bulldog courage and with bunched muscles that stood out in knots and ridges all over his body.

No one was more surprised than Romine. He had made the mistake made by many men in thinking that his particular build of body gives more strength than any other. And Gamp was not finding his task easy. Romine tried to get under Gamp and lift him bodily from the floor, while Joe sought to draw Romine up in that bearlike hug and hurl him off the platform.

So they strained and swayed and struggled to and fro over the boards. Twice Romine seemed about to lift Gamp from the platform, but Joe's feet did not rise. Gamp had profited by the lessons given in the Yale gymnasium and was not an opponent to be despised.

"I got ye now!" Romine panted, as he doubled his back and caught Gamp round the hips. It appeared to be the movement for which Gamp was waiting. He also stooped forward. Then he straightened up, lifting Romine clear of the boards. Up, up, Romine went, his feet flailing the air. A cry of surprise came from some of the spectators. Then, with marvelous quickness, Romine shot over Gamp's head and came down sprawling in the dust of the road by the platform. Fortunately his fall was partly broken by the dusty bed and by a heap of weather-worn tanbark which was moldering to decay beside the station.

The jolting fall and the surprise of his defeat almost sobered Romine, but it angered him, and this was not decreased by the guying laugh that was sent up by some of the bystanders.

At that instant Frank Merriwell and Bart Hodge came out of the station, drawn by the noise of the struggle and the excited cries. Romine half-rose in the dust, while a wicked glare came into his eyes. Gamp was standing looking down at him, as if wondering himself how the thing had been done.

Suddenly Romine took from his mouth the mass of gum he had been chewing and flung it at Gamp's head.

"Take that!" he snarled.

Spat!

Gamp dodged, and the flying gum struck Frank Merriwell just over the eye.

Romine leaped up with a look of fear.

"Beg pardon! All a mistake!" he said, while his face whitened under the tan.

Merriwell removed the mass of gum.

"Better be a bit careful!" he said grimly, for his eye pained him and he was not at all pleased to have anything of that kind hurled into his face. "I don't——"

Romine was moving toward his coat and hat.

"Just recklected that I promised to meet a man at the hotel! Ought to have been there half an hour ago."

He slouchily picked up the articles. He was breathing heavily, and his face seemed now of a sickly yellow.

"See you some other time!" he flung at Gamp.

"Got to go, or I'd like to have't out with ye now!"

Then he pulled his hat into his eyes, slung his coat over an arm, and turned quickly into the road leading toward the Wabeek Hotel.

"Must have been afraid you'd take some of that tan-bark and tan his hide for him!" gasped Danny.

"It fairly paralyzed him when he saw that he had hit you instead of Gamp!" asserted Rattleton to Frank. "Never saw chuch a sange—such a change in any one!"

"It scared him, I tell you, as the little fellow said of the can he tied to the dog's tail! It made him go sailing!" observed Bink.

"Felt that he was up against the real thing!" remarked Carker.

"Oh, he knew that, when he tut-tut-tut-tackled me!" stuttered Gamp, beaming all over, as he put on his coat and hat.

"There was some other reason," said Frank, as he thoughtfully watched Romine disappearing down the road. "It wasn't because he threw that gum into my eye, nor because he was afraid of me on that account. Nothing of the kind, I feel sure. He didn't know I was here until I came out of the station. I've seen that fellow before, and he has seen me, and for some reason he fears me. I believe that I have seen him in New Haven."

"He said he had been to New Haven!" informed Danny.

"That's it, then. He has some reason for being afraid of me. I wonder what it can be?"

"Here comes the stage," Rattleton announced, pointing to a dust cloud. "Now we'll get down to that old hotel."

All were glad to know that the stage which was to take them was coming. It drew up in a few minutes, with a flourish of the driver's whip—a regular mountain stage-coach, with seats outside and in.

"Wish I had taken a picture of Gamp and that fellow just as Gamp threw him!" said Carker, as he climbed to one of the outside seats, swinging his camera.

"Why didn't you try for it?" Merriwell asked.

"For the same reason that I didn't," said Ready, who also had a camera. "The match was so interesting that no one could think of a camera in the same breath. That's the trouble with taking snap-shots. At the moment of interest your interest is so great that you let your interest in that make you forget your interest in——"

The stage started with a lurch, and Ready was almost piled on his head. He came down heavily across Bink's knees.

"I object to having interest heaped on me in that way, as the debtor said to the note-holder!" squeaked Bink, throwing him back. "Sit on your own knees! It will be more interest-ing—for me!"

"One of us ought to have waited and got a shot at this stage, with its load of dome-browed and intellectual passengers!" said Carker, though the bored look he nearly always wore did not leave his face. But the driver cracked his whip, the stage gave another lurch, and all were away for the Wabeek Hotel, leaving the trunks and other luggage to be brought up later.

Merriwell looked for Ben Romine as the stage

swung and swayed along the woodland road, but Romine had strangely disappeared. If he had kept to the road, the stage must have passed him; but it did not pass him, unless he was hiding in the timber near-by.

“For some reason the fellow is afraid of me!” was Frank’s thought. “I wonder what it can be?”

CHAPTER IX.

SOME GUESTS OF THE WABEEK.

The Wabeek was a handsome house, charmingly situated, and enjoying a liberal patronage in the summer season. Back of it rose the picturesque Trinity Peaks, sometimes called the Three Sisters. In front was Wabeek Lake, a beautiful sheet of water and one of the chief attractions of the place. Bart Hodge caught at Merriwell's sleeve as the stage drew up in front of the hotel.

"Look here!" Bart whispered, in a surprised voice, "do you see who that is?"

Merriwell looked. In one of the comfortable chairs that were plentifully distributed about the wide piazzas was a young man whom both Frank and Hodge had good cause to remember.

"Herbert Hammerswell!" Bart exclaimed. "If I'd thought he'd be here, I'd voted to go some place else. He's a dirty sneak, and he always makes trouble when he's around!"

Young Hammerswell, who was a dudish-looking youth, with hair parted in the middle and carrying a cane, suddenly became aware of the fact that he had become an object of interest to the passengers in the stage. His face changed its appearance quite as much

as Ben Romine's had done when Ben saw whose eye the gum had struck. He rose hastily from the chair and turned toward the nearest doorway, through which he vanished. When he was beyond the sight of the people in the stage he stopped, and suddenly became aware that he was trembling.

"Merriwell's crowd!" he grumbled.

Then his manner changed.

"Well, Mr. Frank Merriwell and his friends will be sorry before they get away from the Wabeek that they've again run foul of Herbert Hammerswell. I'd like to get even with that fellow, and I never was in such a position to do it. I've got the wherewith now to make a fight whenever it's necessary. Of course, they recognized me, and no doubt they'll think it funny that I should get out that way. They'll think I'm afraid of them! Well, that's all right, too! They'll know better by and by. I'll watch for some chance or other to do Merriwell up, and if a chance doesn't come, I'll make one!"

With this mental declaration, Hammerswell moved away and went to another part of the house. He wanted to have time to think, and desired to keep away from Merriwell's friends until he mentally pulled himself together and determined on some line of action or on some method of possible revenge.

"Yes, that was Hammerswell!" grunted Bart, as he swung down from the coach. "If he comes fool-

ing around me, he'll get hurt, too. I haven't any use for that fellow."

"Probably he'll clear out like Romine did!" said Danny. "He scooted as soon as he saw Frank. What sort of an influence is it you are wielding this season, Merry, that makes people speed away on the wings of the wind as soon as they see you? Never heard of any such hypnotism as that!"

"Romine did seem to want to get away from me," Frank admitted. "I've been asking myself what his reason was, but I don't know."

Merriwell's party were not long in discovering that the Wabeek Hotel held other persons whom they as little expected to see there as Herbert Hammerswell. One of these was Dunstan Kirk, who had been the captain of the Yale nine, and had taken part in the great game of ball which Yale played against Princeton not long before.

Merriwell saw Kirk crossing the piazza and made his presence known.

"Why, hello, Kirk!" he exclaimed, in his kindly fashion, getting up and extending his hand. "Glad to see you, though I had no idea you were here! How does it happen?"

Kirk was equally surprised, but he was not pleased. There was one thing which happened in practise on the Yale field shortly before college closed that had "stuck in his crop," and he was not likely soon to

forget it. Though he and Merriwell had been friends, that thing had brought on a coolness in his feelings for Frank.

Kirk was really a great batter, and Frank had sorely wounded his pride by striking him out before the great crowd of students assembled to witness the practise work. Kirk could not forget it.

"Glad to see you!" he said; but his handclasp was languid and his tone did not show pleasure.

"We just arrived," Merry volunteered, as they dropped into seats. "We're out for some fun and sport in the Adirondacks."

He looked inquiringly at Kirk, who was in baseball costume.

"Vacation time, you know!" Frank went on. "There are nine of us in the party, and we call ourselves an athletic team. We believe that we can play ball."

Again he glanced at Dunstar's costume. The Yale captain flushed a little, still thinking of the strike-out incident, which he was likely to remember a long time.

"There are nine of us up here, too," he said, "and we fancy that we can play ball! You know some of them, Merriwell. They are all ball-players. There's Curringer!"

"Oh, Curringer? The Princeton pitcher! Glad he's here. He is a great pitcher."

Kirk flushed again at this mention of Princeton, though the mention in this connection was unavoid-

able, as Kirk knew. Curringer had pitched against Merriwell, and the game had really been a pitcher's battle.

"And Galt is with us!"

Galt was the Princeton catcher, he and Curringer having been the Princeton battery.

"Then, there is Wadkins, our short-stop."

"Princeton shows up strong," was Merriwell's comment. "You couldn't find much better men anywhere. But Yale is well represented. Wadkins is a clever man in his position."

"Yes, they're all right!" admitted Kirk, who had a captain's pride in good ball-men. "They're good stuff."

"Then we have Severing, a Harvard man, for center-fielder."

"Severing is all right."

"And Putnam, of Dartmouth—descendant of Old Put, you know—is with us, too. He's a 'south-paw' man, but he's great on first."

"Hope to meet these fellows soon."

"They're all here in the hotel somewhere. Be round by and by. We have a college nine—picked men, you understand! We think we can play ball!"

This was said with a certain emphasis which showed that in Kirk's mind there was no doubt that the nine of college men that had been got together and were now at the Wabeek ready to meet anything worthy of

their mettle on the diamond could hardly be beaten in the great national game by any nine from anywhere outside of the strictly professional field. And really, in Kirk's belief, there were few professional nines that could down this nine of which he was proud to be a member.

"And you?" he said inquiringly. "You said something about a team?"

"A lot of college fellows, special friends of mine, out for our summer vacation. We left Yale two days ago, after some preliminaries and a good deal of study as to where we ought to go. We're out for a good time more than anything else; and to Yale men that necessarily means some form of athletics. There are nine of us, as I said, and we believe we can play some ball, though we are not just dying to meet everything in the country. Still, I am sure we can play ball."

Kirk was wondering who the players on this nine were.

"Friends of yours, you say?"

"Oh, you know most of them—all of them, I think. There are Hodge and Browning and Rattleton and Jack Ready. Greg Carker is with us; so is Joe Gamp, and Bink Stubbs, and Danny Griswold."

A doubting look that was almost scornful came to Kirk's face.

"Yes, you've nine men there, counting yourself, but I shouldn't call them ball-players. Hodge and Brown-

ing will do, though Hodge has too uncertain a temper, and the hot weather will take all the baseball fever out of Browning."

"They told us it never gets hot up here!" Frank laughed. "It never gets hot at a summer resort, you know?"

"Well, that is, hardly ever!"

"So Bruce is all right, you see!"

"He'll be all right on these piazzas and in these easy chairs. You'll never get him to do any work on the diamond."

"Which shows that you don't know Bruce as well as I do."

"And as for the rest of them——"

Kirk waved his hand meaningly.

"No good?"

"Not in it, Merriwell!"

"We're not out especially as a ball-team," Frank corrected. "Still, I believe we can play ball. Some of the fellows are camera cranks, and they want to take pictures; others just have the fever of the woods in their veins, and I think I must count myself among that number. We just want to get away from the cities and from books and all such things for awhile and have a good time, and that means a quiet, pleasant trip. Playing ball isn't quiet, but for us it's pleasant. We don't know just where we will turn up before the summer ends, but our team——"

"An athletic team I believe you called it? Any particular name?"

"The fellows call themselves Frank Merriwell's Athletic Team," said Frank, with modesty and dignity. "It was of their own selection. Any other name, or no name at all, would have done as well, I suppose."

A look that was almost a sneer, and which did not escape Frank's notice, chased itself like a shadow across Kirk's face. It was gone almost as soon as it came.

"A very good name, I should say. I must see some of the fellows and tell them of your arrival. It will stir their sluggish blood a little. They have been here only two days, but long enough for them to begin to feel lazy."

"Awhile ago I saw a fellow here named Herbert Hammerswell," said Frank; "he is not with your party?"

"No."

"I didn't know. He might be into a thing of that kind, though not as a member of your team, for he is not a college man, I think. He has plenty of money, so that he can do pretty much as he fancies, since his father died—I read in a newspaper of his father's death."

"Don't know him!" said Kirk.

Then he hastened away for the purpose of telling the baseball nine of which he was captain and manager of

the arrival of Frank Merriwell's Athletic Team, which he evidently looked upon with some scorn.

Bart Hodge came up and took the chair vacated by Kirk.

"I'm sorry that Hammerswell is here," he declared, with a show of displeasure and uneasiness. "You know the dirt he did, or tried to do, last summer. I wish he was somewhere else just now!"

"So do I," Frank admitted. "We'll have to keep our eyes open, that's all!"

"He will do anything, that fellow! He's a scoundrel from the ground up. I'll bet a dollar he's hatching up some scheme this very minute. It is just like him. He'll make trouble for us before we get out of here; see if he doesn't!"

Herbert Hammerswell had come into a considerable property since the death of his father, the Honorable Artemus Hammerswell, and he was using it with a liberal hand. He had servants and horses and hounds, with a yacht on the sea and a hunting-lodge in the hills. He seemed to feel that the amount he had inherited was so great that it could not be dissipated, a folly of which better young men than Herbert Hammerswell have been guilty.

"If there is a fellow on the earth that I simply hate, it is Frank Merriwell!" Hammerswell was saying to himself, as he strolled through some timber back of the Wabeek the next day.

He had a camera slung at his shoulder, with which he had been taking snap-shots at various objects in his walk. Hammerswell had developed into something of a faddist in the field of amateur photography and was able to do creditable work.

All at once he came to an uncertain stop while his face paled and his hands shook. What seemed to be a dead man was lying in the path directly in front of him.

"Dan Romine!" he gasped. "Dead as a hammer, I guess. How did that happen? Couldn't have been——"

He stopped and glanced furtively about.

"Some of Merriwell's friends had trouble with Dan yesterday. It was that tall, awkward fellow they call Gamp, I think, and Merriwell was in a rage, they said, because Dan threw that gum into his face. It made Merriwell simply fierce. Can that account——"

He stepped forward and took a look at the face.

"Just been done!" he said. "Perhaps the fellow isn't dead, after all."

Blood was trickling from Dan Romine's nostrils. Herbert stooped over Romine, shook him, decided that if he wasn't dead, he was little better than a dead man, and again glanced about. Suddenly his face changed, and the camera came off his shoulders.

"I'll just get a snap-shot of him as he lies there."

With that, he stepped back a proper distance, leveled

the camera, steadied it a moment, and pressed the button. This he repeated several times.

“I think I’d ought to hurry on and report this! If it wasn’t for getting blood on my hands and clothes I’d find out for certain if he is dead. I should like to know how it happened.”

Then Hammerswell, with heartless callousness, walked on down the path, leaving Dan Romine lying there, without trying to aid him. Down the path farther, at the other edge of the woods and nearer the lake, was a rustic cottage that Hammerswell had never chanced on in the few days he had been at the Wabeek.

Within the cottage at that moment were a number of Merriwell’s friends, who had returned from a ramble along the shores of Wabeek Lake and were stopping there for a brief rest. As they rested they talked of the University Nine, as the nine under the management of Dunstan Kirk called themselves.

“Kirk simply thinks those fellows can earth the wiper—I mean, wipe the earth—with us,” Rattleton rather excitedly exclaimed. “I want Merry to send them a challenge. We’ll be able to show them a trick or two.”

“Trouble with Kirk is, that Merry struck him out in a way to turn his head,” said Bruce. “It’s turned it, I guess.”

“He says you can’t play ball!” reminded Jack Ready.

"Don't want to play ball," Bruce grunted; "but I'd forego my own inclination to help wallop those fellows."

"With Merry and Bart as the battery, we can everlastingly do 'em up!" Danny declared. "See me hit 'em! Whack! Three-bagger! Run, you sinners, run! We ought to have Dismal to howl for us once in awhile."

"We'll all howl when you hit a three-bagger!"

"Get your throats into form, then, for I'll do it the first game that we play. I've been practising at night while you fellows have been asleep. I can hit the——"

"Atmosphere every time!" Bink scornfully declared.

"Oh, if I couldn't play ball any better than you, I'd go away and hide my diminished head!" squealed Danny.

"If you had any modesty you would do that any way!" Bink retorted. "But we'll likely be troubled with you all summer!"

"They have some mighty good players," said Bart, returning to the subject of the Wabeek nine. "They won't be easy, but I believe we could do them."

"Only my well-known and excessive modesty keeps me from declaring that I know we can do them!" said Jack Ready. "When I was a little boy one of my good old aunties taught me that self-praise is half-scandal. Hence, when I have a chance to throw bou-

quets at myself, I refrain. I really think that we are the real thing, but I'd die before saying so."

Bruce seemed to arouse himself. He had been standing near a small open window of rustic work, glancing lazily through the woods.

"What in thunder is that fellow up to now?" he drawled, with the least bit of excitement manifest. "That's what I'd like to know?"

"Who?" asked Rattleton, hopping up.

Bart also arose and looked in the direction indicated.

"That's Herbert Hammerswell!" he snarled.

"Taking a picture of this cottage!" declared Ready. "Apparently he doesn't know that there is more beauty upon its inside than upon its outside."

"Perhaps he is trying to photograph you through the walls with an X-ray?" suggested Carker.

Herbert Hammerswell was only a few yards distant, half-concealed in some bushes, and apparently trying to get a view of the cottage for photographic purposes.

"Don't care about making his acquaintance," grumbled Bart. "Knew the scoundrel too well last year!"

"Well, he's coming—no, he's going!"

Hammerswell was withdrawing into the bushes, as if for the purpose of moving away.

"Got his X-ray and is satisfied!" said Carker. "And we're satisfied. From what I've heard. I don't think I

care anything about cultivating his acquaintance myself."

Bruce dropped down into his chair again and looked out of the door. He was not much interested in young Hammerswell. In fact, the day promised to be hot, and Bruce was keeping as quiet as he could.

"Hello! here comes Merriwell. Got a snake, I declare!"

Frank Merriwell appeared in the doorway of the cottage as Bruce spoke, holding up an ugly-looking serpent which he had a moment before despatched with a club.

"Great snakes!" chirped Bink. "Who'd have thought of serpents in such a place?"

"They were in the Garden of Eden, you know," Carker reminded. "The world is full of them."

"You're speaking of two-legged ones, now!" said Danny.

"Yes. The heartless plutocrats and bond-holders and moneyed classes, to say nothing of the trusts, which are squeezing the life out of the people. A snake like the one Merry has is an innocent thing compared with the other kind. If the people fail to grapple resolutely with the trust octopus, it will simply strangle the life out of them. But I believe that the people will arouse yet to their danger, and that the wealthy oligarchy which has this country by the throat will be throttled. And when the people arouse, there

will be an awful earthquake. The French Revolution will be outdone, unless the ruling and wealthy classes are wise enough to bow gracefully to the inevitable."

The boys were accustomed to Carker, so they paid little attention to his talk.

"Where'd you get him?" asked Hodge, speaking to Merriwell and pointing at the snake.

"Right out there."

"Great advertisement for a summer hotel!" grunted Browning. "Put that in the papers and the Wabeek won't have a dozen women as guests this summer."

"And that would break your heart."

"That's what Bruce came down here for," warbled Danny. "Of course he is an adore——"

"There's a-door, too!" Browning growled. "I'll pitch you through the hole that the carpenter left if you don't stop that chatter. Merry hasn't told us where he got the snake?"

"Right out there," Merriwell repeated. "He was crawling down the path when I saw him, and batted him in the back."

"Ought to have saved him for right-fielder in place of Griswold," said Bink. "He'd get around faster."

"Hah!" Danny snorted. "You think you're a crack-a-jack, just because Merry is going to let you play short-stop. When things are moving you'll tie yourself into more knots than any ribbon snake that ever knotted."

"I will knot!" Bink snorted. "And I will knot take such stuff from you. If you'll prance over here I'll put some knots on your head that will be a puzzle to a phrenologist."

"Oh, yes, you're wonderfully brave."

"I'm as brave as you are!"

"Just come over here!" Danny begged.

Bink made a rush, but stopped with a howl, for Merriwell gave the snake a toss in their direction to keep them apart and the clammy thing dropped down on Bink's neck.

"Wow!" he screeched, falling to the floor. "Wow! Take it off!"

"Oh, you're a brave man!" sneered Danny.

But the words were scarcely out of his mouth when Bink, made desperate by that clammy feeling, caught the snake by the tail and gave it a toss. It went straight up into the air, and seemed about to fall upon Danny, who, with a screech rushed backward and knocked Joe Gamp rolling to the floor.

When the snake fell Merriwell kicked it out of doors.

"Of course you're a brave man!" scouted Bink. "I'd go off and hide somewhere. Afraid of a dead snake!"

CHAPTER X.

A MYSTERY.

When Merriwell and his friends returned to the Wabeek they found the guests in a state of excitement. Herbert Hammerswell had come in and reported that he had found Dan Romine either dead or dying in the path in the woods.

"I wondered where Dan could be all this time?" said the hotel proprietor, whose name was Dimmick. "Dan has been staying here pretty close for several days. He has been sleeping in the barn every night for a week. Last night he wasn't in the barn, and I didn't see him around here all day yesterday. Nobody seems to have seen him since he went up to the station."

Hammerswell gave Frank Merriwell a meaning and malignant look. That look said as plainly as words:

"I rather think that Frank Merriwell could tell the secret of this mysterious disappearance, and who it was that struck Romine down."

Aloud he said:

"From the looks of things, I think Romine was struck down with a club. There was a gash in his head which seemed to have been made with a club.

And I think it was done some time ago—perhaps yesterday.”

Hammerswell was getting into deep water. He was so anxious to frame and fit a theory that would some way involve Frank Merriwell that he forgot caution. But it was sometimes difficult for Hammerswell to tell the truth, even when telling the truth seemed easier and safer than telling a lie.

“We’ll go along with you,” said Merriwell.

Some of the hotel servants hastily appeared with a sort of stretcher, and the party, consisting of nearly all the guests of the hotel, set out for the place where Hammerswell had come on Romine. When they got there Romine had disappeared.

No one was more astonished than Herbert Hammerswell. And again he looked at Merriwell in that suspicious, searching way. It came to him that perhaps Merriwell had dragged the body of Romine away and concealed it. Of course, if Frank had done that, it would be pretty good evidence that he did not want the body seen, and this would very suggestively indicate that he was really the one who had done the bloody deed. There had been trouble between Romine and a member of Merriwell’s party, and Romine had angered Frank by throwing that gum into his eyes!

Hammerswell’s head fairly swam as all these beautiful theories and possibilities crowded through it. The surprise occasioned by the disappearance of Romine,

whom nearly every one expected to find lying murdered in the path, had not passed away, when Frank Merriwell was more astonished than words can express to behold the bushes separate and John Swiftwing, the Carlisle Indian student, stand in the opening, ringed in by a frame of green.

Swiftwing never looked handsomer nor more athletic, though his civilized clothing hid much of the beauty of his symmetry. He had the complexion and face of an Indian, with the grace and strength of one of the old fighting gods. Merriwell had not seen him since those eventful days at the far-away pueblo of Taos, where Swiftwing for a brief time had been his red rival.

"John Swiftwing!" he exclaimed.

"So you remember me!" said Swiftwing, stepping out of the frame of green and coming forward. "I did not know but you had forgotten me."

There was a tinge of bitterness in his words.

"On the contrary, I have thought of you often and am glad to see you."

Merriwell cordially took Swiftwing's hand. He would have asked some questions.

"We're in a puzzle here, John!" said the proprietor. "We expected to find Romine dead out here, and we find nothing. Mr. Hammerswell saw him here awhile ago."

"He was lying right there!" Herbert exclaimed. "I

saw him. Somebody must have carried the body away."

Again he glanced at Merriwell, but no one seemed to take note of this. Swiftwing's face changed.

"Romine?" he asked.

"It was Romine, I am quite sure!" Hammerswell insisted. "I——"

He was about to say that he had taken some photographs of Romine as he lay in the path, but something checked the words. Swiftwing stooped over the spot which Herbert pointed out.

"I'm a Pueblo and my people are not good at such things as are some Indians," he said. "Now an Apache! But my people have been tillers of the soil as long as any one can remember, and they, like the white men, have largely lost the power of trailing. But I can see blood on the ground here."

He pointed out the blood which still dampened the soil.

"That was done not long ago!" he muttered, as he hunted about, trying to find further evidence. "He was dead, you say?"

He turned to Herbert.

"I—I thought so!" Herbert faltered, remembering that it was not safe to be too positive, since this indicated that the deed was of recent occurrence.

"Then he couldn't have walked away!"

"Somebody carried him away, I think!" said Hammerswell fiercely.

"Of course, if he couldn't walk!" and Swiftwing's voice held a note that Herbert did not like to hear.

"We'll have to make a thorough search of the woods!" advised Dimmick. "If he has been dragged away, probably we'll find him. But I can't understand this thing, and I don't like it."

Herbert was wildly hoping that Romine's body would be found in some out-of-the-way nook, and that in some manner evidence pointing toward Merriwell as the guilty party could be manufactured or found. He even began to wish that he had thought of it and had himself dragged Romine away.

"But some one might have seen me and laid it to me!" he mentally gasped, as soon as the thought had passed through his evil, scheming brain. "That wouldn't have done, you know! I want the thing laid to Merriwell, not to me!"

The search was carried on at first in a harum-scarum way, but soon a more organized and thorough search was instituted, which, under the direction of Frank Merriwell, covered all the woodland and lake-shore in the vicinity.

But Romine, living or dead, could not be found. A sneaking, crafty, almost triumphant look was in the face of Herbert Hammerswell when the searching parties announced their failure.

"I can make things come my way," he muttered, "and I guess I will!"

Having reached this satisfactory conclusion, Herbert Hammerswell crept back into the woods as darkness was falling, and going to a spot with which he seemed familiar he took up from a small clump of bushes a heavy, broken, clublike bough and carried it farther into the timber, where he cast it into a mass of thick undergrowth.

After he had discovered Romine lying in the path, and had taken the snap-shot near the cottage temporarily occupied by Merriwell's friends, Hammerswell had returned to the point in the path where Romine lay. The bough which he now cast away he had found at that time lying near Romine, and had borne it to the small clump and cast it there, just as he now cast it into the thicker mass of undergrowth.

"They'll not find that!" he muttered, breathing more freely when the clublike bit of wood was safely hidden. "I'm going to pin things down on Merriwell sure. I never had him in such a trap. I believe I have evidence that will convict him of murder. And when I strike, I will strike harder than that club did!"

Herbert crept back to the hotel as quietly as he had crept away, but he was much longer in making his return trip, and the woods and hills and lake had grown quite dark. As he reentered the Wabeek and

slipped along the corridor on the second floor he heard Merriwell's name mentioned.

This was enough to make him stop and bend in a listening attitude. Some of the college men, members of the University Nine, were in a room talking. Herbert was so anxious to know what they were saying about Merriwell that he slipped into an adjoining room, which chanced to be empty and open. The room was dark as a pocket, and he half-feared he might stumble against some one in the darkness, but he soon convinced himself that he was alone.

"I believe the people here are beginning to suspect Merriwell of that!" Hammerswell thought, as he bent again in a listening attitude. "Perhaps I'll hear something that will help me."

"Equal to farce-comedy!" Dunstan Kirk was saying. "Did you see their ball-suits? I got a look at some of them. Hodge and Browning and some others were out on the diamond tossing the ball around awhile to-day. Blue suits, with a Yale Y! Think of it!"

"I suppose they will make people think they are a regular college team," said Curringer sneeringly. "What right have they to put on such togs?"

"That's what I should like to know. It is simply to gain notoriety. Can't be any other reason. I wonder they didn't call themselves the Yale team."

"They would hardly dare to do that," said Wadkins, the regular Yale short-stop.

"I don't suppose they would do it if they could," said Curringer. "They are all Merriwell worshipers, and, of course, they would be bound to ring in Merriwell's name some way. Frank Merriwell's Athletic Team!"

"Don't sound bad!" remarked Putnam, of Dartmouth.

"Well, I've sent them a challenge," Kirk announced.

The listener in the other room could hear a rustling, as if the men were moving in their seats, or drawing together because of increased interest.

"Good!"

"They won't accept it."

"We'll put it all over them if they do."

"That aggregation! I'm almost surprised that you should do such a thing, Kirk."

"You were away, Wadkins, when we talked it over. The others were in favor of it."

"Those fellows can't play ball. Merriwell's a fool for holding out the idea that they can. They are simply a collection of freaks. Did you ever see such an assortment of wonders?"

"Sort of happy family!" drawled a voice.

"Just so," said another. "Browning would do for the elephant and Gamp for the giraffe, and those little fellows would do for the monkeys."

"The idea of that layout playing ball!"

"It does seem a sort of condescension to challenge them!" Kirk admitted.

"Simply lowering the University Nine to go against that mob! We've got together some of the best men from leading colleges, while Merriwell has a handful of his friends!"

"And such friends!"

"Merriwell is all right in his way, but——"

"You haven't heard from the challenge?"

"No. I ought to have it soon."

"Taking time to think it over!"

Hammerswell, with his ear against the partition wall, did not hear much that promised to assist him in his schemes, but it warmed his heart to know there were other men who seemed to have a very poor opinion of Frank Merriwell and his friends.

"College men, too!" he muttered. "Men from the leading colleges—ball-players and athletes!"

Hammerswell failed to reflect that a man may have enemies and still be honorable, of stainless character and very much a man. Sometimes a man's enemies say as much for his good qualities as the friends he gathers round him.

"All their sympathy will be against Merriwell, and that will help me, of course. I believe they'd be ready to move against him now if the opportunity came!"

Herbert was so busily engaged in his eavesdropping that he failed to hear footsteps that were coming down the hall until they were almost opposite the door. He turned round with sudden anxiety, which changed to a chill as the footsteps advanced to the door of the room he occupied. He wanted to make a wild dash for the hall, whose light he could see through the opening, but the newcomers stopped right in the doorway, thus blocking his chances.

"It's those college men," he heard a voice say.

Dunstan Kirk and his friends seemed to be vacating the room they had used. Hammerswell was agitated. He was near a corner which held some coat-hooks, and not knowing what else to do he crept softly into this corner, and while the noise made by the retiring Yale men covered his movements he drew a coat in front of him.

"Perhaps I can get a chance to make a break!" he thought. "I can pull this coat down and hide my face with it when I run. They won't know who I am."

But these reflections did not relieve his anxiety, and when the two men came through the doorway and seemed to his excited mind to be advancing straight toward him his alarm became great. The gas was lighted with a blinding flash which seemed to penetrate through the sheltering coat and cut away every shielding thread. He felt himself to be trembling so violently that the coat appeared to shake.

"Talking about Merriwell!" said a voice, as the door was closed.

The speaker was John Swiftwing, the Pueblo Indian. Chairs seemed to be moved out, and the Indian spoke again.

"I've as good a right to be a gentleman as Merriwell has, and I'm going to be to-night. What do you think of the room?"

The room was handsomely furnished and overlooked the lake.

"Great stuff! Boss!"

Hammerswell knew that the first speaker was Swiftwing, whom he had several times seen, and the voice of the second speaker told that he was a white man, though not of the higher grades.

"Just as good a right to be a gentleman as he has, and so I took this room for to-night. I'm a gentleman to-night, and a white man, so far as money can make me one!"

There was a sort of bitter, defiant scorn in the words and tone that seemed to burn the tongue that uttered them.

"Pretty hard to make a gentleman out o' me, though I'm white enough. That is I would be white if it wasn't for the wind and the sun. If a feller tramps through these mountains as I have, he can't be white."

"And as I have!"

"Ain't any better er more faithful guide in these mountains than you are, John Swiftwing!"

"That's so, Totten. I can be a woodsman, and that is as near as any man can come to being neither Indian nor white. A woodsman, a guide—and a nothing!"

"No use flinging clubs at the house you live in," growled Totten, who did not like this sort of talk.

"That's the way you look at it, Si. But—well, you can't understand what I would say—so what's the use?"

"What you goin' to say?" questioned Totten, somewhat touched by this outburst.

"You're a white man, and you can't understand. When I saw Merriwell I felt as the rattlesnake feels when the road-runner hems it in."

"How's that?"

"The road-runner is a bird, you know. When it finds a sleeping rattlesnake, it rings it in with cactus spines and wakes it. The helplessness of the snake throws it into such a rage that it bites itself and dies. That's the story. When I saw Merriwell I felt that I wanted to sneak away somewhere like a poisoned rat and die. But I braced myself. I said to myself that I am as good a man as Merriwell or any of his friends, even if I am an Indian. And so I went to the proprietor and offered him enough money to induce him to let me have this room to-night—one of the best in the hotel. Money will do anything, Si—except make

an Indian a white man. The trouble with me is that I'm neither an Indian nor a white man!"

This was said with such fierce emphasis, though the tone was low, that Herbert Hammerswell shivered in his hiding-place.

"Heavens! I wish I was out of this!" Herbert mentally moaned.

Still, he was pleased to know that another man at the Wabeek seemed to hate Frank Merriwell, and, even though he was trembling with fear and anxiety, he could but wonder if this might not in some way be used to Merriwell's undoing in the scheme which he had evolved for Frank's overthrow.

"My room!" exclaimed Swiftwing, surveying it. "Money is a great thing."

"B'lieve I'd ruther have a good eddication!"

"Bah! I thought so once. When you have gained an education, what does it amount to? Educated brains are simply a drug on the market. You can buy brains for less than the pay of an Adirondack guide."

He rose from his chair, crossed the room, and hung his hat not far from the corner in which Hammerswell was tremblingly hiding.

"My hat-peg—for to-night! Mine, for as long as I have the wherewith to pay for it. Even my red Indian blood didn't close this establishment against me—simply because I paid the double price the proprietor asked, and because the season so far has not brought

him the number of guests he wants. A little later and even money wouldn't let me in here. For I am simply 'that Indian,' John Swiftwing, the Adirondack guide."

"How'd y'ever happen to be a guide up here, anyway? You ain't a York State Indian."

"No, I'm a Pueblo. I don't like to talk about the thing, so I've never told you, Si, even though we have tramped and camped and slept together. I was trying to forget it. I could never forget it with Merriwell near me.

"I am an Indian, a Pueblo, but I was educated at the Carlisle school—the college for Indians, you know! I was one of their best football-players and a good baseball-player. I played against Merriwell, who was on the Yale eleven. Later I met him at my home, the pueblo of Taos, in New Mexico. He and some of his friends were there to witness the dances and races and ceremonies of St. Geronimo's day. With his party was a beautiful girl. I can't tell you, Si, how handsome she looked to me, with her bright eyes and dark hair. I thought she loved me. I threw her across a horse while the races were going on, for I thought she would be glad to fly with me. I was pursued by Merriwell and a company, who were raging for my blood. But they could not have taken her away from me. I knew places in those mountains to which they could never have come. But I found that she didn't love me. Her bright glances, her sweet smiles, her almost

loving looks, had been given to me simply"—he seemed to choke—"simply because she admired my fine form and my abilities as an athlete! I called her the White Dove—my White Dove; but I did not want the White Dove after that. If I had not been spoiled by the white man's education and the white man's books, I should have held her and made her my wife. But I permitted her to go. I took her to meet Merriwell, who was pursuing me with a rifle lifted to shoot me through the heart. I let her go. My heart turned to water. I was not an Indian, though I had heard Merriwell's friends scornfully call me one.

"When I returned to my people and they discovered what I had done—learned the whole story, they scorned me, as I knew they would. They already disliked me because I had been to the white man's school. Now they hated me because I had a white man's heart. They called me a white man. I was neither a white man nor an Indian, Si Totten. Just a thing despised by the white men and scorned by the red. A man born with a red heart, which was spoiled in the vain attempt to make it white. I left the pueblo, and I have never seen it since. I wandered about until finally I found this place up here. A guide of the Adirondacks is as near to being neither white man nor Indian as it is possible to be. I became a guide of the Adirondacks. To-night, and, if I take a notion, for a week, I shall be a white man—so far as money can make me

one. Then I shall go into the woods again, and try to forget all this."

Si Totten seemed dazed by what he had heard. The silence became so great that Herbert Hammerswell almost feared they would hear his suppressed breathing.

"And who was this handsome girl?" Totten asked. "This girl that looked at you in a way to make you think that she loved ye? You've never seen her sence?"

"No, I've never seen her since. I don't want to see her. Her name was Inza Burrage!"

CHAPTER XI.

THE EAVESDROPPER EXPOSED.

"You've had a talk with Merriwell, I s'pose?" Totten went on.

"No; I've kept away from him. I heard that he was inquiring for me. The fellow who told me thought Merriwell wanted to have a talk with me about Romine, but I knew better. So I have kept away."

"Sing'lar thing about Romine," said Totten. "Well and hearty yisterday. Dead as a nail to-day. Must have been murdered! What's become of the body? Frum the story that dude told he was deader'n a nail. But dudes don't know much!"

"If I could find the one who struck Romine down!"

This was from John Swiftwing, and was said in a terrible way. Hammerswell's heart leaped with pleasure when he heard it, yet there was such fierceness in it that he also shivered.

"Romine and I have tramped the hills together, as well as you have," said Totten.

"I'm not through with this thing yet!" the Indian declared. "If Romine was murdered, I'm going to find his murderer."

Hammerswell's heart again glowed with delight.

"Oh, I've put together some evidence for you, red-skin!" was his exultant thought.

For the moment he almost forgot that he was hiding in that corner, in deadly fear of discovery. The next words brought the thought back:

"That dude, as you call him, lied! I don't understand the thing, Totten, but I know that much. You saw the blood. It was fresh, and that showed that Romine had been struck down there not long before."

"Dudes don't know much!" Totten again sneered. "Perhaps Romine jest dragged himself away?"

"Yes, he may have dragged himself away and dropped down somewhere and died. I've thought of that. Either that, or he was dragged away."

"Who would 'a' done it?"

"That's what I intend to find out!"

"I've got some evidence for you!" thought Hammerswell.

He had slightly shifted the coat, so that now he was able to peer through a small opening between the body of the coat and one of the sleeves. Suddenly his blood seemed to freeze in his veins. The eyes of the Indian youth appeared to be fixed on him. The conversation stopped. Si Totten turned round in his chair and sent his gaze in the same direction.

With a pantherlike motion Swiftwing rose from his seat. For a moment he stood staring at the point where Herbert Hammerswell was concealed. Ham-

merswell's brain was whirling, and he felt that he would fall to the floor in spite of his efforts to stand erect. He was sure that the coat was swaying and that his breathing could be heard. He held his breath, and his heart thumped so loudly that it appeared impossible that the men in the room could fail to hear it.

Swiftwing stood thus but a moment, yet to Hammerswell the interval of agonizing suspense was long. Then the Indian took a step forward. He walked toward the corner where the coats hung. Hammerswell wanted to cry out in horror. His little cowardly soul seemed shriveling into nothingness. He could hardly repress a shriek. With a springy leap the Indian crossed the intervening space, caught the shielding coat, drew it aside, and revealed the white, scared face of Herbert Hammerswell.

"What does this mean?" he hissed, in an awful voice. "Why are you hiding there?"

"The dudel!" Si Totten gasped.

"What does this mean?" John Swiftwing questioned, in that dreadful voice.

"I—ah—I——"

The red guide caught Herbert by the collar and jerked him out into the room, then pushed him violently toward a chair.

"What does this mean?" he fiercely demanded. "No lying! What were you up to?"

"It was an accident!" Herbert shiveringly pleaded.
"That's the truth. Just an accident."

"How—did—you—accidentally—happen—to—hide
—there?"

"I—I—came into the room thinking it was my—my
room; and th-then you c-came in—and—and I
couldn't get out; and I——"

Swiftwing glared at him suspiciously.

"I think you're lying!"

Hammerswell was trying hard to get back his nerve.

"That's the truth!" he chattered. "I was startled
when I found it wasn't my—my room, and I slipped
in there. You scared me. I—I thought you would
soon go out and——"

"Don't come in here again!" threatened the young
Indian.

Hammerswell was edging toward the door.

"I won't!" he stammered. "I—I—I——"

He began to feel that, after all, his excuse was very
flimsy. The door was just before him.

"I—I—I—won't!" he chattered, and dived through
the doorway.

"D'y'ever?" gasped Totten. "Must have come in
nere to rob ye!"

"Hardly!" said the other. "He has more money
now than he knows what to do with."

"May have just been an accident, then?"

"But I don't think so. His whole manner told that he was lying."

"What was we sayin' that he could have wanted to hear?"

"It doesn't seem likely that it could have been anything. He couldn't have known even that we were coming up to the room together!"

Herbert Hammerswell was shaking and gasping as he fled down the hall.

"Heavens!" he choked. "I never had a closer squeak. That fellow looked as if he wanted to murder me. But if I could arouse him against Merriwell it would be just the thing. He would simply be a terror if he turned against any one, and I could see that he doesn't like Merriwell even a little bit. That was a funny story he told about that girl, Inza! I shall cultivate his acquaintance if he'll let me, though I feel as if I could never stand it to look at him again. If he gets the idea that Merriwell killed Romine! Phew! wouldn't he make it hot for Merriwell! Shouldn't be surprised if he killed him. Indians are awful things. See how he looked at me! Yes, he'd kill him!"

Toiling away in his room in the Wabeek, the next day, Herbert Hammerswell looked proudly and triumphantly now and then at some photographs over which he was working. They appeared to please him very much.

"A professional couldn't do it better!" he mentally declared. "That is simply great work."

Finally he took up one of the photographs, slipped it into a pocket of his coat, and left the room. His room was on the same floor as that occupied by Dunstan Kirk, the captain and manager of the University Nine, and toward Kirk's room he hurried. He was rather pleased than otherwise when he found that Kirk was not alone. In the room were Curringer, the pitcher, and Galt, the catcher of the Wabeek ball-team, which delighted in being known as the "University Nine."

"I don't think you fellows have any higher opinion of Frank Merriwell than I have," said Hammerswell, daintily seating himself in the chair which Kirk pointed out to him. "If I am right, you will not be surprised when I show you this picture. I confess that I am afraid of the fellow; which will explain to you why I have held this thing back. I didn't know—couldn't tell, of course—whether I had a film that really showed anything or not until I developed it. And I was afraid to venture my unsupported statement. Merriwell has such a lot of heelers with him! That's all those fellows are! Simply his heelers!"

Kirk and his companions looked somewhat surprised, for they had no idea what was in the mind of Hammerswell. Herbert tried to make a furtive study of their faces.

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"This will explain everything!" he said, as he held out a small photograph. Kirk looked at it and stared at it in amazement. Hammerswell arose also and looked at it. The others gathered at Kirk's side. Exclamations of astonishment came from all of them.

The photograph showed Frank Merriwell bending over the prostrate and seemingly insensible form of Dan Romine and striking at his head with a club!

"What do you think of it?" Herbert triumphantly asked.

"It seems impossible to believe it!" said Kirk.

"I don't know what to think!" Curringer admitted. "That's Merriwell, sure!"

"Can't be any doubt about that!" said Galt.

"And he's pounding Romine's head!" Curringer added.

"Hitting to kill!" declared Galt.

"And it's a photograph!" said Kirk.

"You took this?" Curringer demanded, turning to Hammerswell.

"Yes."

"You ought to have told of it sooner!"

"I explained to you why I didn't!"

"And you saw it?"

Herbert Hammerswell assumed a defiant look.

"How could I take it without seeing it? Of course, I saw it. I wanted to make sure that the negative could be developed before making any charges."

"What are you going to do about it?" asked Galt.

"I shall have him arrested. Don't you think I ought to?"

"That's the only thing to be done."

"If it is done right away it will spoil our ball-game," said Curringer. "Besides, for all of your old picture. I don't like to think such a thing of Merriwell."

"Has he accepted your challenge?" Herbert questioned, pretending not to notice the real significance of Curringer's words.

He flushed, fearing he had said too much. Then it occurred to him that the news of the ball-game was probably all over the hotel, only he had been too much interested in producing that photograph for it to reach him in the ordinary channels.

"Yes; and their team is to meet ours this afternoon on the ground by the lake."

"Oh, you'll do them up easily enough!" Hammerswell declared.

"When is this arrest to be made?" Kirk asked.

"Well, come to think of it, if I get word to the sheriff right away, he will probably get here some time this afternoon. Not till after the ball-game probably. It's some distance. I can telephone from here, but he will have to drive across the country."

"I don't know whether our team will want to meet a team whose captain and manager can do such a thing as that!" said Kirk, who seemed wonderfully ready to

believe Merry guilty. "I never would have thought it of Merriwell, though there have been some things recently to make me dislike the fellow. We used to be friends. It seems impossible now that he could do it."

"Oh, he would do anything!" Herbert asserted. "I know him well—altogether too well!"

"I don't feel that I want to pitch against such a fellow, either," said Curringer, beginning to waver. "It would be like tarring my fingers."

"Tell you what would be great," said Herbert craftily. "If you fellows could just lay it all over him and his crowd in the ball-game, and I could have the sheriff come right up on top of that and arrest him for this affair! It would paralyze him!"

There were possibilities in this to appeal to any one's dramatic instincts. Whatever they had thought of Merriwell before, the photograph showed that he had not hesitated to brutally strike an insensible and helpless fellow-creature.

"If we refuse to meet them now, they will simply believe that we have backed down through fear, for, of course, we wouldn't dare to say anything about this evidence until after the arrest."

Kirk was studying the picture as he talked.

"I'm in favor of going right ahead and playing them," said Curringer. "I'd like to go up against Merriwell again, anyway, in the pitcher's box. He thinks he is the one and only!"

"That's right. Go right ahead and play them, and then let the sheriff come in and do his work. You'll do them up first, and the other will come in to knock them out completely. They've been worshiping Merriwell, and they'll find that their golden image is made of clay."

Hammerswell's face was shining with the possibilities this offered.

"I want to meet Hodge," said Galt, the catcher. "He thinks he is great stuff, but I want to prove to him that I can catch a few!"

"Yes, that's what we'll do!" said Kirk.

Hammerswell went down from the room, chuckling in glee. On the piazza he met John Swiftwing, who had put aside his woodsman's clothing and was neatly and becomingly attired in a summer outing-suit. He had just come from a long walk with Frank Merriwell, which had warmed his better impulses and taken some of the bitterness out of his heart.

"I want to show you this photograph," said Hammerswell. "Come out here to the end of the piazza, where we will not be interrupted. It's something you will be astonished to see."

Swiftwing's dark face became darker when he looked on that picture.

"Where did you get this?" he asked.

"I took it myself."

Something in the tone and manner made the Indian youth give Hammerswell a searching look.

"May I keep it?" John asked, after a close scrutiny of the photograph.

"No," said Hammerswell, nervously and quickly drawing it away.

The Indian gave him another searching look.

"That simply shows that Merriwell beat Romine in the head with a club," he said. "It doesn't prove murder. Even your testimony"—and he gave Hammerswell another queer glance—"wouldn't prove that. The body must be found. I am going to find that body!"

He turned and left Herbert shivering on the piazza and disappeared in the direction of his room. Ten minutes later Swiftwing left the Wabeek clothed in his woodsman's garb.

CHAPTER XII.

DUNSTAN KIRK'S CONFIDENCE.

As Dunstan Kirk and his men went down to the ball-field by the lakeside that afternoon he was proud of the University Nine and confident of their ability to wipe up the earth with Merriwell's athletic team.

Merriwell's men were already on the field, and the grand stand was filling with guests of the hotel and with people from the surrounding country. Numbers had also come over in carriages and stages from the Twin Mountain House and from the big hotels at Lake Karney.

The sympathy of the crowd seemed to be with the University men, and they were greeted on their arrival with enthusiastic cheering. Merriwell smilingly met Kirk and held out his hand, which Kirk took in a cold way.

"You have a good team," said Frank, looking admiringly and without envy at the handsome fellows of the University Nine.

"I rather think you made a big mistake in accepting that challenge," said Kirk. "But the way you talked, I felt that you were really inviting a challenge."

"All right," was the quiet answer, "if I've made a

mistake, I'll take my medicine. But we are going to try to win this game."

"I don't see how you can have any confidence in the crowd you have. They aren't ball-players; that's the trouble."

"Three of us were on the Yale nine. We have the Yale battery, Hodge and myself; and Browning played first for Yale."

"But three men don't constitute a nine!"

All the time Kirk was feeling that he was lowering himself by talking to a man who was to be arrested soon on the terrible charge of murder. He had not told this to the members of his team, but it was known, of course, to Galt and Wadkins, whose feelings toward Merriwell were like those of their captain.

"We have nine men!" Merriwell declared.

"And I have nine ball-players, picked men from leading colleges. You can't hope to beat them!"

"It's a good thing to be satisfied with your team, Kirk."

"Then you are not satisfied with your team?"

"I didn't say that. Of course, I know that not all of my men are crack ball-players. But you will find that they're not sticks. You may beat us."

"Sure to!"

"But we shall try to make you work to do it. There is many a slip, you know, and a game is never won or lost till it's done. This one hasn't begun yet?"

"Well, I want you to make some kind of a decent showing," said Kirk. "There wouldn't be anything in it for us if you fellows were all lobsters. Of course, I know what you can do, Merriwell. If there were nine men of you who could play as you can, it would be a different thing."

Kirk's baseball instincts overcame for the moment his suddenly acquired prejudice against Merriwell. He could not forget nor overlook the fact that Frank Merriwell was the best all-round ball-player and athlete in Yale.

"It's really too bad," he thought, as he moved away, "that Merriwell is to be arrested on that awful charge, even though the evidence shows that he is guilty. He must have done the thing when he was in a great rage. The fellow insulted him in the first place by throwing that gum into his eye, and afterward they have had words in the woods, and Merriwell in his anger has simply done a thing that will send him to State's prison, if not worse. I wouldn't be in his shoes for the world. But it's too bad. He really is the best ball-player ever in Yale. If his men could approach him we wouldn't be able to beat them, probably, though my men are all of the best. But with the mob which he calls his nine, he hasn't a ghost of a chance."

"What was Kirk talking about?" asked Bart, who had come up and was speaking with Frank after Kirk's departure.

"Oh, he thinks we aren't in it. He admits that you and I and Bruce can play ball, but he just laughs at the rest of our fellows."

"I wish, myself, that Diamond were here!" said Hodge.

"Yes, it is too bad that he had to go home and couldn't be with us this trip. Diamond is a fine fellow. But he isn't here."

"I don't doubt about Carker!" Hodge dubiously admitted. "He always looks so bored about everything! I saw him a minute ago, and he looked as if he were simply dead of ennui. I don't know whether he will wake up or not."

"Languidly thinking about the earthquake that's coming, I suppose," laughed Frank.

"Probably."

"But we are all right, Bart. Don't let it trouble you a minute. Of course, we shall have to fight if we win, and in any event our margin of victory is not likely to be great. But we're all right. We'll give those fellows some work that will surprise them. It's never well to be too confident, but our men are not so slow as they look. They think Gamp can't play, but Gamp is all right in his place and can fill it as well as any man we could get."

"Gamp is all right."

"And so are the others, with a couple of exceptions, probably. Oh, we're all right, Bart!"

Before the opening of the game Merriwell made it a point to have a talk with each man of his team and to encourage them all he could with the assurance that they would be able to do good work and to put up a stiff game, even if they were to meet some of the crack players of the great colleges.

The crowd grew greater and greater. More carriages and hacks arrived, and the grand stand and grounds filled up. The news that a great college team was to play another team of college men had spread throughout the surrounding country, and the people were pouring into the grounds of the Wabeek Hotel to see it. The proprietor was pleased, and went round rubbing his hands and chuckling, for he was anxious that something should be done to make people forget, in a measure, the terrible event of the previous day—the discovery of murder down on the Wabeek grounds.

“Look out!”

A little steamer had come puffing up the lake with a load of passengers for the ball-grounds, and when just opposite the landing had sent forth from its whistle a piercing shriek. A team hitched to a carriage wheeled short around at this, half-overturning the vehicle, and started to dash across the ground. Frank Merriwell sprang to their heads, but was knocked almost from his feet by a young man on a bicycle, who seemed trying to get out of the way, and the next moment he was under the horses' feet.

A cry of alarm went up, for many thought Merriwell would be killed. The wheels seemed to pass over him. Then the team raced on up the slope, scattering terror and sending people scampering to places of safety. Bart Hodge was at Merry's side almost instantly.

"Hurt, old man?" he gasped, lifting his friend. "Much hurt?"

Merriwell arose and shook the dust from his clothing. An excited crowd was gathering. Hodge saw that the face of his friend looked unnaturally white.

"You're hurt!" he declared.

"Might have been hurt, you mean?" and Frank laughed. "That was a close call!"

Hodge took his arm to support him, and they walked aside together, for already the crowd, observing that Merriwell was not killed, was giving its attention to the runaway.

"Hammerswell did that!" Bart hissed. "I saw him strike you with his wheel, and he did it purposely."

"I saw it, too, but too late to save myself."

"I'll smash that fellow's face in, the first chance I get! The scoundrel! To do a thing like that! But as soon as I saw him here I knew he would do all the dirt he could. For a minute you looked as white as a sheet, and I thought you were badly hurt."

"Knocked my wrist out!"

"What? You don't mean it!"

"Just so. I don't know whether a wheel passed over it or I fell with it twisted. But it's in bad shape."

"And you can't pitch?"

Hodge's face bore a terrible look. If he could have put his hands on Herbert Hammerswell at that moment he would have given the rascal a terrible drubbing.

"I can't pitch the double shoot. But I can pitch!"

Merriwell was feeling of his injured right wrist and moving it from side to side.

"The pain is going out of it, and it is not much hurt—that is, not seriously hurt, I think. I can pitch. I must pitch!"

"Oh, let the old game go! Put in somebody else."

"Who?"

"There isn't anybody to put in, that's a fact."

"Except John Swiftwing, and he isn't here. He is a football-player, but he can play baseball, too; but he isn't here."

"Perhaps he is on the grounds!"

"No, I heard some one say that he had left for the woods. I'm sorry about that, too, for I wanted to have another talk with him."

"The horses have been stopped. Nobody hurt!" announced Danny Griswold.

"Except Merry!" growled Hodge. "His wrist is knocked out."

The words were heard, and the news that the pitcher

of the athletic team had been injured and could not pitch went traveling over the ball-field. Several of Merry's flock gathered round him and asked about it.

"I'm going to pitch!" he said. "My wrist is hurt, and it feels lame. I can't use the double shoot; that's all."

"Then we're done up!" Browning groaned.

"They'll put it all over us!" said Rattleton.

"Take a brace, you fellows!" Merriwell commanded. "I'm not crying, am I? We will try to win this game, and we've a big chance to do it, if we try."

Kirk and Curringer, having heard the story, came over.

"Knocked out, eh?" said Kirk.

"I'm sorry, for a fact," said Curringer. "I wanted to have another battle with you in the pitcher's box."

"Oh, I shall pitch!"

"But your wrist is hurt."

"Not enough to keep me from pitching."

"Just a bluff!" said Curringer to Kirk, as they walked away together. "He is afraid I will down him in the work to-day, and he will use that for an excuse to explain his defeat."

"His wrist didn't seem to be injured," Kirk admitted. "He may be telling that to make us think he will be easy."

"Just an anchor to windward," insisted Curringer. "Making a soft spot to fall on, that's all!"

After a ten minutes' brisk warming-up practise for each side, and with the preliminaries all arranged, the game was called, and the University Nine went to the bat. The excitement over the runaway was almost forgotten, and the grand stand and grounds were filled with an eager, talking throng.

Merriwell caught the handsome white ball which the umpire tossed to him and proceeded to rub it with dirt.

As he glanced round to make sure that his men were in their places, a breathless hush fell on the spectators. Merry was in the box and Hodge behind the bat. Browning was on first, Rattleton on second, and Jack Ready on third. Stubbs was short-stop, and Danny Griswold was in right field. In the left field was Greg Carker, and in center Joe Gamp, the long-legged New Hampshire youth.

Wadkins, the University short-stop, was first at the bat. He was a small man, who did not give the impression that he was a great batter, yet at the first swing he cracked out a two-base-hit.

Hodge groaned. He saw that Frank was not starting off in his usual form. Galt, of Princeton, the University catcher, next went to the bat, and two balls were promptly called. Wadkins was watching for a chance to steal third.

Herbert Hammerswell, because of his wealth and the lavish way in which he flung his money, had a number

of admirers and pretended friends among the guests of the Wabeek, and he had gathered some of these round him in the grand stand, from which point they were viewing the game. Herbert had telephoned the sheriff, and knew that the latter was now on his way to the Wabeek to place Merriwell under arrest, and his little soul was filled with exultation.

"Three balls!" called the umpire.

"Oh, that fellow can't pitch, and he knows it!" Herbert sneered. "That story about his injured wrist was all a bluff. I understand that he says I struck him with my bicycle and knocked him under the carriage. That's a lie. I know the fellow, and you can't rely on anything he says. To hear him talk, you'd think him the greatest pitcher in the country. But it's pure guff! He can't pitch apples into a barrel!"

"Four balls!" called the umpire, and Galt went trotting down to first. It did seem that Herbert was right.

Severing, of Harvard, the center-fielder, came to the bat. Wadkins, on second, was still trying to steal third, closely watched by Bart Hodge. On the second pitched ball, Wadkins made a dash, running like the wind. But Hodge had his eye on him, and with a lightning throw sent the ball down to third.

"Slide!" yelled the coach.

Wadkins threw himself forward in a cloud of dust.

Plunk! The ball struck in the hands of Jack Ready, who instantly touched the runner.

"Out, third!" said the umpire.

There was a flutter of excitement in the grand stand and some cheering over Hodge's beautiful throw and the prompt manner in which the third-baseman put the ball on the runner.

Then Severing got a hit—a pretty hit—which took him to first and took Galt from first to third. Putnam, of Dartmouth, the University's first-baseman, came to the bat, and on the first pitched ball Severing tried to steal second, but Hodge promptly lined the ball to Rattleton and cut him off. And Galt had stumbled in his start from third, so that he was forced back by a return throw from Harry.

Whatever might be thought of the pitching of Frank Merriwell—and the spectators were beginning to guy it—the University men saw that they could not steal much on Hodge.

Then Putnam got a hit, which brought Galt home from third and gave the University Nine a score.

"Is this the great Yale pitcher?" Curringer laughed, as he stepped to the bat.

"Oh, it's his wrist, you know!" said Lew Mason, of Brown.

"Take him out of the box. He ain't got no license to pitch!" some yelled in the crowd.

"Our friend Merriwell seems to be in a hole," said Kirk, secretly delighted with the poor work that Frank was doing. It was poor work, and it did not seem to

get better. Three balls were called on him, and then Curringer lined one down to short-stop. Bink Stubbs, who seemed to have gone to sleep, suddenly woke up and tried to get the ball. But he simply fell on it, as if it were a football, and by the time he got up with the ball in his hands, ready to throw, Curringer was on first and Putnam on second.

"Frank Merriwell's athletic team!" laughed Ogle, a Harvard man. "This is a great aggregation!"

"And they say they can play ball!" commented Mason.

"Too easy to be interesting," said Perkins, who was from the University of Pennsylvania.

Mason went to the bat next and had one strike and two balls called. The base-runners were not so wildly anxious to steal bases since their experience with Hodge. Frank tried to pitch an in curve, which Mason promptly lined into some scrubby bushes—and all three men came in, making a total of four scores.

There was some wild cheering from the vicinity occupied by Hammerswell and his friends and a general clapping of hands. Merriwell walked out of the box, after beckoning to Hodge, and the two met and began to talk.

"Going to fix up the switch so that the signals won't get crossed all the time!"

"Tell the captain to get a new pitcher!"

"Put somebody else in the box!"

From various points came guying cries, as Merry and Hodge consulted, while the members of the athletic team, pained and humiliated by Frank's evident failure, wondered what Merry and Hodge were talking about.

The talk lasted but a few moments. Then Hodge went into the pitcher's box and Frank Merriwell walked behind the bat.

"Batted him out of the box!" said Curringer, flinging up his cap.

And a roar of triumph went up from the throats of the University men. They continued to laugh, for Hodge's first was wild. Perkins, who was at the bat, connected with the next one, but sent up a terrifically high foul. It did not seem possible that Merriwell could get under it, though he was making a desperate run. But he did get under it, gathered it in, and retired the side.

CHAPTER XIII.

FRANK ARRESTED.

The University men went into the field hilarious, feeling that they had a snap. Curringer, in the pitcher's box, was jubilant. He fancied the game was already won. With this jubilant feeling, he planted his toe on the plate and sent in the first ball.

"One ball!" called the umpire.

Curringer pulled himself together with a jerk, and proceeded to strike out Ready, who was first at the bat.

Gamp came next, and after one strike had been called on him he drove a swift one into the hands of Wadkins, the short-stop, who held it. Then Curringer struck out Browning, and the side was retired without even having seen first base. The University men were howling.

"Don't you wish you had a pitcher like that?" squalled Perkins. "That's the way we do the business."

"Oh, we won't let any of Merriwell's hinky-dinky players see first!" yelled Galt.

Merriwell now went back into the pitcher's box, and Hodge took his old place as catcher.

"Yes, we've got 'em!" thought Kirk, who was the first man up in that inning. "Those other fellows

have toyed with Merriwell, and I'll raise thunder with him, sure!"

Kirk was accounted a certain hitter. He felt confident that he could handle Merriwell as he pleased. The first was a ball, and he did not swing at it.

Then, with bewildering swiftness, and in a manner to make Kirk's head swim, Merriwell struck him out.

Kirk almost gasped as he turned about:

"And he did not use the double shoot!"

Ogle, of Harvard, was the next man up, and was struck out with equal promptness.

Danny and Bink began to dance. Gamp's "Haw-haw!" floated across the field. Ready began to chirp on third. Then came Wadkins, the head of the batting-list, and he went out the same way, and Merriwell's team came in from the field yelling.

"Oh, don't you wish you had a pitcher like that?" Rattleton retorted, grinning into Perkins' face. "Curringinger never saw the day that he could pitch with Merriwell when Frank is all right!"

Greg Carker, who usually wore a bored, tired feeling, even in times of excitement, came to the bat actually smiling, and after two strikes and one ball had been called he got a beautiful three-base hit off Curringinger, which made the University pitcher growl like a bear.

"How about none of Merriwell's men getting to see

first base?" shrieked Danny Griswold, as he pranced to the bat.

"Carker, you're a lulu!" shouted Bink.

"Nobody will do that again," thought Curringer, as he faced the batter, and it seemed that he might be able to make good this mental boast, for two strikes and one ball were called on Danny. Then Danny got one that suited him, and, to the astonishment even of his friends, he hit a safe long fly that was apparently out of the reach of the center-fielder.

Jack Ready, who was coaching, sent Carker from third for home, feeling sure that the center-fielder could not get the ball. But Severing, the fielder, one of Harvard's best men, made a wonderful run and a splendid catch, and quickly sent the ball to Wadkins, the short-stop, who was playing back a little. Wadkins lined it to third before Carker could get back.

Carker was out and Griswold was out. A storm of applause came from the grand stand and the field. This was pretty playing, and the crowd appreciated it.

"Oh, we'll do 'em up!" thought Curringer, smiling in relief.

He seemed to get right into gear after this, and struck out Rattleton so swiftly that Rattles felt dazed.

There was some exceptionally fine playing after that by both teams for a number of innings, but without changing the result. Merriwell's wrist seemed to have recovered to a great extent, and he and Curringer did

some really excellent pitching. But neither side made a run, though each got men as far as third. Once the University team got a man as far as third, with no men out, but Merriwell kept them from scoring. As the Universities came to the bat in the beginning of the eighth inning it surely seemed that they had a cinch, and that Merriwell's nine was certain to lose.

Herbert Hammerswell was in high glee. Still, he seemed uneasy, and kept turning his eyes down the stretch of yellow road visible from the grand stand. Suddenly his face flushed and his eyes brightened. A man, whom he instinctively knew to be the sheriff, turned a bend of the road and trotted his horse toward the ball-grounds.

"I only wish that the game was ended and these fellows had them surely beaten! But they have them beaten now. There can't be any doubt of that. Now, Frank Merriwell, my revenge has come!"

Merriwell and Hodge were talking, and Merriwell was ready to go into the pitcher's box when the sheriff dismounted, asked some questions and came walking across the diamond. Merriwell paid no heed and lifted his arm to send in the ball. He was stopped by the sheriff's words:

"Frank Merriwell, I arrest you for the murder of Ben Romine!"

Frank was never more surprised in his life. And the surprise extended to nearly all within hearing. A

crowd surged toward the sheriff and his prisoner. The people in the grand stand began to stir.

"I don't understand this!" Frank declared, in astonishment.

"For the murder of Ben Romine!" the sheriff repeated, taking out a legal-looking document. "Ben Romine!"

"Is here!"

The sheriff turned round. Before him was Ben Romine, whom he knew well, accompanied by John Swiftwing. The sheriff retreated a step, and there was a general shrinking back, as if the beholders fancied they saw a spirit.

"Never was murdered at all!" said Romine. "A dead limb fell from a tree, knocked me on the head and about killed me, but that fellow never had nothing to do with it!"

Herbert Hammerswell was getting out of the grand stand, with shaky limbs and white face.

"I come to and went away. I had reasons—that is, business took me away; and I come back, because Swiftwing said I must help this feller, who was about to be 'rested for killin' me! And that's all!"

"Where is the young feller who brought the charge against this man?" the sheriff asked. "He had a photograph which he said proved it. I'd like to see him."

But Herbert Hammerswell could not be found.

"Play ball!" said the umpire.

The sheriff was looking for Herbert Hammerswell, and the excitement on the grounds was subsiding. Merriwell was again in the pitcher's box, apparently as calm as if nothing had happened.

The time which had elapsed since the injury to his wrist was now in Merriwell's favor. The wrist was not as good as it ought to have been for him to do his best work, but he believed he could now use the double shoot, and more than ordinary work seemed needed if his athletic team was to defeat the boastful University. He signaled Hodge that he would use the double shoot, and then showed something of how he could pitch when in condition by striking out two men.

"Haw-haw!" came Gamp's laugh from far down in the center field. The third man got a hit—and batted the ball straight into Frank's hands. The side was out!

Again the men came in from the field, yelling and wildly enthusiastic. The recent attempt to arrest Frank had thrown them into a fever of excitement. They were ready to stand up for him, to talk for him, and to fight for him. Now they would have taken him on their shoulders and joined in a triumphal procession.

"The game isn't won, fellows!" was all he said, as they gathered to congratulate him.

This was true, for, with the exception of this natural

feeling in favor of Merriwell, there was as yet nothing on which to build hope that the athletic team could win the game. Nor did Gamp's work help it, for Gamp, who came first to the bat, was struck out. It really began to look like the same old thing!

Browning got a safe hit. Carker came next, and Carker had been slashing at everything. But now Merriwell had warned him to wait, take everything he could, and so try to get his base on balls.

Carker proved a good waiter, after being thus admonished. The bored feeling never left his face, nor was there any sign of exultation as ball after ball was called. Nor was he at all hilarious when the umpire called "Four balls!" and he went to first.

In spite of the fact that Danny had knocked a ball into center field, Curringer regarded Griswold as "easy," and the little fellow was next at the bat. That had been something of an accident, and Curringer knew it.

"Right there!" Danny chirped, putting up his bat. "Give me one right there, and I'll knock the cover off it!"

The ball did not come "right there," but, to the astonishment of himself and everybody, Danny smashed it in great shape, getting a three-base hit, bringing in both Browning and Carker and putting himself on third.

Rattleton was next, and he came up nervous and

excited. He fancied that things were coming Merriwell's way again. He was too excited, and as a result Curringer fanned him out.

Galt, the catcher, after this strike-out, threw the ball down to Curringer. Curringer rather carelessly stuck out his hand to catch it. It struck his hand, and bounded off to one side, in the diamond. Danny Griswold, who had been crazy for a "steal," went for home like a shot. Curringer jumped for the ball, got it, and threw it for home.

"Slide!" yelled the coacher, and Danny slid home in a cloud of dust, bringing in the third tally for Merriwell and sending the hearts of Kirk's men into their mouths.

Bink Stubbs pranced up to the bat.

"Watch me!" he called. "No little red-headed runt can do better than me! I'll make a home run!"

He threw back his chest, swung at the balls, and fanned out. Merry's side was retired when only one score was needed to tie the game.

"A home run," snorted Danny. "Better run home to your mother! I'm the only real thing, with my signature blown in the bottle!"

The excitement climbed up to fever pitch among the spectators as the University Nine came to the bat in the first half of the ninth inning. The University men now had scored four runs, which they had not in-

creased since the first inning, while Merriwell's team had made three.

Hodge did not want Frank to make further use of the double shoot, fearing it would injure his wrist, but Frank believed he could safely use it still to a limited extent, and he was determined to hold down the Universities now if it lay in his power.

He never pitched better. He had a beautiful delivery, without many fancy flourishes, but every move counted, and three men fruitlessly punctured the atmosphere, and the side was retired.

Hodge was the first man up in the last half of the ninth inning, and in spite of Curringer's desperate effort to duplicate Merriwell's performance Bart got a safe hit.

Merriwell was next at the bat, and Curringer pulled himself together for his best work, resolved to strike Frank out. But Frank was cautious. He seemed to be waiting for the kind of ball he liked. Two strikes were called on him and two balls. Then, as Merriwell lifted the bat, an unseen rifle cracked in the woods, and the bat fell from his numbed fingers, while he staggered backward as if about to fall. The bat had been hit by a bullet.

Men poured from the grounds, racing toward the point where the shot had sounded, while women screamed, and some of them fainted. Everything was in a tumult. Hodge and Browning and others leaped

to Frank's side, and their joy was great when they knew that Merry had not been touched at all.

"Hammerswell did that!" said Hodge. "He wanted to kill you, because his scheme to have you arrested for murder failed. I feel sure of it!"

No one was found in the woods, which was not strange, as the woods extended along the lake for a considerable distance and back toward the mountains, furnishing many hiding-places. The woods also came up to the hotel on one side.

While the excitement was still at its height, Herbert Hammerswell coolly sauntered upon the ground and asked what the "row" was about. He had come from the hotel. But cool as he seemed to be, he slipped away again when he saw Hodge and Merriwell looking toward him, as he fancied, hurrying back to his room.

"Will we never get this game played?" said Rattleton.

"We'll never get along with anything while that scoundrel is here!" growled Hodge.

Merriwell said nothing. He was thinking. He believed in thinking before acting.

Again the nines took their positions, somewhat wildly wondering what would happen next. No one, except some of Frank's friends, harbored the thought that a deliberate attempt had been made to assassinate

him, the general belief being that some one in the woods had fired a shot at some small animal or at a target, and that the shot had been incautiously directed toward the diamond. The supposition was that the rifleman, discovering this, had fled in fear.

Many of the ladies and a few of the men left the grounds. They did not care to be longer in the range of possible bullets which some reckless hunter was peppering away at small game in the timber.

Nevertheless, the teams had reentered the field and proposed to finish the game. Curringer seemed cool enough, and he resolved that he would strike Frank out. Two strikes had been called and two balls.

But Curringer was counting without his host. The next pitched ball Frank hit with terrific force. It flew high above the diamond, and on, and on.

"Into the lake!" was yelled. "It's gone into the lake!"

Not since there had been a diamond at Wabeek had such a thing occurred.

Gamp's "Haw-haw!" rose in a mighty outburst.

"Gug-gug-get a bub-bub-bub-boat and gug-go fishing for it!" he howled.

"Hooray!" Rattleton was screeching, as Merriwell flew along the lines of the bases. "Come home, Frank!"

"Yee-e-e!" squealed Bink, throwing his cap into the air. "Oh, we're dead easy! Wee-e-e!"

Frank's hit was a home run, and it brought in Hodge, making a total of five scores.

It won the game!

* * * * *

Herbert Hammerswell could not be found at the Wabeek, though he had momentarily shown himself on the ball-grounds, to prove that he could not have done the shooting. The rifle with which he fired the shot he carried away with him and threw into the lake, with the cartridges that belonged to it. He also demolished and threw into the lake the negatives from which he had made the photograph, and destroyed the photograph.

He felt that this was the only safe course. He had made the photograph from two others—one the picture of Ben Romine lying insensible in the path, the other a snap-shot he had obtained of Frank Merriwell pounding the head of a snake with a club. By cleverly uniting these and getting a negative from them a new photograph was produced, which showed Merriwell striking Romine instead of the snake. On his second visit to the spot where Romine was felled, Herbert had observed and carried away the broken clublike bough which struck Romine down.

As for Romine's mysterious disappearance, when he saw Frank at the station, he wildly fancied that

Frank was a detective come to arrest him for some evil deed done in New Haven. Romine had lived a crooked life in the famous college town, and once, when dodging the police and in terror of arrest, he had seen Frank talking with Selton Dirk, the detective. Hence his natural inference that Frank was a detective.

Swiftwing's keen eyes and the answers given by Hammerswell had led him into the belief that the photograph shown him by Herbert had been "fixed." If this were true and Romine not dead, he fancied that Romine might be found at a certain camp in the woods. He found Romine there, and by assuring him that Frank was not a detective, but greatly in need to be saved from unjust arrest, he induced the woodsman to return with him to the Wabeek.

Having destroyed the evidence of his guilt, Hammerswell's plan was to keep away from the hotel for a short time and profess on his return that he had been on a camping-trip.

"And I'll keep out of the way of the sheriff!" he muttered, looking into the lake where the articles had been cast. "There is no evidence against me that can seriously harm me—not a thing; and I'm safe. I failed in this, but I'll come back at Merriwell again. If he thinks he is rid of Herbert Hammerswell he is mistaken. Even if he should have me arrested now, what could he do? Not a thing. And I've got

enough money to hire lawyers and buy up judges and juries, if necessary!"

And so he believed.

* * * * *

After the ball-game Merriwell met John Swiftwing on the hotel piazza.

"You are a noble fellow, Swiftwing!" he said, when he had heard the story of the Indian youth. "We want you to go with us on this summer trip. You are a good pitcher, and the work to-day shows that we should have another pitcher. Will you go?"

Swiftwing's dark face brightened. It seemed good, after all, to be again spoken to in this way. He thought a moment, then returned Merriwell's honest hand-pressure.

"Yes," he said, "I will go!"

CHAPTER XIV.

IN THE WOODS.

"Light is the breeze in the tree-tops astir,
Fragrant the breath of the hemlock and fir,
Bright is the sky as the eyes that we love,
Sweeter the brook-song than note of the dove—
 Deep in the woods,
 Deep in the woods."

A group of youths were sitting in front of a big wall tent, which had been pitched under the shade of some trees on the shore of a beautiful lake in the heart of the Great North Woods. Behind them rose a spur of the blue Adirondacks, visible through an opening in the trees. In front, the lake rippled on a rocky shore. Farther out its waters ran in heavier waves, and beyond these, and far enough away to be misty and romantic, rose timbered islands and mountainous woodlands. Here and there the white cottages of summer residents peeped at the lake through green vistas, like coy maidens trying to behold their mirrored beauty in the crystal depths.

The words of the song, sung by Frank Merriwell, Jack Ready, and Greg Carker, whose voices blended harmoniously, floated softly and sweetly out over the lake.

"Fellows, this is what I call comfort!" said Bruce Browning, who was reclining lazily, with his back

against a tree, pulling reflectively at his pipe. "I don't think I shall ever want to go back to Yale. What's the use? I can't ever get my sheepskin, anyway."

"You'd get it, all right, if you'd study for it," said Carker.

"Too hard work to study," Bruce grumbled, shifting into an easier position. "What's the use?"

Merriwell laughed.

"I feel about as indolent as Browning. The drowsiness and laziness of the woods get into one's blood. This morning I don't want to do anything but sit here."

"And sing," said Ready. "Tune 'er up again! I don't want to do anything but twang my lyre."

"Enough to make a seagull sing," grunted Bruce.

"Why don't you sing, then?"

"Oh, I'm not a seagull."

"I saw a fellow twang your lyre, once," declared Bink Stubbs, speaking to Ready.

"How was that?"

"He said, 'You're a liar!' and then he hit you."

"You're another!" Ready flung back. "Tune 'er up again! 'Deep in the woods! Deep in the woods!'"

"Bowers of beauty and vistas so fair;
Far, far behind us each sorrow and care!
Lighter our thoughts than the brancâes that swing,
Joyous our hearts as the birds on the wing—
Deep in the woods,
Deep in the woods."

"It dud-dud-don't always mum-make a feller feel happy to bub-bub-be deep in the woods," said Gamp, with a mournfully reminiscent note in his voice. "Sus-sometimes it's worse than bub-being dud-dud-deep in debt."

"Couldn't be worse than that," chirped Ready. "I've had harrowing experiences with my dear, old uncle. And last term Morey came near publicly writing my name up on his black list. That almost curled my hair."

"Went bub-bub-blue berrying one sus-summer, Gamp continued, as if he had not heard this. "Gug-got lost in the woods and stayed out tut-tut-two nights. Sus-second night out I fuf-fell in with a cuc-cuc-cuc-crazy feller, who thought he was the gug-gug-gug-grandfather of an Old Town Indian, and he tut-tut-tut-ried to scu-scalp me! Mum-mum-my hair cuc-curled!"

Danny Griswold "turned his lyre" and began to sing:

"Bored by mosquitoes and bitten by fleas,
Sitting in ant-beds while taking our ease;
Snakes for our playmates and gnats for our fare—
Tell me, oh, tell me! who wouldn't be there?
 Deep in the woods,
 Deep in the woods."

Gregory Carker glanced uneasily around.

"Do you suppose there are any snakes here?" he anxiously asked.

"Never an Eden without a snake," said Bart Hodge.

"The snake of this Eden is Herbert Hammerswell," declared Harry Rattleton.

"Oh, he's cut out," said Bink.

"As they said about the fellow when another man took his best girl from him," added Danny.

"I'll believe it when I know it," Bart grumbled. "That rascal will stay around here as long as he thinks he can injure us. I know the scoundrel."

Browning began to stir and a look of annoyance came into his face. Suddenly he hopped to his feet, as if he had never dreamed of being lazy, and began to claw at a leg of his trousers.

"Talk about snakes! Ants are eating me up!"

"Gug-gug-goshfry! They're on me, too!" howled Gamp, beating at his shoulders, and then thrusting a hand down the back of his neck. Bruce dropped on his knees and began a search for the ant that was gnawing at his leg, while Gamp proceeded to dig at his neck and to dance an awkward hornpipe. Danny rolled over on his back and laughed till the tears came into his eyes.

"Oh, it isn't so funny!" snarled Bruce.

Danny's laughter came to a sudden end when a big black spider that had been trailing its web down from a tree dropped upon his nose.

"Wow!" he howled, leaping to his feet. "Spiders! That's worse than eating gnats."

Having expelled the ant, Bruce found another easy spot to rest on, and again stretched out in a lazy attitude, humorously watching Joe Gamp, whose antics still continued.

"Let's bo goating—I mean, let's go boating!" Rattleton suggested, when Gamp subsided.

"What's the use?" Bruce asked.

"What's the use of anything?" Bart Hodge retorted.

"No use at all," said Browning. "I'm happy, if the ants will let me alone. Go boating? What's the use?"

Merriwell laughed.

"Browning's philosophy makes me think of a picture I saw in a store on Hanover Street the last time I was in Boston. It was a grinning skull, crowned with laurel leaves, and under it the pessimistic question, 'What's the use?'"

"Painted in a fit of despair by some poor devil or an artist," suggested Carker. "I don't wonder. What is the use, anyway? That's what we come to at last. Whether we wear the laurel crown of fame or dig dirt in the streets, that's what we must come to."

"Life is its own compensation," said Frank. "To win the love of friends and to stand by them, to do your best in whatever you undertake, and to kick repining to the dogs—these are the things that make life worth while. Whoever does that will not be a cheerless pessimist."

The warm sunshine was bringing out an army of ants, and they became so pugnacious and ravenous that the little party under the trees was broken up and scattered, some going down to the edge of the lake.

"I deny that I'm a pessimist," said Carker, walking up and down in front of the tent—the larger tent, for there were two. "It isn't pessimistic to look facts in the face. Life is all very well to the man born with a gold spoon in his mouth."

"Like yourself," suggested Rattleton.

"But to the man who is born poor, who works from dawn to dark for miserable pay, who is half-fed, and half-clothed, and half-starved! All this stuff about equality and freedom, the inalienable rights of man, our glorious American privileges, and all that is well enough for office-hunting politicians to fire off as pyrotechnics on the Fourth of July and in political campaigns, but I don't see that it does any one else any good."

He was addressing himself to Merriwell. Bart Hodge was bending over a camp-fire, earnestly studying the condition of something that was simmering and stewing in the pot that was swung above the fire.

"I used to go crazy about the American flag."

"When you were a boy?" said Rattleton.

"Yes—in the dim long-ago, when I was a boy, and didn't know any better. But I've got over that. I'm a patriot, I want you to understand. This country is

treating me well. But I don't see anything for the poor man to enthuse over."

Whenever Greg Carker struck this string he became interested and even excited. At all other times his face wore a bored expression.

"There is just as good a chance for a poor boy to-day as there ever was," Frank asserted. "Most of the men of the past half-century who have made great names and fortunes for themselves were born poor, many of them in want and obscurity and without opportunities. They made men of themselves because they had brains, ambition, and energy."

"But conditions have changed."

"Conditions have somewhat changed. But men have not changed—human nature has not changed. The opportunity for the poor boy is as great to-day as it has ever been; and the men who will be the men of the next half-century are in a large measure the boys who are now poor and often discouraged—the boys of the farm and the streets, of the shops and the stores. The poor boys who are honest and true. The poor boys who want to be somebody in the world, and are determined that in spite of their conditions they will."

"You ought to take the stump in behalf of the down-trodden and impoverished," said Carker. "That is quite like a Fourth of July oration."

"It is true!"

Suddenly Merriwell and the others began to laugh. Carker thought they were laughing at him, and it angered him. But they were laughing because a goat had suddenly walked from behind the tent and, angered by Carker's excited gestures, had thrown itself into a pugilistic attitude.

"You fellows always laugh as if you hadn't any brains in your heads!" Carker grumbled. "That's right—laugh if you want to! You may laugh as much as you please, but the earthquake is coming."

Truly it was. The goat had lowered its head.

"Yes, I think the earthquake is coming!" Frank admitted, much to Carker's astonishment.

"Ba-a-a-a!" went the goat; and as it did so, it "lifted" Carker, sending him rolling on the grass. He grasped a club, as he jumped up in a rage, and dashed at the goat as if he wanted to beat its horns off.

"Go-at!" yelled Rattleton, as the animal ran toward the shore, with Carker in pursuit. "Go-at, Carker! But I'll bet five dollars you don't catch him!"

"Is that Frank Merriwell? If it is, we'll help him catch the goat."

A half-dozen boys had dropped down the lake in a boat from the Lake View Hotel and had come ashore. They were eager, bright-faced fellows, and they looked earnestly at Carker as he vainly chased along.

"No, that's Keg Grarker—Greg Carker. That's Merriwell with Hodge."

Rattleton pointed to Merriwell, who was walking toward the lake with Bart. The boys stared with gasping breath.

"That's Merriwell!" one of them whispered. "I never expected to see him. Greatest baseball pitcher in the world. Say, do you go around with him all the time?"

Rattleton laughed, although he was pleased. It was impossible for the boys to admire Frank more than he did.

"A good deal of the time," he answered.

"Can't nobody bat that feller out of the box?" said one of the other boys. "Them Wabeek fellers found out a thing er two t'other day. Gee, wouldn't I like to go around with him! Say, if I was a man, I'd pay a thousand dollars a day for that!"

He looked admiringly at Rattleton, who seemed by reason of companionship to have received some of Merriwell's glory.

"If his wrist hadn't been lame, wouldn't one of 'em touched first base?" declared another. "Most broke his wrist when the carriage run over it. That sneak Hammerswell done that."

"Do you know Hammerswell?" Harry inquired.

"He's stayin' at the Lake View now. We fellers hate him, for what he done to Merriwell."

"And he called me Sonny!" chirped another.

"Don't any of the people up there like him, 'ceptin' Delancy Livingston, and he's a fool."

"Some of 'em says he tried to shoot Merriwell, but he says he didn't. Hammerswell would do most anything, though, I b'lieve."

They followed Merriwell down to the shore, keeping at first at a respectful distance, but drawing nearer as their courage increased.

"Where did you ever hear of Merriwell?" Harry asked, as one of them came near him again. The boy looked at Rattleton in amazement.

"Hear o' him? Why, there ain't a boy in the United States ain't heard of him! We've heard of the rest of you, too, but we boys is swearin' by Merriwell. Is he goin' to play some more baseball?"

"I don't know. I expect so."

"Wish't he'd play the Wabeeks again. I'd like to see him knock the spots out of 'em. Didn't git to see t'other game. Me an' Jimmy was fishin' that day. But if we'd knowed that Merriwell was at the Wabeek playin' baseball, all the fish in the lake could 'a' died, for all of us! Wish't he'd play 'em again."

"Perhaps he will."

"There comes Hammerswell down the lake with Delancy's sister," one of them announced.

Merriwell's friends by the lake-shore had already discovered that Herbert Hammerswell was near. [They

had seen him come to the boat-house and landing with a very pretty girl, and get out a sailboat, which both entered.

"I knew the scoundrel hadn't left," Hodge was growling. "He will stay in the neighborhood as long as we do. I'm going to thump him the first time I get near him."

"Don't want to soil my hands with him," drawled Bruce. "But I feel that I'd like to kick him. I didn't think he'd stay around here."

Frank and others came up, and all stood under some trees, the boys crowding closer and listening with all their ears.

"That's Delancy Livingston's sister," one of them volunteered, proud to be able to give Merriwell some information. "Hammerswell is her reg'lar. She's goin' to marry him, I guess."

For the first time Frank observed the admiring glances of the boys and heard their whispered comments. He flushed like a schoolgirl.

"Who is Delancy Livingston?" Bruce asked, looking at the boat.

"He's a dude stayin' at the Lake View."

"Hammerswell doesn't know how to handle a boat," Hodge growled. "The breeze is getting up, too. He'll turn it over. She's a fool to go sailing with such a fellow."

"He and Delancy are chums, you see, and Delancy

is her brother," explained another boy. "I s'pose that's why she's sweet on him. She's goin' to marry him."

"I can't admire her taste," said Greg. "Screw loose in her head if she takes to him."

"Sore of obliquity of mental vision," chirped Ready. "A bit color-blind in the intellect."

"Simply a lack of sense!" growled Bart.

"Mighty pretty girl," said Bink, folding his arms and posing. "I'd smile at her, if she'd look this way."

The boat was drawing near, for the landing was not distant, and the boat was coming straight down the shore.

"She'd be a fool if she looked at you," Danny declared. "If she wants to see something sweet, let her cast her admiring glances hitherward!"

"Something soft, you mean!" squeaked Bink.

The party sat down under the trees, with the boys junched together near them and talking to Rattleton when they had a chance. Frank saw that the girl was remarkably pretty, and he could not understand how a girl such as she seemed to be could enjoy the company of Herbert Hammerswell, to say nothing of receiving attentions from him.

It was soon apparent that Hammerswell was aware of the proximity of Merriwell's party and that he had known it before he came to the landing. He came close inshore, as if in bravado, though only two

days before he had sought to bring about Frank's arrest on a trumped-up charge of murder, and, having failed in this, had shot at Frank with a rifle from the depths of the woods while in a rage, the ball striking Merriwell's bat and tearing it from his hands. When he was able to see the party plainly he called the girl's attention, as was shown by his motions and by the glance she sent shoreward.

"She saw me!" exclaimed Bink. "I'm going right over to the Lake View and get acquainted as soon as she comes back."

"She was looking at me!" Danny asserted. "Say," turning to one of the boys, "is this Delancy wealthy?"

"Got more money 'n he knows what to do with."

"He might give some of it to Carker to distribute to the poor!" Bart growled, under his breath.

Hammerswell knew that he was safe out there in the sailboat, and, because of this, he insolently stared at the group under the trees as the boat swept by.

"I'd choke him if I had my hands on him!" said Bart. "Merriwell, are you going to let that matter end as it is? If you don't whip him for what he did to you, I will."

"I think we'll have a settlement," was Frank's significant answer. "I hoped the fellow had got out of the country."

The girl did not again look toward the shore, and Merriwell's party did not stare at the boat. Bart

Hodge, however, flashed Herbert Hammerswell a glance of hate. Soon the boat passed from sight round a bend.

"If I'd been a man I'd 'a' whipped Hammerswell yesterday when he said that Frank Merriwell was a big stiff!" one of the boys was heard to whisper to another.

"Oh, he's jist mad 'cause the Wabeeks got licked," the other answered, with a sniff of disgust. "I heard him tell one o' the men that he bet money on the Wabeeks. Wish't Merriwell would play 'em again. It would make him sicker at the stummick than ever!"

"That double shoot is what paralyzes 'em. He can make the ball cut all kinds of figgers in the air. My brother Bob says 't he can pitch the ball one way and then pitch it another, and that the two lines will make a reg'lar figger eight!"

The boys did not intend that their conversation should be overheard. Bruce laughed, and Merriwell, getting somewhat red in the face, arose for a stroll along the lake. "Too much fame for me!" he said, as he walked away with Bart and Rattleton, closely watched by the admiring youngsters.

"What else can you expect?" asked Rattleton. "Nearly every one has heard of your pitching!"

"It's slightly embarrassing, to say the least. I think I'd prefer not to be quite so famous. I'm glad to have the boys like me, but it makes a fellow feel

queer to be pointed out and stared at as if he were a camel in a circus parade."

"We're going in the direction taken by the boat," said Hodge, stopping.

"What's the odds?" queried Rattleton. "Hammerswell doesn't own the lake."

"I think if I'd known he was at the Lake View I'd have pitched the camp somewhere else. It's annoying to know that such a cad and sneak is in the neighborhood," Merriwell declared.

"Such a scoundrel!" panted Hodge.

They strolled along very leisurely, and some minutes elapsed before they rounded the wooded bend. They saw the boat again as they came out in full view of the lake. Hammerswell had sailed down a short distance and was coming back.

"He wants to tantalize us by sailing back and forth in front of our camp!" snarled Hodge.

"It certainly begins to look that way," Merry admitted.

"He feels safe as long as he is out there, and he knows we won't go up to the hotel and thrash him!"

"He isn't so very safe!" panted Rattleton. "Wheegiz! Did you see that? 'Bost turned the moat over—'most turned the boat over!"

The wind had perceptibly freshened, the waves were running high enough to throw white-caps, and near

the shore, where the boat was, the rocks seemed to hurl them back in a confused and broken mass.

Hammerswell, in trying to change the boat's course, had let the mainsail and jib fill with a quick jerk and had not put up the helm, and the boat had almost gone over. The girl was seen to leap excitedly to her feet. Hammerswell made another awkward effort. The boom came back with a slashing swing, knocking the girl overboard.

"Whee-giz!" again gasped Rattleton. "Did you see that?"

Merriwell did not say anything, but began to run with all his might for the rocky point nearest to the boat. And as he ran he threw off his coat.

CHAPTER XV.

LUCY LIVINGSTON.

Bart Hodge was close at Frank Merriwell's heels, and he was a good runner, but not so good as Merriwell. Rattleton followed at his best pace, as soon as he could recover from his astonishment. The girl was not to be seen when Frank gained the point. Hammerswell was frightened, and was throwing the helm back and forth in a frantic effort to secure his own safety, but he evidently had lost his head.

Without taking time to remove his shoes, Frank leaped into the water and began to swim rapidly toward the spot where the girl had disappeared. Hodge had thrown off his coat and now imitated Merriwell's example, following almost in his friend's wake. When Rattleton gained the point Frank was half-way to the boat. He saw the girl come to the surface, throw up her hands, and disappear again. But as she went down she caught hold of a rope near the bowsprit and seemed to draw herself up.

Rattleton was greatly excited.

"If she can mang on a hinite—hang on a minute—Merry will save her! No, there she's gone!"

The honest fellow groaned as he saw the girl's head go beneath the waves. Hammerswell had again tried

to change the boat's course, and had shifted the helm so suddenly and let the sails fill so quickly that the rope to which the girl was clinging with drowning grip had been torn from her fingers.

But the delay had brought Merriwell much nearer. He saw the streaming hair disappear, and he dived in the same instant. To the excited mind of Harry Rattleton, Frank was under the water a long time. Yet Hodge had gained but a little distance when Frank came up near the tossing, yawing boat, and when he came up he held the girl.

"Whoop!" Rattleton screeched, dancing about on the rocks. "Whoop! He's got her!"

He ran as far down to the water's edge as he could and looked anxiously about to ascertain if he could do anything to aid his friends. Hodge was swimming on with firm and rapid strokes.

"There never was another fellow like Merriwell!" Harry exclaimed, while his heart warmed with delight. Then he sent up a yell that was both a call for help and a shout of triumph. He saw Frank swim to the boat, holding the girl's head well up out of the water, saw him grasp the boat's side, and heard him ask Hammerswell for help. Then he saw the coward lift the long oar that lay in the bottom of the boat and strike at Frank with it.

"Keep away!" Hammerswell shouted. "You'll upset the boat! Keep away, I tell you!"

But Hodge was soon alongside. Rattleton's shout had been heard at the camp, and the boys and the members of Merriwell's party were coming at headlong speed, assured that something was wrong. Rattleton was wildly dancing up and down the rocks.

"You scoundrel!" Hodge sputtered, as he lifted himself at the boat's stern and swung himself upward with a muscular grip. "I'll throw you into the lake!"

"You'll upset the boat!" Hammerswell shrieked. "Keep off, I say!"

Then he lifted the oar and struck at Bart. Hodge grasped it and hung on, while Hammerswell, jerking and flouncing backward, in an effort to get the oar free, almost drew him into the boat. The next moment Hodge was in the boat. Then, with clothes streaming water, and with his face working with rage, he threw himself on Hammerswell, tore the oar from his hands, and seemed on the point of pitching the cowardly rascal overboard.

Suddenly he remembered that Frank Merriwell and the girl needed help, and he turned to them, leaving Hammerswell gasping and frightened and crouching on his knees near the bow. Merriwell had clung to the side of the boat, holding the girl's head and shoulders above the waves.

"I need help," he said, as Bart appeared. "That fellow——"

"I'll settle with him! Here, let me get hold of her! That's right. Now!"

Hodge grasped the girl's arms and shoulders and slowly drew her into the boat. Then Merriwell swam round to the stern and quickly climbed in.

Hodge had laid the girl down. She was unconscious and seemed dead. Hammerswell was still crouching where Hodge had left him, and was shaking as with an ague. Once or twice he half-rose, as if he thought of leaping overboard and swimming ashore, but the water frightened him and he drew back.

"Look after the boat," Merriwell commanded, beginning the work of resuscitating the half-drowned girl, and with such success, too, that in a very few minutes the girl showed signs of returning animation.

Hodge soon had the boat under control and headed it toward the landing. Hammerswell seemed half in a faint. Merriwell's friends and the boys from the big hotel were walking and running excitedly along the shore.

Once or twice Bart glanced at Herbert Hammerswell in a way to make the scoundrel's teeth chatter, but for the most part he gave his attention to working the boat and to watching the successful efforts of his friends.

The boat went along briskly under the influence of the freshening breeze. In any but the most unskilful

hands it was a good, safe vessel. And the boys and youths on the shore gave expression to their excitement and pleasure in cries and shouts and whoops. Suddenly it occurred to Rattleton, who had been wildly anxious to help, that there was something he could do.

"Going for a carriage!" he exclaimed, and started on a run for the Lake View Hotel, accompanied by the largest of the boys, who sprinted along at his side in lively fashion.

"Ugh!" Hammerswell exclaimed, as the water which had been collecting in the boat from the wet clothing sloshed toward him. "Ugh! I'll get my knees wet!"

Whereupon he scrambled up and gingerly tried to hold his bright tan shoes out of the water.

The coats thrown off by Hodge and Frank had been picked up, and two of the boys were quarreling as to which of them should carry Merriwell's.

Frank continued his efforts to revive the girl, and by the time the boat reached the landing she had regained her senses, though physically so weak she could not hold up her head. As soon as the boat touched, Herbert Hammerswell made a sprint for the float and then ran toward the hotel as if his life depended on it.

"Going for a doctor!" he called back, thinking that it might be well to have a convenient excuse to account for this show of cowardice.

As Frank lifted the girl, Bruce took her in his strong arms and bore her across the float to the shore. Frank followed, as did Hodge as soon as he had secured the boat. Browning motioned to some of his friends, and soon a comfortable bed of coats was prepared under the nearest tree, upon which the girl was deposited.

Her strength had so much returned by this time that she was able to look around her.

"I want to thank you for saving my life; and you, too!" she whispered, speaking to Merriwell and Hodge, whose soaked clothing pointed out her rescuers. "The boom knocked me over!"

"Did it injure you in any way?" Merriwell anxiously asked.

"I—I think not," was her weak answer. Then her head fell back on the pillow of coats.

In spite of her drenched condition and the unnatural whiteness of her face, it was easy to see that she was a very pretty girl, seventeen or eighteen years old. Her hair was brown, her eyes blue, and her features revealed intelligence as well as beauty.

Bruce looked off toward the Lake View, the white towers of which rose from a natural grove near the water.

"The carriage will be here soon. Rattles has had time to get there."

"I wish I could have laid hands on Hammerswell!" said Bart.

"You and Bart ought to change clothes, Merriwell," Carker advised.

As she heard the name, a surge of color came into the girl's face. She looked earnestly at Merriwell, then at Bart.

"Could I have a few words with you?" was her surprising request, addressed to Frank.

"Certainly."

The others drew aside instantly.

"You won't punish Mr. Hammerswell for what he did the other day?" she begged.

"He's a coward," said Frank. "He refused to help you when the boom knocked you into the water, and when Hodge and I swam out to you he tried to beat us away from the boat with the oar, fearing we might overturn it. He would have let you drown."

"I ask this for the sake of my father," she begged. "I can't explain more now. For the sake of my father."

Merriwell hesitated. Perhaps she was not Hammerswell's sweetheart—did not care anything for him? Perhaps there was a reason far below the surface that made her accept his attentions? These thoughts, like questions, flashed on Frank.

"For the sake of my father!" she implored. It was impossible to resist her pleading look.

"For your sake and your father's, we will not

trouble Herbert Hammerswell, if he does not further trouble us."

"And your friend, the one who spoke now, the one called Bart, can you promise that for him?"

"Yes," said Frank.

"My name is Lucy Livingston."

"And mine, Frank Merriwell."

She looked at him so earnestly and trustingly that he colored.

"I can't explain now. Perhaps some time. But I thank you, Mr. Merriwell, from the depths of my heart. This isn't merely the whim of a girl."

She was silent a moment. A pinkish tint came into her white cheeks, and again she looked at Merriwell.

"Will you think it very strange if I make another request? You will not, I hope."

"I shall be happy to serve you in any way," Frank answered, bowing politely in his soaked and dripping clothing.

The tint in her cheeks grew brighter.

"I want you to pitch against the Wabeek nine again and beat them."

"It would be impossible to promise that, for it might be an impossible thing to do."

"Oh, I am sure you can," she insisted.

"My wrist is in a bad condition."

She glanced anxiously at the wrist, and her face showed disappointment.

“If only you could,” she urged. “Perhaps your wrist will be much better in a day or two. Oh, if you could.”

“My wrist is in very bad shape. I should be glad to please you in this, and——”

“Carriage coming!” yelled one of the boys.

CHAPTER XVI

MOVING PICTURES.

An hour later, when Merriwell and the original members of his Athletic Team were lounging and talking at the camp, John Swiftwing, the Pueblo Indian and Adirondack guide, who had been recently added to the membership, appeared in their midst. Behind him came Ben Romine, of whose murder Merriwell had been accused by Hammerswell. Romine was dragging Hammerswell by the collar.

"I've got the skunk!" he grated. "I found him sneakin' round in the trees over there. He tried to run when he seen me, but he didn't run fur. I've got him!"

Hodge sprang to his feet with a black look on his face. Merriwell and some of the others also leaped up.

"I brought him over here fer you to thump the stuffin' out o' him," said Romine, shaking Hammerswell as a terrier shakes a rat.

There was a patter of feet and a dudish youth burst into view.

"Help!" bawled Hammerswell, who seemed to fear that he was about to be killed. The dude came to an irresolute halt, stuck an eyeglass into his eye, and owlishly stared at the group of excited youths.

"Aw! what's the row?" he asked.

"They're going to murder me, Delancy!" Hammerswell exclaimed.

"Aw! they wouldn't, you know."

"Let him go," said Frank, giving Herbert a look of scorn. Romine glanced at Merriwell in surprise. Delancy Livingston was so unlike his sister that Merriwell's friends could but regard him with astonishment. He was sickly and sallow, with whitish eyes and wispy hair. That his intelligence was not great could be seen by his slanting forehead and protuberant brows. He was dressed in a loud golf-suit.

"Could hear that suit a mile," whispered Bink.

"A good mate for Hammerswell," Danny whispered back. "I don't think I want to marry his sister."

"Ain't you goin' to thump him?" Romine demanded, still with his hand on Herbert's collar.

"Let him go!" said Frank.

Romine withdrew his hand, and Hammerswell hopped behind Delancy Livingston for protection.

"Goin' t' let men shoot at ye 'thout doing anything to 'em about it?" Romine disgustedly demanded.

Merriwell had informed his friends of the request of Lucy Livingston, but in spite of this Hodge advanced as if he meant to punish Hammerswell.

"Hit him, Delancy!" Hammerswell exclaimed.

"Aw!" said Delancy, staring at Hodge through his

monocle and swinging his cane as if it were a golf club.

"I never shot at him!" Hammerswell asserted.

"You're a liar!" Romine snarled.

"Luck him into the chake—chuck him into the lake!" Rattleton suggested.

"Yes, give him a lesson in swimming," drawled Bruce. "He hasn't had those clothes wet this morning."

"And those tan shoes need a bath!" howled Bink.

"You won't dare do anything of the kind!" said Hammerswell, dodging behind Delancy. "You'll get yourselves into a whole mess of trouble if you try it. Hit them, Delancy, if they come this way!"

"Aw! they're just joking, don't you know!"

"I think I'd like a photograph of this," said Carker, with an amused smile, as he ducked into the tent.

"Don't you dare!" cried Hammerswell. "I'll sue you for damages."

Greg Carker reappeared with his camera.

"Don't you dare!" Hammerswell warned, dodging behind the dude. "If you do, I'll make it hot for you! I've got money and I'll make you suffer if you do that."

"He doesn't like to think of photographs," sneered Hodge, still acting as if uncertain whether or not to hammer Herbert's sneaking visage.

"We'll get a series of moving pictures and go on

the road with," drawled Bruce. "It will draw better than the Corbett-Jeffries fight."

"Photographs make him weak in the knees," said Danny. "What did you do with that other photograph, Herbert?"

"Yes, that's what we want to know?" queried Hodge. "The one you showed to Swiftwing?"

Hammerswell, in preparing to make his charge of the murder of Ben Romine against Merriwell had combined two pictures: one of Romine lying in a woodland path stricken down by a bough that had fallen from a tree; the other picture of Merriwell pounding the head of a snake with a club. The new picture, formed by cunningly joining these, had shown Merriwell pounding Ben Romine on the head with the club.

"That was just a joke, you know!" said Hammerswell.

"Then you don't deny that you had such a photograph?" Frank questioned.

"He doesn't dare to deny it," Swiftwing declared.

"I was just trying to see if I could fool anybody with that," Hammerswell brazenly asserted. "It was all a bit of fun, you know. I didn't mean anything by it."

"But you sent word to the sheriff and had him arrest me on a charge of murder, and all on the strength of the evidence furnished by that photograph."

As Merriwell said this he gave Hammerswell a look that made him shiver.

"Hit him, Delancy, if he comes this way."

"Aw," said Delancy, flourishing his cane and staring at Merriwell. "Don't you dare to strike the man who is to marry my sister!"

"I'm getting the moving pictures all right!" cried Carker, who was industriously manipulating his camera.

"What about that business?" Merriwell asked, his eyes still fixed on his enemy.

Again Hammerswell assumed a brazen look.

"I was betting on the Wabeeks, and I wanted to win my bet. I wanted to have you arrested and pulled out of the box, and then I thought perhaps I could win."

It was a clever lie.

"You're a liar!" snarled Hodge. "And if I was Merriwell, I'd thump you, anyhow."

Herbert ducked down behind Delancy, as if he expected Hodge to make a lunge at him.

"Aw! that was all a joke, don't you know," purred Delancy. "Herbert has told me all about it. He fooled you and he fooled the sheriff. Deuced clewaw, don't you know."

"More pictures!" laughed Carker, the bored look having gone out of his face. "I'm afraid I'll have to get some more film."

Bruce looked at him with an amused smile.

"This is life?"

"This is life, yes! This is worth while! Take that pose again, Delancy, do!"

"I'd like to have a little earthquake with it," grumbled Bart. "I think it would be more interesting."

"Hit him, Delancy," said Hammerswell, again dodging.

"There are more days coming," growled Bart, in a threatening tone.

"When you go up against him let me know, and I'll get another series to add to this," laughed Carker.

Jack Ready had produced his camera and was also taking snap-shots.

"We'll go on the road together," he declared to Carker. "We'll label the combination, 'The Great Hammerswell and His Patent Body Protector.'"

"Mum-mum-makes me think of a she billy-goat pup-pup-protecting her lamb," put in Gamp. "A-haw-haw!"

"If you'll come over here I'll hit you with this, don't you know," Delancy threatened, shaking his cane at the lank New Hampshire youth.

"You cuc-cuc-can't spell Cain until you're Abel."

"I'll sue this whole outfit for this outrage," Hammerswell fumed, glaring at the camera fiends.

He began to retreat, seeing that no hands were in-

terposed to prevent him, being wildly anxious to get away.

"Knock their heads off if they follow us, Delancy."

"Aw," said Delancy. "They won't dare to, don't you know."

Again he flourished the cane at Gamp. Merriwell seemed to have recovered from his anger, and was apparently as much amused as Carker and Ready.

"I'd hit him one," growled Hodge. "Let me do it for you, Merry."

"And break my promise?"

Herbert heard the words, and they filled his heart with relief. He wheeled about and ran, slowly followed by Delancy Livingston, who now and then turned and shook his cane at the group.

Dan Romine had disappeared, though no one observed it but John Swiftwing. The open way of retreat led toward the lake-shore, and Romine had observed this.

Herbert Hammerswell swung round the corner of rocks and then again came into view. As he did so Romine rose up beside the path, caught him by the waist and shoulders, and, with a powerful swing, threw him bodily into the lake. Herbert went through the air with a cry and disappeared in the lake with a resounding splash. Delancy swung his cane and bounded forward. The group at the camp started for the shore.

They halted half-way down. Hammerswell came to the surface, blowing the water from his mouth and puffing like a porpoise. He could not swim much, but he began to paddle to the shore.

"Aw!" Delancy was heard to exclaim. Then he stepped to the edge of the water and held out his cane. Herbert wildly grasped it and the dude gingerly pulled him out of the lake.

"Let me give him a football kick," begged John Swiftwing, looking savagely at the dripping, hatless figure.

"I'll sue you for this outrage!" Hammerswell cried, shaking his fist at the group.

"Go 'long, or I'll kick you into tan-bark!" threatened Romine.

Delancy made a desperate effort to retain his dignity. He fitted his eyeglass and stared at the guying group, then retreated, following Herbert and swinging his cane. And as they went, Merry's friends, led by big Bruce Browning, swung their caps and uttered a wild shout.

"Well," said Frank quietly; "now that's settled let's talk over something worth while—the coming match."

They settled down to earnestly discussing their future prospects of defeat and victory. And, while they were doing so, the Wabeek team—the "University Nine," they called themselves—were discussing the future game also.

"We simply didn't get into gear somehow," Tip Curringer, the Princeton pitcher was saying. "I'm not a bit afraid of Merriwell in the box on ordinary occasions. But luck was simply dead against us. There is such a thing as luck, you know. In poker the cards will all run one way sometimes, and you can't tell why it is."

"I remember a time when the cards all ran to the other fellow," said Wadkins, the short-stop, who belonged to Yale. "The other fellow was working a hold-out."

He smiled grimly.

"Oh, I think there was no cheating in the game the other day," Dunstan Kirk, captain and manager, also a Yale man, commented. "I should have seen it if there had been."

"Well, there were several places in which a stiff kick against the decisions of the umpire would have been just the thing, I'm thinking. If I had been captain I should have kicked. Such things are sometimes enough to win or lose a game."

"That's right," added Severing, of Harvard. "Up to the very end of the game we had them beaten. Those scores at the close did the business for us."

"Why at the beginning of the eighth inning I was dead sure we would win," asserted Mason, also of Harvard. "I would have bet money that we couldn't lose if we tried."

"Merriwell had been fooling us with that pretense of a lame wrist," growled Curringer, who did not like the way Merriwell had defeated him in clever work in the box.

"I'm beginning to think, myself, that is a very convenient thing," admitted Kirk, who had been the captain of the Yale nine, and was, therefore, well acquainted with Frank.

"I think I'll go into the business of nursing a sore wrist. It's a sort of mascot idea," growled Curringer.

"You may be sure that I should have made a kick if there had been any grounds for one. But you see, even though it is possible there were a few times when a kick might have been in order, I saw no need of it. Why, I thought we weren't in any danger. Merriwell's men weren't doing anything. Everything was coming our way."

"But you can't tell," grumbled Wadkins. "Whenever there is a chance to kick, kick anyway."

"As captain and manager, I shall never make a kick unless I see that I am right. What's an umpire for?"

Kirk had some good traits. One of them was the feeling that honor ruled, or should rule, among college players and teams. He would not permit a dishonorable thing, if he knew of it.

"Oh, it was simply dead luck," said Perkins, of the

University of Pennsylvania. "There is no other way to account for it."

"I saw Hammerswell this morning," said Galt, a Princeton man.

"He was betting on us, and he says he cooked up a story to get Merriwell out of the box so that he could win," explained Mason, of Brown.

"He's a liar!" declared Kirk. "I haven't any use for that fellow. I believe that he fired that shot from the woods, even if he does deny it. If not, why did he sneak his things away from this hotel and go over to the Lake View?"

"Easy enough to account for that," answered Mason. "He was afraid that Merriwell or some member of his set would whip him for bringing the sheriff to make the arrest. And I suppose they would."

"I hope they will," declared Kirk.

"Thought you were against Merriwell?" growled Wadkins, getting up and going to the window of the hotel looking out over the lake. "I guess you think as much of him as you ever did. I say, play them again. Make them play us. They'll not want to, for they would like to stop while they're safe. But force them into another game."

"I'm in favor of playing them again," said Kirk. "I'd be as glad to meet them again as any one."

"So would I," Curringer declared, "I know Frank

Merriwell can't beat me pitching. I know it. I want another chance to prove it."

"And I think I'd like to show Mr. Bart Hodge that he is not the only grass-blade on the diamond," said Galt, who felt that he was a much better catcher than Hodge.

"If I can't do better work at short than that little rat of a Bink Stubbs, I'll eat my hat," growled Wadkins.

"That's what grinds me, fellows," Kirk admitted. "To be beaten by a regular college nine wouldn't be so bad. Or to be defeated by a nine that had anything like the strength of ours. But such a conglomeration as that! Such a hodge-podge! It makes me sick!"

"I've been decidedly weary," admitted Curringer.

"Such an aggregation of freaks!" added Severing.

"Any village team ought to beat them. I tell you, fellows, I can't understand it. It must have been simply blind luck." This from Allen Ogle, of Harvard, the right-fielder.

"Let's send them another challenge," cried Galt.

"That's the stuff!"

"Force them to give us satisfaction."

"Make them meet us."

"It was simply a case of dead luck that may not happen again in a year. Demand another game!"

A half-dozen were talking at once. Dunstan Kirk smiled with evident pleasure.

"Fellows, I know that we can beat them. The game the other day shows it. We had them just as good as beaten, when Merriwell's lucky hit at the very end of the game gave them two scores. Griswold made two lucky hits, one of them a three-bagger; a thing I never knew the fellow to do before. He couldn't do it again in a thousand times. As Curringer says, it was blind luck. We had them beaten out of sight, but they struck a streak in the eighth and ninth innings and won out. I'm in favor of challenging them."

"And we'll make them play!" said Galt.

"You bet!" cried Wadkins.

"Sore wrists don't go!" growled Curringer.

"If they won't play us, we'll know that they're afraid to try it over," asserted Wadkins.

"Well, if they back down," said Mason, "we can use it as proof of what we claim—that they won by pure luck, and that they know it and are fearful of putting the thing to a test. We can do that, and the claim of a lame wrist will be seen through by the people. As Curringer says, it's convenient at times for an important pitcher to have a lame wrist."

"And force them to play right away. Demand an early game!" Curringer begged. "Will you deliver the challenge in person? I'd like to go with you, if you do."

"Then it's agreed that we're to send a challenge?"

"Yes," every one shouted.

CHAPTER XVII.

HOW THE CHALLENGE WAS RECEIVED.

Bruce Browning was lying on his back, staring up at the sky through the green branches at one side of the largest tent, when Kirk and Curringer came over from Wabeek with the challenge. He lazily roused himself when they appeared.

"Where is Merriwell?" Kirk asked.

"In the tent there. Bathing his wrist, I think."

Browning sat up and stared at them as they went to the tent door.

"I'll bet it's a challenge!" he grunted. "Who wants to play baseball out here in the woods? But Merry won't do it, for his wrist isn't fit. Some fellows aren't satisfied unless they're exercising themselves to death all the time!"

He groaned; then, hearing Kirk speak to Merriwell, he slowly got up from the ground and lounged round to the tent door.

"Come in," Frank was inviting.

Hodge was in the tent with him, and had been rubbing some liniment into Merriwell's lame wrist, which was swollen and painful.

Kirk and Curringer accepted the invitation. Kirk held out a paper as he entered.

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"We want to play you fellows again," he explained. "We think that you beat us by a lucky streak instead of good playing, and we want to prove it by meeting you again and defeating you."

Frank flushed, but merely laughed, as he pointed them to some camp-stools and dropped upon one himself. Hodge was annoyed and irritated. Browning lounged into the tent and also dropped upon a camp-chair. Before answering, Merry opened the written sheet and looked it over. It was a challenge in due form. He passed it to Hodge.

"I should like to accept that. But you see this wrist."

He held it out.

"I hurt it in that game. I shouldn't have pitched at all, to tell the truth, after that accident. The wheels passed over my wrist, I feel sure."

"We can do you fellows, just the same!" Hodge snarled. "If Merry had half a wrist, we could do you."

Kirk looked doubtful, and Curringer perceptibly sneered. Danny and Jack Ready, who had been taking a siesta in a hammock not far away, came in.

"They want us to play them again," Frank explained, taking the challenge from Bart and passing it to Ready, who read it, with Danny looking on.

"I'm ready," Danny chirped.

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"That's my name, too," said Jack. "I'm always Ready."

"But I'm not," Frank declared.

"Of course, you're not afraid to meet us?" Kirk queried, while Curringer gave the lame wrist a questioning look.

"Not on your life, we ain't!" said Rattleton, coming in. "Whee-giz! why should we be afraid to meet you?"

"'Willing to mum-meet you any tut-time and place,' as the feller sus-said to his best gug-girl," stuttered Joe Gamp, who had followed Rattleton.

"'Just dying to meet you, dear,' as his best girl said to the feller," Danny chattered, addressing Kirk. "'The memory of the last time is precious to me.'"

"'And it will be a warm time when we do meet,' as they both said to each other," Jack Ready chirped. "'The time goes slow, my darling; the time goes slow. I wish it might be this afternoon.'"

Curringer gave the chatterers a glance of contempt.

"Talk never wins a game," he growled.

"That must be why you never win, then," Danny asserted, not at all abashed.

"We want to know if you will meet us—if you accept or reject the challenge."

"I suppose there will be time given to think it over?" asked Bruce, looking anxiously at Frank's wrist. "I'm not ready to meet anything, myself. It's

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a shame to waste these glorious days stewing on a diamond. Still——”

“I can’t pitch,” was Frank’s positive assertion, “or, rather, I won’t, which amounts to the same thing.”

“I wanted to get at you again,” said Curringer. “You claim to be a better man in the box than I am. You——”

“I claim nothing of the kind, Curringer.”

“Don’t you say that you’re about the best pitcher on the planet?”

“I do not.”

“I’ve heard the claim made.”

“Not by me, Curringer.”

“But you’ve claimed that you can put it all over me, as a pitcher.”

“Nothing of the kind.”

“Well, you’re friends have claimed it.”

“That’s quite a different thing. I’m not responsible for what my friends think and say. You must see that yourself.”

“You can’t pitch in the same class. You can’t pitch a little bit, compared to Merriwell, when his wrist is all right,” Hodge hotly asserted. “You know it, too. And so does Kirk.”

Curringer flushed redly.

“I wasn’t talking to you,” he said.

“Well, I was talking to you! You came down here with this challenge when you knew that Merry was

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in no condition. You knew it the other day. You knew that he ought not to have pitched that game, for you saw the accident. I see through your little game, Curringer! You want to make us refuse to accept this challenge, and then go out and crow over us."

Curringer rose to his feet. His face was flaming.

"I don't allow any man to talk that way to me," he declared.

"Help it, then!"

Hodge got on his feet also. His face was as black as a thunder-cloud.

"I'll say what I think, Curringer, to you or any other man. This is low-down, dirty business. That's my opinion of it, and my opinion of you is that——"

"No quarreling," Frank sharply commanded.

Bart turned on him with a look of disgust.

"Why, can't you see through the thing, Merry? If you can't, you couldn't see a hole in a ladder. It's a sneaking, contemptible trick."

"Are you saying those things to me?" demanded Curringer.

"Yes, to you! To you! And I stand ready to back them up, too."

Merriwell got on his feet.

"This must stop!" he said sharply. "There will be no quarreling or fighting in this tent or on these grounds. That's sharp!"

Hodge drew back. His fists had been clenched, and

he had seemed ready to hurl himself on the man he was addressing.

"There are other places," said Curringer.

"You bet there are! And I am willing to meet you wherever and whenever you say."

"As her best feller said to his best girl," chirped Ready.

"We'll not quarrel," said Kirk. "We didn't come here to quarrel. I understand that John Swiftwing is now one of your pitchers? Put him into the box, if your wrist is too bad."

"Swiftwing is out of practise," Merriwell was forced to answer. "He has been up here a good while, acting as guide. He must have time to get into shape for good work."

Curringer sneered again. Hodge had retreated, and Curringer was again sitting on the camp-chair. His sneer said as well as words that this was another very convenient excuse. Bruce had dropped lazily back on a cot, but he kept his eyes fixed on Curringer.

"If he should try any monkey business here, I'd like to pitch him out of the tent neck and heels."

"I'll tell you what we'll do," said Merriwell, who had been doing some rapid thinking, and before whose mental gaze the sweet face of Lucy Livingston brightened. "If you'll give us two days, we'll meet you."

"Whoop! That's the stuff!" shouted Rattleton. The lazy look went out of Browning's eyes.

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"Oh, it will be a warm time, day after to-morrow," said Ready.

"I don't know how my wrist will be by that time; but, if I can't pitch, we'll risk it with Swiftwing."

"That will be satisfactory," said Kirk.

But Curringer did not look happy. It did seem that he had hoped that the challenge would not be accepted.

"Oh, the wrist will be well, no doubt," he said, in a tone that brought the black look again into Hodge's face.

"Another thing," said Merriwell calmly. "Two days is a long time to wait. You have challenged us, and we have accepted. I now challenge you!"

Kirk opened his eyes in surprise, and every one grew breathless.

"I challenge you to a series of water sports, the contests to be here on the lake, at any suitable place. Fix the time, but I should like to have it to-morrow, the day before the ball-game."

Kirk was annoyed. He looked uneasily at Curringer, who seemed no more pleased than his captain.

"I can't accept that right off," Kirk was forced to say. "You must give us time to think about it. I don't know whether we're in condition."

"But you would force us into a ball-game when you know that we're not in condition!" cried Bart.

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"We don't pretend to be anything but a ball-team," protested Curringer.

"And we are only a ball-team," said Merriwell.

"We'll have to have time," said Kirk. "And, really——"

"You're as much in condition as we are. My lame wrist will be a handicap there, too. And we've not been practising in that line at all. You seemed so anxious for something, I thought we might be able to give you occupation while waiting for the ball-game."

"This is wholly unexpected," Kirk protested.

"Meet us or back down. That is the way you came at us with your challenge."

Kirk fidgeted and Curringer's face grew redder.

"We'll let you know this evening," Kirk promised, rising and anxious to go. He and Curringer retreated, covered with confusion and filled with uncertainty.

An hour later a note was brought in, notifying Frank Merriwell that the challenge was accepted.

Accordingly, on the day appointed, an immense crowd had gathered on the shore, not far from the Lake View Hotel. The rocky slopes, which here rose precipitously, were black with a swarming mass of humanity trying to get comfortable and desirable seats overlooking the water.

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Behind the bluff on the landward side, toward Merriwell's camp, dressing-tents were pitched. On the flatter slope toward the Lake View were rows of long seats of boards, with camp-chairs, stools, blocks of wood, stones and boulders, and everything else almost that could be used for a seat, and these seats were already filled.

"I don't know where all the people came from, I'm sure," said Lucy Livingston, speaking to Frank.

Crowds had come from across the lake, and for more than two hours they had been arriving in carriages and buggies and on foot, for the news of the contest had spread throughout all the region in that short time. The telephones had helped much to disseminate it, and the fact that the sports were to be unique in some cases aided in drawing a crowd.

The boys from the Lake View were there, with their numbers increased to a score. They had a big blue flag, with a large white "Y" on it, which they frantically waved whenever there was the least excuse, and they were also supplied with horns and whistles with which to assist in proclaiming the fact that they were champions of Merriwell.

Frank had been reintroduced to Lucy Livingston by the wife of the proprietor of the Lake View. He found her a much prettier girl than he had thought. She seemed to have recovered entirely, and her cheeks, which had been so white when he saw her before,

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glowed with health. The hair that had seemed a lovely brown even when wet and stringy, was now a very crown of glory. She was dressed becomingly and wore a cool-looking straw hat and a shirt-waist.

"Our first meeting was under rather trying circumstances," she confessed, as she looked out at Danny, amid the blare of the horns, the impatient rattle of bells and the talk of the great crowd. "I suppose Delancy told you how very grateful I am for what you did? It makes me shudder to think what would have happened if you hadn't been there."

"Don't think about it, then," Merriwell suggested.

"But I must think about it. And I want to tell you again, as I did in the note I sent by Delancy, that I can never thank you enough."

Frank cleverly evaded the necessity of informing her that he had never received the note, and soon they were talking as gaily and unreservedly as if they had known each other for years, instead of hours.

Yet there was nothing bold or forward in the manner of Lucy Livingston. She was simply a girl who was deeply conscious of the obligation she was under and who honestly admitted to herself that she liked Frank Merriwell.

"Merry is the luckiest dog alive," grunted Bruce, speaking to Hodge. "Half the girls he meets are just cracked over him."

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Hodge grumbled something in a jealous tone, then added:

“Think I should be myself, if I were a girl.”

Frank was thinking of the request she had made on behalf of her father. As he looked at her, he felt quite sure that she could not like Herbert Hammerswell; yet he had found the opinion current that Hammerswell's attentions were being accepted by her, and it was further rumored that they were engaged. He and Delancy were nearly always together, and when Herbert was not with Delancy he was with Delancy's sister. Frank had seen her walking with him in the grounds of the hotel and on the borders of the lake. The whole thing was strange and mystifying.

“I'm so glad that you challenged those Wabeek men for this contest,” said Lucy. “If you had heard them talk! They came over to the Lake View yesterday before they sent the baseball challenge. Your men were simply an aggregation, a group of monstrosities, freaks, and I don't know what else. Some of them seemed to be quite decent, but the others were so loudly boastful that I was just crazy to have you accept their challenge. Of course, you will win. I told Delancy so, and that he must not bet anything on the other team.”

Merriwell knew, though, that both Hammerswell and young Livingston were laying bets on the Wa-

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beck men. The crowd was cheering Danny as he paddled the boat around by kicking out with his feet.

"Wee-e-e!" he yelled. "If you want to see a fish go through the water, put your optics on me. Don't cast all your eyes on the boat at once, though, for the weight of them might sink it. It wouldn't hold up more'n a ton of apples—or eyes."

Another boat pushed out from the shore. In the stern sat Allen Ogle, attired like Danny, though the colors were different and the Yale "Y" was not on his breast.

"Honest" Bill Mattock, the proprietor of the Twin Mountain House, was the starter, and he now stepped down the rocks to the edge of the lake, pistol in hand.

All of the contests were to be for points.

"Ready!" squealed Danny.

"Right here," said Ready, lifting his cap.

"I mean, I am ready."

"Oh!"

Bang!

Mattock's pistol spoke, and the crowd began to yell as Danny and Ogle, paddling solely with their feet, which they were forced to use both for steering and propulsion, clumsily attempted to drive the boats through the water toward the line stretched from shore to anchor boat, a score of yards away.

"Go it, Red-head!" yelled the proprietor of the Lake View. "Ogle is beating you!"

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"If you call me names, I'll paddle the boat across the rocks into your best parlor!" Danny flung back.

His bare feet and legs were flashing like the paddle-blades of a stern-wheeler. But the boat made little progress. Indeed, Olge was moving slowly, though he was distancing Danny.

Then Danny stretched his short legs farther over the stern, and the boat began to crawl up on Ogle's. Faster went his flying legs. Ogle's boat showed a strange disposition to turn round, for his right leg was much stronger than his left, and it diverged quite a distance from the direct line before the yells of a coacher on shore drew his attention to it. Before he could recover what he had thus lost Danny was even with him.

Danny's feet were churning the water at a wonderful rate, and he was gaining. The boys on the rocks waved their flag and screeched and rattled their bells.

But the Wabeek men had many friends. Indeed, the sympathy of full half the people seemed to be with the so-called "University Nine." The feeling of rivalry was seen to be intense. Dimmick, the proprietor of the Wabeek, with all of his friends and adherents, were followers of Kirk and the University men, chiefly because Merriwell's party had left the Wabeek and set up a camp in the woods. On the other hand, the people of the Lake View, a rival house, were wildly enthusiastic over Merriwell's team, on account of the rescue

of Lucy Livingston. The boys were with Merriwell because he was Merriwell, whom they knew to be all that a manly, vigorous young fellow should be.

The face of one big ledge was almost covered with Wabeek adherents, who howled and laughed whenever Ogle was ahead and groaned when he fell behind. Danny was two yards in advance, with the goal-line near, when his boat also took a freak. His right leg had become tired and was weakened in consequence. Before he knew it his boat was moving off at a tangent.

Ogle was coming more rapidly than ever, though his speed was still as slow as that of a man who tries to walk in a bag, and before Danny could get his boat back the Wabeek contestant passed him and crossed the goal-line, and won.

A terrific din went up from the Wabeek sympathizers. The bells and horns and whistles of the Merriwell boys were silent, while the Wabeek admirers laughed and whooped until they made the rocks resound. At one side, on a prominent projection, Herbert Hammerswell and Delancy Livingston stood and swung their caps in delight. Lucy Livingston saw them, and a shade of pain and annoyance passed over her face.

"Two points for the Wabeeks," was the announcement.

"A bad start makes a good ending, I've heard,"

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Lucy said to Merriwell. "You will defeat them, I know, even if you did lose that."

Danny and Ogle began to paddle back again, using oars which had been in the boats, and Merriwell, excusing himself, hastened toward the dressing-tents, followed by his men. Having discovered the station of Merriwell's team, the boys, with their flag, came across and took a position near.

"That wasn't no fair deal, anyway," one of them was declaring. "Danny's legs was too short for that. W'at made Merry put him into that? Why didn't he take that long-legged feller?"

"Gamp?"

"Yes; why didn't he take him?"

"Merriwell's all right," asserted a third. "He's goin' t' do these things up."

When Frank appeared he was accompanied by eight men, making a total of nine, counting John Swiftwing, the Pueblo. All were in swimming-suits.

Dunstan Kirk appeared from another dressing-tent, also with eight men. Merriwell had asked to put the Indian into the contest, and Kirk had chosen a powerful woodsman named John Jackson, who was noted throughout the region as a wonderful swimmer and diver, and was to contest for points and honors with Swiftwing. Jackson, in the suit which had been furnished him, was a noble specimen of physical manhood. He was long of limb, and while wonderfully

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muscled, was not gnarled and knotted in development, as was Ben Romine. Danny and Allen Ogle were not to take part in the contest now about to take place, for it was presumed that they would be too tired to be of much use to either team.

“A swimming tug-of-war,” announced Mattock, as the contesting teams entered the water, and he walked down the rocks with his pistol.

CHAPTER XVIII.

WATER SPORTS.

"I want you to watch John Jackson," Swiftwing whispered to Merriwell. "He will injure me if he can. We had a quarrel last year over a party that each of us wanted to take into the woods, and he afterward tried to hit me with a club on account of it. All the bad men are not Indians."

Merriwell flashed a glance at the muscular young woodsman, and saw him give Swiftwing a look of deadly hate. Then he saw Herbert Hammerswell wildly cheering Jackson.

"There is some understanding between those two rascals," was his conclusion. "It wouldn't surprise me to learn that Hammerswell has influenced Kirk in some way to put Jackson on the team. If he attempts to do dirt to Swiftwing, he will get hurt."

A long cable was being taken out in a boat. Round the middle of it was tied a white cloth. This cloth was to be placed directly under the starting-line, and the two teams were to pull against each other on the cable until one or the other was pulled across the starting-line. The contest was much the same as a boat tug-of-war, except that the pulling was to be done by swimmers instead of boats.

As the teams waded and swam out to their places, Merriwell drew near to Dunstan Kirk.

"Where did you pick up Jackson?" he asked. "He is a powerful fellow."

"Better than your Indian, I think. Hammerswell recommended him to the proprietor of the Wabeek. But I took him on my own judgment, after I had seen him. He is a wonderful swimmer, they say, and any one can see that he's as strong as a moose. If he don't put it all over your Indian, I miss my guess."

"A splendidly muscled fellow," Merriwell admitted. "But I am willing to put Swiftwing against him."

He had satisfied himself that his guess was true. Hammerswell had been instrumental in getting Jackson placed on the Wabeek team, and between them there was some under-handed understanding.

"I'll just keep my eye on the fellow," Frank thought, as he swam easily along at the head of his men.

By the time the swimmers were in their places on each side of the starting-line the cable was in position. Not all of the men of both teams were good swimmers. Merriwell had some fine swimmers, of which he was himself the best, and some poor ones, of which Greg Carker was, perhaps, the poorest. Mason, of Brown, was about as poor as Carker, and altogether the teams seemed very evenly matched. The best swimmer of the Athletic Team, next to Merriwell, was John Swiftwing, the Pueblo.

"What's the matter with Merriwell?" one of the boys yelled in a shrill voice.

And immediately the roar went up from a hundred throats:

"He's all right."

As the swimmers had hold of the rope in readiness for the signal, Merriwell looked shoreward. Lucy Livingston was seated in the midst of a group of young women and girls, who seemed to be chaperoned by the wife of the Lake View proprietor. The group caught that shoreward glance, and an answering flutter of white handkerchiefs made Frank think of a bower of white blossoms swayed by a fitful breeze. He lifted a hand in acknowledgment.

"All the girls in the Great North Woods will be stuck on Merriwell soon," grunted Bruce.

"I should think it would be Bart," whispered Ready, who was near the big fellow.

"Why?"

"He's the catcher, you know."

Bang!

Mattock's pistol flashed, and the tug-of-war was on. At the first surge the powerful pull of John Jackson drew the white line toward the Wabeek side more than a foot. But Swiftwing drew it back. Then the battle began.

As there were nine men pulling in each team, four were on each side of the rope, with the captains in the

lead at the ends. Kirk was a splendid swimmer, so that in arranging for the disposition of the men he had been perfectly willing to take the lead at the end of his half of the rope, in opposition to Merriwell. The other swimmers were disposed to suit the notions of the captains, Merriwell had put Swiftwing next the starting-line, and Kirk had balanced Swiftwing with John Jackson on the opposite side. The man next Swiftwing on Merry's team, on the other side of the rope, was Bruce Browning, who could pull in the water like a team of horses. The men next, on opposite sides of the rope, were Hodge and Rattleton. Then came Ready and Gamp, Stubbs and Carker, and Merriwell in the lead. Curringer was pulling with Jackson, against Browning and Swiftwing.

"Pull, fellows! Pull 'em out of the lake!" shouted Danny, who stood on the shore, coaching and encouraging.

"Get 'em back again! Get 'em back!" yelled Allen Ogle to the Wabeek men. "You can do it! There, you're coming! Get 'em back!"

Only one hand could be used in swimming, as the other was on the rope. The white line was again moving to the Wabeek side. It crossed the line. One yard—two yards. The Wabeek adherents began to yell.

"Now you're hitting them!" yelled Ogle. "Keep 'em coming!"

"Take a brace!" Danny screeched. "Get a move on you, you snails!"

Swiftwing said something to Browning. Then the two together made a mighty effort, and the white line moved back.

"All together, now!" called Merriwell, also putting forth all his tremendous strength. Carker and Bink were growing weak. They were not equal to any very long strain in the water. But Kirk's poorest swimmers were likewise growing weak. The line continued to move toward Merriwell's side. The boys waved their flag and screeched and made a furious clamor with bells and horns, while the white handkerchiefs of the girls grouped around Lucy Livingston fluttered.

Suddenly John Jackson, who seemed already to be exerting the strength of ten men, roused himself for a final and mighty effort.

"Pull!" he sputtered, blowing back the waves from his mouth in a spray. "Every tiger of you, pull! Now!"

The white line jumped back a foot. It again crossed the starting-line.

"Pull!" cried Jackson. "Pull, ye terriers, pull!"

He did not waste further breath, for breath was precious, but, swimming low and deep, sweeping the water backward with his free hand, he seemed to have the strength and power of a small tug. In spite of

everything that Browning and Swiftwing could do, aided by the others, the white line moved toward the Wabeek side.

The Wabeek sympathizers were roaring. Once more Merriwell, Browning, and Swiftwing—the strongest swimmers in Merry's team—gathered themselves, and for a moment stopped the progress of the white line; but only for a moment. Jackson threw himself forward like a sea-horse, and again the white line moved to the Wabeek side.

It was really a splendid exhibition for those on shore—the powerful strokes and tremendous strength of Jackson, the young giant of the North Woods. He was simply a wonder in such a contest.

The Wabeek men on the ledges stood up and roared again and again as the cable was drawn to the Wabeek side and Kirk's team won.

"Ten points for the Wabeeks," was the announcement. "Total for the Wabeeks, twelve points."

"And we haven't a thing," said Lucy Livingston to the bevy of pretty girls about her. "Not a thing. I feel sorry for Merriwell."

The big "Y" flag was trailing in the dust, the horns and the bells were still and the boys on the slope did not utter a word, but the Wabeek sympathizers—they seemed to want to pull the sky down.

One little fellow, who had been glumly sitting with

his chin in his hands and his hands on his knees, finally lifted his head and called to the roarers:

“Merriwell’s all right, and don’t ye fergit it! He couldn’t do the whole thing by hisself!”

After a long rest, Browning and Jackson came from their tents in swimming-suits. The other members of the teams had temporarily donned their usual clothing.

As Jackson and Browning walked toward the water, side by side, a comparison of the men was easy. Both men were about the same age. Browning was a bit fleshier and his skin was whiter. Jackson looked to be more powerful about the shoulders. The greatest contrast, however, was in the faces of the two men. Bruce’s features had a placid, easy, even lazy look. Jackson’s face was hard and stern.

“As a man, Bruce is worth a hundred of him,” Merriwell thought.

The clamor on the shore and on the ledges again rose, and the boys ceased to grumble and argue. Merriwell and some friends walked down on a point of rocks, as did Kirk and other members of the Wabeek nine. From this point a good view could be had of the water, which at that point was crystal-clear. The rocks and sand showed plainly.

A boat well laden with stones was towed out by another boat and sunk. It lay in the crystal-clear water, eight or ten feet below the surface, and plainly visible to large numbers of the spectators.

"A novel test," Mattock announced. "The one who gets that boat to the surface in the shortest time will win five points. He may do it in his own way."

There was a scampering for better viewpoints, and some men climbed a rocky pinnacle that looked sheer down into the water.

Browning and Jackson stood together at the water's edge.

"Are you ready, Jackson?" called Mattock.

Jackson bent forward and nodded. The pistol spoke, and he dived instantly. He could be seen when under the water almost as plainly as when on shore. He first tried to lift the boat, then began to take out the stones. He worked with lightning speed, for it is impossible for any one to remain long under water, especially when exerting himself. He lifted again, and brought the boat to the surface.

"Ten seconds!" said Mattock.

The same stones were then laboriously fished up and heaped in the boat, which was sunk again on the same spot. A hundred watches were now out and necks were being strained.

"Can't be done in quicker time than that," Hammerswell was heard to say.

"Aw! that was deuced speedy, don't you know," drawled Delancy. Merriwell looked up and saw that both were on the rocky point, almost above his head. Hammerswell gave him a look of defiant hate.

"Are you ready, Browning?" Mattock asked, holding his watch in one hand and the pistol in the other.

"Ready!" said Bruce.

Bang!

Bruce dived like a fish. He did not stop to remove a single stone; but, bending over the boat, he swung upward with all his mighty strength, and the boat came to the surface.

"Five seconds!" said Mattock, in a tone of amazement.

The friends of Merriwell's team felt that their time had come at last. They simply howled. The boys waved the big "Y" flag and screeched, and then added to the universal din by tooting the horns and whistles and ringing the bells.

"Hurrah for Browning!" yelled Rattleton, swinging his cap.

Again the yell broke out.

"Man, what are your muscles made of?" Mattock asked, clearly showing his surprise.

"Meat," drawled Bruce, as he came dripping to the shore.

And no one was more astonished than John Jackson. He had felt that he could beat Bruce at any feat of strength, simply because he seemed to outpull him in the water.

"Five points for the Merriwells," Mattock announced.

"Five points. Oh, we're coming up!" said Carker. "If we had seven more we'd be even-Steven!"

"I wonder how many points they'd give me if I'd lift that boat?" Bink swaggeringly asked.

"A million," said Merriwell.

"Then I guess I'll lift it and win the game. Have them sink it again for me, will you?"

After a rest, Swiftwing and Jackson came from the dressing-tents ready to engage in another contest. The wind had begun to blow in fitful gusts and storm-clouds had appeared. One cloud in the southwest began to look dark and threatening. Merriwell studied it anxiously.

"I'm afraid we're not to finish these contests," he said, speaking to Kirk.

"I've been noticing that cloud for some time," replied Kirk. "I don't believe we can get through. There may be time, though. If not, we'll have to call the thing off."

"No need of that. We'll simply finish them in the morning."

Hammerswell was near. He heard the words with wild joy. He had seen the clouds and he had talked with John Jackson.

"Oh, if it will only go over till to-morrow!" he grated. "I haven't been able to do a thing to-day. Neither has Jackson. We're too closely watched. But if the diving goes over until to-morrow! I wouldn't

have thought of it but for Jackson and the thing Merriwell said awhile ago to Kirk. If the thing goes over till to-morrow, I can fix Merriwell."

His face had so vindictive a look that he turned it from the crowds and stared out over the water, without seeing anything, however, but merely to conceal that look. A boat had been anchored two hundred yards out in the lake. Swiftwing and Jackson were rowed out to this boat, which they entered. Then each stood on a thwart, facing toward the shore.

"A swimming-race between Swiftwing and Jackson!" Mattock announced. "They will swim from the boat to this line drawn between these two boats here by the shore, the first passing under the line to win ten points."

Then he stood up, and, facing toward the boat, lifted his pistol. The moment the pistol flashed the swimmers sprang into the water. Jackson came up farther from the boat than the Pueblo, and began to swim shoreward with a powerful, steady stroke. He seemed to go through the water like an amphibious creature. But Swiftwing was soon close at his heels, perhaps two yards behind him, not more.

The Wabeek men began to shout again. They were sure of Jackson's swimming abilities, after the exhibition he had given. But their shouting seemed premature. Swiftwing began slowly to gain on his competitor. When fifty yards had been covered his

head was at Jackson's shoulders. At the half-way point he passed Jackson. At the one hundred and fifty-yard point more than half his body was ahead of Jackson.

Then he was seen to give a sudden flounce and to lose headway. Jackson spurted on. Swiftwing tried to recover the lost distance, but could not, and Jackson came in winner.

"The Wabeeks ten points—twenty-two in all!" was the announcement.

While the cheering was at its height Merriwell stepped toward Swiftwing. He knew that something treacherous had happened. And as Swiftwing came out of the water his right leg was seen to be bleeding.

"He stabbed me!" he hissed.

Jackson heard the words and turned back.

"What's that?" he demanded, with a fierce scowl.

"You struck me with a knife," said Swiftwing.

"Let's be sure of it," Merry advised, and Swiftwing, crushing down his heart of fire with Indian stolidity, walked composedly to the dressing-tent.

A shallow gash an inch long was seen in his leg, below the knee.

Kirk hastened to the tent.

"Jackson says that he did not touch Swiftwing," he declared. "Swiftwing must have struck something—a piece of drift, perhaps. Such a thing could easily happen."

He was anxious not to lose the ten points, but still did not wish them if gained unfairly. Merriwell looked again at the cut. He saw how difficult it would be to prove that it had been made with a knife. Still, he had been expecting treachery from Jackson ever since he knew that Hammerswell had been instrumental in getting the woodsman on the Wabeek team.

"I shall find out the truth of this," he quietly said. "Tell Jackson so, will you. Any man who strikes at one of my men strikes at me. This is my quarrel just as much as it is Swiftwing's. Tell Jackson so, and tell him that there will be a settlement with him, just as sure as I find that he is guilty."

The thunder bellowed. The storm was coming, and the spectators began hurriedly to leave the grounds.

CHAPTER XIX.

A MURDEROUS PLOT.

The proprietor of the Lake View gave a supper that night, to which the members of Merriwell's Athletic Team were invited. Lucy Livingston was there, of course, and Frank found an opportunity to engage her in conversation. She seemed as happy as a released bird. Her bright eyes sparkled, her laugh was infectious, and she was altogether charming.

"You can't imagine what makes me so happy to-night?" she queried.

"Because the Wabeek men beat us on points to-day, I suppose," was his roguish answer.

"They will not beat you to-morrow. You can beat them yet!"

"If we win everything. There are only two things more: another swimming-match and the high dive."

"I have been made happy by a letter I received this evening from father."

"I remember that you mentioned your father."

"And you remember that I asked you not to punish Herbert Hammerswell, for my father's sake. You thought it a queer request, and it was. But it wasn't a mere whim. Father has been telling me for some time that he has been under great financial obligations

to Mr. Hammerswell, and that he wished me to treat him nicely and do all that I could to make matters pleasant for him. I have done so, though I have hated the very sight of him."

"I thought you were engaged to be married to him," Frank teasingly quizzed.

"Well, I wasn't. Though it wasn't his fault. But about that letter. Father has been threatened with a mortgage which Hammerswell held, and instead of being under obligations to him, as he told me, he was simply afraid of him. That debt has been paid; and now I can be myself again, regardless of Herbert Hammerswell!"

"So that is the solution of the riddle?"

"Very simple, isn't it? But it has lifted a mountain for me. If I can only get Delancy to give up his company, now!"

"Which you never can," Merriwell thought, "for he is another rascal like Hammerswell!"

The proof of this was being furnished at that moment, though neither of the speakers dreamed so. Hammerswell and Delancy had early withdrawn from the company gathered at the Lake View. The storm had passed, and they were out on the lake-shore. With them were two other men, one of whom was John Jackson. The other was a drunken, disreputable fellow named Pike Conner. Hammerswell and Livingston had never met Conner before, and that he

might not recognize them should he meet with them again they talked in thickened voices and wore masks made of handkerchiefs.

The strength of four men was necessary to perform the black deed contemplated, and Hammerswell had liberally paid Jackson for his services and for the services of another safe man he was to bring with him. This "safe" man was Conner.

"Right here is where Merriwell will make his great dive!" said Hammerswell, not able to conceal the sneer of hate. "He will dive from the top of that high bluff into this deep water. I heard him talking about it this afternoon; and this evening when he came out here to locate the place with that Indian I sneaked after him and heard what they said."

"And that redskin thinks I jabbed a knife into his leg!" growled Jackson. "He cut his leg with something, and then tried to lay it onto me to explain how he got beat. I'll beat his head in!"

"Perhaps you did cut it?" suggested Hammerswell.

"Less talk of that kind you git off the better fer you and this business!" warned Jackson.

Hammerswell collapsed like a closing jack-knife.

"The hole is right here. I've been here before, and it's so deep and dark that no one can see anything on the bottom. Now where is that stump?"

For answer, Jackson led the way a short distance

along the shore and pointed out a tree stump that was almost wholly submerged.

"It's water-soaked and heavy as iron," he said. "When it goes down it will stay. We'll have to carry it there, and through the water, too, so's not to leave any sign. Take hold, there, Conner."

Conner took hold, as did Hammerswell and Delancy Livingston, though the latter grumbled through his mask that he did not like to get all wet and muddy.

"Take holt, all o' ye!" Jackson snarled. "Conner and me can't do all the lifting."

The soaked tree trunk was a heavy load for them, but after much struggling and straining they moved it across the intervening space and succeeded in sinking it in the spot which Herbert had pointed out.

"That's O. K.!" he gleefully exclaimed, when the work was done. "When Frank Merriwell makes that high dive he will go smash into that!"

Even Jackson seemed to shudder at the cold-bloodedness of the plot against Merriwell.

"I wouldn't go down there for a hundred dollars! Ain't no one else li'ble to, I s'pose?"

"Not unless it's the Indian."

"I'd give a million dollars, if I had it, if he would!" snarled Jackson.

"If they should want some one to compete against them, I'll pay you a hundred dollars to jump off there," said Hammerswell. "You know where the stump is,

and you could avoid it. That would draw Merriwell on, and he would go smash into it!"

"I'll do it!" Jackson hoarsely promised.

Then the cowardly quartet, having done their work, crept away.

The crowd was not so great the next morning, but it was roaring wild. Frank Merriwell had entered a protest against the swimming-race won by Jackson; the protest had been allowed, and the race had been swam over. And it was handsomely won by Swiftwing, in spite of the fact that his leg was somewhat stiff from the knife cut. Jackskon had strenuously denied that he had struck at Swiftwing with a knife, but Merriwell had told him flatly that he lied, and that the knife had been concealed in the trunks he wore, and Jackson's manner had confirmed Merriwell in the belief. More than that, Merriwell intended to have Jackson arrested as soon as the contests were finished. With this race to the credit of Merriwell's team, the score was now fifteen to twelve in favor of the Merriwells.

Then Merriwell went in and won the swimming-race in which he was pitted against Dunstan Kirk, and won it more handsomely even than Swiftwing had won his. The score became twenty-five to twelve. Danny and Bink fairly screamed with delight, and Rattleton's tongue became so twisted he could hardly talk, while the boyish supporters of Merriwell filled the air

with such deafening braying of the horns that all other sounds were almost drowned.

The last thing on the list of contests was the high dive. Hammerswell chewed his tongue in a very anguish of hate and mortification, but, with fiendish gloating, he was still biding his time. He hated Merriwell that morning more than he had ever hated him before. Lucy Livingston had suddenly changed in her manner, now treating him with cold disdain, and he attributed this change to Merriwell.

"Wait till he dives! Wait till he dives!" he mentally panted.

Hammerswell came to Jackson.

"I have just heard them talking. You are to dive against Swiftwing. Merriwell doesn't want Swiftwing to dive from that highest point. He says it is too high. I want you to insist on that spot, though, for the stump is there. It will be one hundred dollars in your pocket if you do. Swiftwing is going to back out, I can see, and Merriwell will be the one to dive against you. It's working round to that. You will know where to leap to avoid the stump, and Merriwell will dive straight into it. A hundred dollars!"

"Lift it a little!" said Jackson dubiously.

Hammerswell grew desperate.

"Two hundred!" he whispered. "Work the thing, and I'll give you two hundred!"

"How much down?"

They were in a place secure from observation, and Hammerswell took out his purse and gave Jackson a hundred dollars.

"There! Go for the other hundred, and you shall have it!"

"Correct! I'll git it. If Swiftwing dives, I'll have my revenge, and if Merriwell dives you'll have yours. I'll make 'em do it."

A little later Dunstan Kirk came to Frank.

"Jackson insists that the dive be made from the point first agreed on."

"All right," Frank answered. "If Swiftwing doesn't care to try it, I may take his place I suppose?"

"Yes; any of your men."

"The dive will be made, Kirk. Tell Jackson to get ready."

The points to be given for the high dive were twenty; so that, as the score now stood, the winner of the high dive would win victory for his team. Not only the fact of diving from this perilous projection, but the manner of the dive, the quickness of the re-appearance out of the water and other things were to be considered by the judges in making their award.

Merriwell went to the dressing-tents, where he found Swiftwing getting ready.

"I'll make the dive," was Swiftwing's grim declaration. "I can dive from any point that Jackson can."

"You're a courageous fellow, Swiftwing, and a more beautiful swimmer never went through water!"

Then Merriwell went into another tent and put on his swimming-suit, to be ready for an emergency, or to take Swiftwing's place if necessary. When he came out Kirk appeared from another tent similarly clad. The four swimmers, accompanied by a few friends, proceeded to the top of the high, rocky bluff, cheered by their sympathizers. Out in the lake was a boat manned by skilful hands, ready to pick up any diver who should show signs of exhaustion when he rose from the water. Farther out was a small lake steamer, black with spectators.

A deathless hush fell on the throng when the divers came out into view on the top of the bluff.

"My time has come!" Hammerswell was panting. "I know Merriwell, and he will make that dive sure. My time has come!"

Jackson, who was to dive first, walked out upon the extreme point of rock and looked down into the water. He fancied he could see the water-logged stump, with its roots thrust upward like spears, ready to impale him. He grew sick and giddy. The thought that he might make a miss in his calculation, or that a current of wind might strike him and pull him aside and impale him on the roots, fairly froze the blood in his veins. His head became giddy. He grew blind, and felt as if he were about to pitch from the bluff.

"I can't do it!" he gasped, reeling back from the point. "I can't do it!"

"You insisted on this place!" said Frank sharply.

"I give in. I can't do it!"

Swiftwing stepped past Merriwell and out to the point.

"I can do it!" he hissed, giving Jackson a look of scorn and hate.

Then, before Merriwell could interfere, he sprang into the air and shot downward, head first, with his extended hands thrust out before in diver fashion. He had looked like a brown wood-god as he stood for that brief moment on the bluff—handsome as a Greek Apollo in form, with head erect, chest expanded and eyes flashing, the thin swimming-suit, with the white "Y" on the breast, revealing instead of hiding his magnificent form.

When he shot downward he looked even more attractive, and the feat was, besides, thrilling. The throng seemed to gasp for breath. Carker, below, coolly leveled his camera and took a snap-shot of the swiftly descending figure—a thing almost as difficult as to take a picture of a lightning flash.

Frank Merriwell was on the extreme point of the bluff before Swiftwing struck the water. He saw him disappear without a splash, cleanly and smoothly. A prettier dive was never made. Then he waited for him to appear.

But Swiftwing did not come to the surface. The moments passed. A restless, bellowing sound came from the spectators, who were standing up now, lifted as if by some invisible power.

"Something is wrong!" Merriwell whispered. Then, without a moment's hesitation, he put his hands together above his head, leaped from the bluff head first, and sped to the aid of Swiftwing.

"Killed! Killed!" Hammerswell was gasping, while his face was ashy white and his heart seemed to have stopped beating.

But Frank Merriwell, feeling that Swiftwing had struck against something, had leaped to one side to avoid that danger spot. He went into the water with the easy, gliding motion of a downward-thrust spear, and the spectators again grew breathless. They felt that some terrible tragedy was being enacted before them.

As soon as he touched bottom Frank swam toward the point where he knew Swiftwing had vanished. His hands came in contact with the stump, the roots of which he dimly saw straggling out before him like the arms of an octopus. He knew that deadly treachery had been at work. He had previously examined that bottom, and no stump had been there. He expected to find Swiftwing dead. Wedged fast amid the roots, he found Swiftwing.

"Have they killed you, Swiftwing?" was his

thought. "This is the work of Jackson! I ought to have had this place inspected this morning. This is my fault!"

He let his hands slide quickly over Swiftwing's body, and found that the Pueblo's head and shoulders had been driven between two roots, which had closed against him and now held him fast. The picture of the terrible struggle which Swiftwing had probably made rose before his mental vision. Then he felt Swiftwing's form quiver under his fingers. Swiftwing was not dead!

Merriwell began to work with savage energy, though without undue excitement. Already his ears were ringing and cracking, and the pressure on his lungs was becoming unbearable. He took hold of the clasping roots and pulled. They gave, but did not break. The pressure on his lungs grew greater, and his ears snapped as if the drums were collapsing. His head began to feel queer.

Again he pulled and surged. His lungs felt as if they were bursting. A sense of giddiness and faintness was taking possession of him. His head seemed ready to fly open.

"My God!" was his thought, "I must save him! It was all my fault!"

The realization seemed to give him the strength of ten men. He tore the roots asunder, pulled the body of Swiftwing from their embrace, and, with the Indian

in his arms, gave a downward kick on the bottom of the lake with his feet and shot toward the surface.

* * * * *

"A thousand dollars!" grated Jackson. "A thousand dollars right in my fist, or I blow the whole thing. Merriwell's got a warrant out fer me, and I'm goin' into the woods. But I'll tell jist what you had to do with it 'fore I go, if you don't cough up the dough!"

He was speaking to Hammerswell in the darkness back of the Lake View, where he had met Hammerswell to receive the remainder of his pay.

"I haven't a thousand!" Hammerswell begged. "And no one was killed, anyway! Merriwell saved the Indian and found the stump."

"'Course! That's why I slide. A thousand, or the whole thing goes to the public. I ain't got no time to monkey. I've writ a letter which I'll give to or send to the proprietor of the Lake View. Here it is. Is it worth a thousand dollars to you?"

He held it up, and Hammerswell desperately tried to snatch it.

"No ye don't!"

"Let me read it!"

"No ye don't!"

"I haven't a thousand with me."

"All right, then! It goes to the Lake View and I'm off for the woods!"

"Make it less!"

"A thousand er nothin'! And no time to monkey!"

Herbert Hammerswell paid it.

* * * * *

"Whoop!" howled Bink, turning a handspring and then standing on his head. "We beat 'em in the water sports, and to-morrow we'll knock their eyes out in that ball-game!"

"Sure!" agreed Rattleton. "Can't anything beat Merriwell!"

CHAPTER XX:

AT THE CAMP.

"Hammerswell made those fellows hand over the cash," said Greg Carker, speaking to Merriwell and a group of the Athletic Team, who sat or stood in front of the big wall tent at Merriwell's camp in the early morning after the water-sports contests. "One of them swiped it off the table when he saw they were beaten and tried to run with it, but Hammerswell stopped him. I didn't think he had the sand."

"Oh, it wasn't Hammerswell!" Hodge contradicted. "He hasn't the courage of a rabbit. I heard it was Delancy Livingston."

"Yes, it was Delancy who made them cough up the dough," said Danny.

"He and Ham will knead the dough, if they buck against Merriwell and me!" grandiloquently declared Bink Stubbs.

"You've got putty in your head!" snapped Danny, secretly wishing that he had made the pun.

"Who were they?" Merriwell asked.

"Some bloods from New York," answered Carker. "Hammerswell and Delancy got them into a poker-game at Lake View and skinned them out of an aw-

ful roll. I don't know how much, but the report is that it was up in the thousands."

"When the 'University Nine' comes up against us this afternoon they'll knead the dough that some of them are again betting!" chirped Ready.

"They'll wed the twine-press—I mean tread the wine-press!" crowed Rattleton.

"They'll sweat blood!" grimly declared Browning.

"I'd agree with you, if Merry was going to pitch," said Hodge. "But his wrist is knocked out. With Swiftwing in the box, things look different."

"Swiftwing will do," Frank declared. "I have watched him closely in his practise work since he came into the team. He can pitch pretty well."

"You bet he can!" squealed Bink. "We'll just knock the eye out of that Wabeek team!"

The picture was so satisfying that Bink exultantly turned a somersault and stood on his head, with one foot waving triumphantly.

"Talking about the courage of a rabbit," laughed Jack Ready, his red-apple cheeks redder from the effects of his morning plunge in the lake, "Bink makes me think of a festive bunny kicking round in the jubilant dawn."

"Practising for acrobatic work as short-stop," said Bink, still standing on his head and flourishing his foot. "This is the way I shall do when a grass-cutting

grounder comes my way. Simply up-end and take it in! See?"

"Take it in with your open mouth?" asked Browning, who was lying on the ground, feeling too lazy to stand up when it was not absolutely necessary.

"Any old way!" squealed Bink. "It doesn't matter how I up-end and take it in, if I take it in!"

"All your brains will run out of your ears, if you try to make stump speeches standing on your head!" Carker warned.

"No brains to run out!" Bruce drawled.

"Come down, Binkey, dear!" begged Danny. "We see that you can do it!"

"You're like the little rabbit,
Who had a foolish habit
Of standing on his head to speak a piece,
Till his teacher said: 'Now, Bunny,
Such conduct isn't funny,
And really these performances must cease!'"

Bink gave his leg a last flourish and came down.

"Where did you steal that from?" he demanded, sitting up and looking very red in the face.

"Bunny, you're as read as an old book!" chirped Ready.

"You can't claim it," Danny squeaked. "I stole it from a man who had brains."

"I've got one for you," said Bink, his eye catching the ghostly white face of the moon over the lake, which

the sunlight had not yet driven into obscurity. "Why does the man in the moon never get married?"

"Oh, that's easy! He stays up so late that no sensible woman will have him."

"Sensible has nothing to do with it."

"Insensible woman, then!"

"He lul-looks too tut-tut-tarnal sick for any woman to lul-like!" stuttered Joe Gamp.

"He's too much of a high-roller," guessed Jack Ready.

"Wrong! All wrong!"

"Then tell us, Danny, dear!" drawled Bruce.

"He only makes a quarter a week, and he gets full every month."

"That's enough to make me stand on my head again!" gasped Bink. "You must have some new, sharp files in your joke-shop. Comic newspaper-files, I mean!"

"Had horse-radish and razors for my breakfast."

"Horse-radish?"

"Yes; it was sharp. So were the razors."

"Kill him!" groaned Bruce, rolling lazily over on his back. "Fire him off the team."

"You fellows seem to think that we'll down the Wabeeks without any trouble this afternoon," said Hodge. "I don't. It isn't going to be a little bit easy. Swiftwing can't pitch with Curringer. I've watched him, too."

"Oh, you're just jealous of Swiftwing!" Bruce drawled. Whereupon Hodge's dark face grew purplish-red.

"Maybe you think talk like that is pleasant, but it isn't. It makes me tired. If you can't say anything with sense, I'll thank you to keep still."

"Always when you jab a fellow in a raw spot he squirms!"

Hodge was on the verge of an explosion. Merriwell gave him a look and he got up and walked fumingly away.

"You oughtn't dig at Hodge that way, when you know how touchy he is!"

"Thunderation, Merry! Can't the fellow take a joke? But I hit dead center. His actions show it."

"Well, Lucy is pretty enough to get stuck on," said Bink. "I'd get stuck on her myself, if she'd only look at me."

"Wouldn't anybody get stuck on a runt like you," declared Danny.

"Brother, give me a cigarette!" Bink begged, imitating the manner of Lew Veazie.

Danny gave him the cigarette.

"Do you suppose that Swiftwing has tumbled in love with Lucy Livingston?" Carker seriously asked.

"Do you suppose that Lucy Livingston has tumbled in love with Swiftwing?" chirped Ready.

"Well, the Indian has been giving her some mighty soft sheep's-eye glances," Bink asserted, striking a match to light his cigarette. "And if she isn't in love with him, then looks are deceiving."

"He did look like a forest king yesterday," Ready averred. "Did you ever see such a picture as he made when he stood on top of the bluff before making the dive? I got a snap-shot of that."

"And while making the dive?" said Carker. "I got a snap-shot of that."

"But he's an Indian," said Danny.

"And 'all the good Indians are dud-dud-dead!'" Gamp quoted.

Merriwell arose and walked after Hodge. He had seen what was fermenting between Bart and Swiftwing. He did not believe that Hodge had really fallen in love with Lucy Livingston, but he felt that he could not blame him if he had, for Lucy was an uncommonly pretty girl. On the other hand the girl's evident admiration for John Swiftwing, the handsome, stalwart, almost physically perfect Pueblo, had been almost undisguised. At first her fancy had been for Merriwell, but Swiftwing's performance and the physical perfection he exhibited at the water-sports contests had won her girlish eye.

"I don't know as I can blame her," Frank thought, as he walked swiftly on in the direction taken by

Bart. "But he is an Indian. He is educated, it is true, and dressed like a white——"

He sought to check the thought. He did not desire even in thought to wrong the Pueblo, whom he liked and admired. Yet he could not forget his experiences with Swiftwing at the pueblo of Taos, when the young redskin had been smitten by the beauty of Inza Burrage and had carried her away on a fleet horse, thinking she returned his love.

"I don't know that I should be sorry if Bart should really fall in love with Lucy Livingston!" he thought. "There isn't any girl too good or too handsome for Hodge, even if he is quick-tempered and obstinate. He is true as steel. Browning ought not to have flung that at him. He has taken a fancy to the girl, and, of course, all the fellows see it, but that's not the way to handle Hodge. I'm afraid there's going to be trouble between him and Swiftwing. It would be just like Bart to refuse to catch, if Swiftwing pitches."

The ball-game between Merriwell's Athletic Team and the "University" or Wabeek Nine was not to be called until two o'clock, but long before that hour people began to arrive on the grounds at the Wabeek Hotel, where the game was to be played. Dimmick, the proprietor, was an up-to-date man, and on his grounds there was a small, but attractive grand stand and bleachers of semi-rustic work, and a fence to keep the spectators from crowding the diamond. As a re-

sult, some good ball-playing was often to be seen at the Wabeek, which had become rather noted as the ball-players' hotel.

All of the neighboring hotels sent heavy contingents of spectators that day; and the crowd constantly increased, until it was seen that no previous contest between the Athletic Team and the Wabeeks had excited such interest. This was largely due, of course, to the dramatic incidents of the water-sports contests as well as to the fact that the people now knew that the playing would be worth going a long distance to witness.

Shortly after noon the boys from the Lake View came over with their flag showing the white Y on a blue field, and with their horns and bells and whistles, determined to make a lively racket. They were Merriwell partisans, and they were joined by all the boys on the grounds, including even those from the Wabeek Hotel.

"We'll whoop 'er up fer Merry this afternoon, and don't yer forget it!" Frank heard them say, as he walked past them.

"Say, he ain't goin' t' pitch!" one of them gasped. "Heard a feller tellin' Mattock so."

"De double-shoot's bu'sted his wrist!" said another. They looked admiringly after Merriwell as he walked on.

"What's that?" a man inquired.

"Bu'sted his wrist wid de double-shoot!" explained the boy. "W'en he played de odder game. See?"

"The double-shoot?"

The boy looked at him in amazement.

"Ain't ye heard nuttin' 'bout Merriwell's double-shoot?"

"No!"

"Huh!"

Then he turned to the boys.

"He's a reg'lar Rip Van Winkle. Been asleep fer twenty years. Ain't heerd o' Merriwell's double-shoot!"

"Swiftwing's goin' t' pitch. There he comes!"

Swiftwing passed and flashed a glance at Lucy Livingston, who had taken a seat in the grand stand. She saw the look and flushed. But it was apparent that she was not sorry to attract the admiration of the Pueblo, and her eyes followed him admiringly as he walked over to Merriwell and began to talk with him.

Bart Hodge had come back with Merriwell after a long walk in the woods, ready to put on the catcher's mask and do his level best against the Wabeeks, in spite of the fact that his heart was seething against the Indian, whose face he had a wild desire to hammer in.

"It will grind me to catch for him, but I'll do it!" he had promised Merriwell.

Still the crowd grew, until it seemed impossible that

so many people could have been found in that part of the Adirondacks, even though it was a popular summer resort section of the Great North Woods. Hammerswell and Delancy Livingston came over, and also took seats in the grand stand. They were in a cheerful frame of mind, for they had not only won a big amount of money in the poker-game from the New York bloods but they were confident that Merriwell's team would be beaten.

They agreed in their opinions with Kirk and others of the Wabeek nine that the first game had been won by a streak of pure luck. When the game was analyzed it did seem so. Until the very last, everything was going to the Wabeeks, when a sudden turn brought Merry's men out on the winning side.

Curringer, of Princeton, the Wabeek pitcher, was really glad, however, that he did not have to meet Merriwell. He believed that the previous game had been won by dead luck, but he knew that Merriwell was a pitcher of undisputed ability, and he knew nothing in favor of the ability of Swiftwing.

"Oh, that Indian will be dead easy!" he had declared to Kirk.

"We're bound to do them this time!" Wadkins had asserted, in supreme confidence. "Most of his men are nothing but lobsters. Really, I am surprised that Merriwell ever took such a crowd with him!"

This was the universal opinion of the Wabeek men.

all of whom were members of college nines and ball-players of experience and ability. They did not see as yet that Frank Merriwell had the rare faculty of fine generalship and the supreme ability to take incongruous elements and melt them into a harmonious whole. Without this ability in its leader Merriwell's Athletic Team would have been a weak combination and might have gone to pieces in short order.

The preliminary warming-up practise drew cries of admiration from the spectators, who seemed about equally divided in sympathy between the two teams. The work of John Swiftwing was an unknown quantity, and this, with the fact that he was an Indian, drew to him a great deal of attention.

In this practise work Frank watched him closely, endeavoring to strengthen him where it was seen to be needed.

At two o'clock precisely, with the lake attractively ruffling its bosom, under the bluest of summer skies, with the weather just warm enough for fine ball-playing, the game between the Merriwells and the Wa-beeks was called, with the boys waving their flag and dinning away and the crowd in the grand stand and on the grounds buzzing like a swarm of bees.

"Here is where we do you!" laughed Curringer, as he walked toward the pitcher's box, speaking to Merriwell, who was on his way to the benches.

"Anything to bet on it?" asked Rattleton, overhear-

ing the boast. "If you have, grets see the leen—let's see the green!"

"That's a fool's argument," snapped Curringer. "If a fellow offers to bet a lot of money, that's a dead sure sign that he knows all about it. I'm not betting, but I wouldn't be afraid to bet you anything you can name."

The impatient crowd was beginning to howl. Curringer walked on toward the box, for the Merriwells were to be first at the bat, and Galt, of Princeton, the Wabeek catcher, stepped behind the home plate. The basemen and fielders took their positions. The horns ceased and the crowd become silent in anxious expectation.

"Play ball!" said the umpire.

CHAPTER XXI.

SOME GOOD WORK.

In spite of their boasts, the Athletic Team was not as confident as if Frank Merriwell had been the pitcher. Swiftwing could pitch, no doubt, but he was not Merriwell. Bart Hodge was glum and sore and filled with forebodings.

"If only you were going into the box, Merry, I'd know we could win!" he had said, speaking to Frank just before Frank took his seat on the benches. "As it is, I'm not so sure. But, of course, you can't, with your wrist in that awful shape! But it's a terrible handicap. Still, I'll do my best. I promised you that I would, and I will!"

"That's right, Hodge," Frank had answered. "I know that you can be depended on to do all you can to-day. But I feel sure that Swiftwing will do better work than you think."

"I don't dare to say anything, Merry, for the other fellows will think I'm just wildly jealous of the fellow! The idea! Why, that girl wouldn't look at him twice. He's an Indian!"

Swiftwing was passing and heard this, and he gave Bart a look of hate and scorn.

"Just an Indian!" Swiftwing was bitterly thinking,

as he stood with Merriwell's men afterward and glanced toward the crowd, hoping to see Lucy Livingston. "And the Pueblos say I am just a white man. I am nothing! But I will show Bart Hodge that I can pitch!"

Merriwell had changed the order of his batting-list, and Jack Ready came first to the plate, swinging two bats to make one feel lighter. He cast the extra bat away and faced the pitcher.

"You see the man on that steamer out there?" he chirped. "I'm going to put the ball right into his hands."

The steamer was half a mile away.

"Knock the eye out of the man in the moon!" squealed Bink.

"Thanks for the suggestion, I will!"

The ball came whistling from the hand of Cur-ringer, who was in his best trim. Ready struck at it, and missed.

"One puncture in the ozone!" gasped Ready, as if he could not understand it.

"You'll knock the air so full of holes that we can't breathe it," some one gayed.

Ready thought he would wait till he got a ball that suited him. The next ball was over the plate, but the curve did not look right.

"Two strikes!" called the umpire.

Ready gripped the bat tighter, and swung at the next, which he saw was also coming over the plate.

Plunk!

"Three strikes, out!"

Jack looked bewildered.

"Why, it's easy!" Curringer laughed.

The Wabeek rooters began to howl.

"I guess my eyes are twisted," said Ready, stepping aside. "I hit the ball, I know, but it went through the bat!"

Gamp came up awkwardly. In the opinion of Curringer and others of the Wabeeks, he was one of the "lobsters."

"Gug-going to knock the cuc-cuc-cover off it!" Gamp grinned.

But he was not confident. Curringer gave the New Hampshire lad a wide curve, thinking he would strike at it.

"No, ye don't!" Gamp muttered.

"One ball!"

The next was an in curve, and Gamp missed. Curringer signaled Galt, the catcher, and sent in a slow drop. Gamp belted it and sent up a high infield fly, but it was taken in by Wadkins, the short-stop; and Gamp was out.

The boys sat in glum silence, while a tremendous din was being made by the Wabeek sympathizers. Even the flag seemed to droop.

Browning, who was third on the batting-list, came up looking too lazy to walk, but he was not boasting. Curringer tried him with an out curve, which cut the corner of the plate, but Bruce did not try for it. Then Curringer sent in a drop, which Browning let go by.

"Two strikes!" cried the umpire; and Curringer's grin could be seen in the grand stand.

The Wabeeks were howling again. Then Bruce knocked a straight drive into the left field, and sprinted. It was wonderful to see the big fellow run. All the sleepiness and laziness had vanished. He simply tore over the ground. The boys were yelling like Indians, and the Merriwell sympathizers were screeching. Perkins, of Princeton, the left-fielder, made a desperate effort to get the ball, but failed; and, with everybody roaring, Browning raced wildly on to second.

Bart Hodge came to the bat, looking grim and determined. Browning began to play off second for a lead, closely watched by Curringer. The first pitched ball was a strike, though Bart did not swing at it. With the next, Bart put a beautiful single into the right field, and Bruce, who had a good lead off second, sprinted again, running like a race-horse. Merriwell, who had gone out to coach him, shouted for him to go home, and he went for the home plate like the wind.

"Slide!" Merriwell yelled, and Bruce threw his im-

mense form forward in a terrific slide, and scored, as the ball struck in the hands of Galt, the catcher.

Bruce's remarkable performance set the Merriwell men wild again, and the din made by the boys was something unearthly. One score had been made, with two men out, and Bart had taken first.

Curringer was sore. The grin had disappeared from his face.

"That giant can run like a rabbit!" he was grumbling. "And I didn't think Hodge could get that ball. But they'll not do it again, you bet!"

Merriwell set Ready to coach at third, and went down toward first to coach Hodge. The boys screeched like Sioux as Swiftwing came to the bat.

"Get a good lead off first!" said Merry to Bart.

He was standing with his left side toward the home plate, and put his left hand on his hip. This was a signal to Swiftwing to wait and give Hodge a chance to steal second.

"That redskin can't hit me," thought Curringer, and put a ball over the plate.

He was watching Hodge, and so was Galt. Galt and Curringer were the Princeton battery, and they did good team-work. When the ball came back from Galt, Curringer threw it over to first, to show Hodge that it would not be safe to try to steal. The ball came back to him, and as Hodge began to play off he threw it again.

"Just let him keep throwing," Frank advised. "He'll throw wild by and by."

Then Curringer suddenly delivered the ball to the bat, and Merriwell instantly demanded judgment on a "balk."

"Curringer's foot was not on the pitcher's plate, and he did not properly face the batter!" he declared.

There was a storm of protest from the Wabeeks, and a buzz in the grand stand, but Merriwell insisted on his point, and the umpire declared a balk, which gave Hodge second and Swiftwing first.

Curringer was frothing mad.

"That was a clean steal!" he growled. "I know that my toe was on the plate."

When Rattleton came to the bat Curringer was so wild with rage that he gave him a swift one right over, and Rattleton drove it as hot as a Mauser bullet straight through Wadkins' hands into the left field. Rattleton jumped for first, while the base-runners fairly flew.

Everybody began to howl.

"Go home!" Ready yelled, as Bart passed third. "Go home! They can't get you. Go home!"

The left-fielder threw to third to cut off Swiftwing, but Swiftwing was safe on third, and Hodge had scored.

"Why, it's easy!" laughed Merriwell to the furious pitcher.

Carker, who came to the bat next, was anxious to get a safe hit also. Curringer saw that his anger had led him into a bit of foolishness, and he tried to get into form. He began to pitch corner-cutters. He was just shaving the plate, and soon two balls were called on him.

If Carker had been content to wait, he probably would have got to first on balls, but because Rattleton had made a hit he wanted to do the same.

“When I pull myself together, you can’t hit me!” thought Curringer, and he gave Carker two strikes. Then three balls were called.

The next ball looked to Carker to be “easy,” and he swung at it—and fanned out!

The side was out, with two scores to its credit.

John Swiftwing went into the box with a face as impassive as that of the Sphinx. The Adirondack people, who had known him only as a guide, wondered to see him there. They did not believe that he could pitch, and were astonished that Merriwell should take any chances with him in that place. Nor did the Wa-beeks believe that Swiftwing’s pitching would greatly endanger their chances of winning the game. Hodge was feeling blue, in spite of the fact that the Merriwells had made two scores. He was fearful of Swiftwing’s ability, and he hated him, besides.

“Looking up into the grand stand, where he thinks Lucy is!” Hodge growled to himself, as he saw the

Indian give a swift glance in that direction. "I'll have to hit him yet, for his insolence. I'm sorry Merry put him on the team. If I'd had my will, I'd find some means to postpone this game for a week, if necessary, to let Merry's wrist get in condition."

Wadkins, the short-stop, was the first man at the bat, and he came up with a great deal of confidence.

"Now we'll see the short-stop knock the cover off the old thing!" chattered Rattleton from second. "I mean we'll see the shop-stort—no, the top-short—no, the short-stop—— Oh, I don't know what I mean—but we'll see him do it!"

Swiftwing began to pitch, but his beginning did not impress the Wabeeks or the spectators. He seemed to be merely monkeying along, but very quickly had two strikes and three balls called.

"Just wait, Wadkins!" advised Kirk. "He can't put the next one over the plate."

He said it loud enough for Swiftwing to hear. The Indian seemed not to hear it, however. But, with terrific speed, he sent the next ball straight over the plate, and the batter was out.

Kirk looked dazed, and Wadkins' jaw dropped. Neither had anticipated such a thing. The grand stand buzzed with admiration for the pitcher, seeming to wake all at once to the fact that here was pitching-timber.

Swiftwing had that impassive Indian look on his

dark face. Once Bart saw him give a quick and almost unnoticeable glance toward the grand stand, which made Hodge grind his teeth.

"He wants to know that she saw him do that!" he grated. "Of course she saw him, and of course she is waving her handkerchief like all possessed! But I'd die before I'd look and give Swiftwing or any one else an opportunity to say I cared."

Galt was next at the bat. He did not like the way the last ball came, and he determined to be careful.

The first pitched ball was an out curve, just out of reach. But Galt was crafty and did not strike.

"One ball!" called the umpire.

The next ball from Swiftwing's brown fingers gave an in shoot close to the batter's knuckles. Galt thought he could get a hit, and he fouled it. The pitcher followed this with a swift, straight ball close to Galt's shoulders. Galt struck at it.

"One strike!" called the umpire.

Then Swiftwing tried a drop, not knowing that Galt was a drop-striker. Drops suited Galt so well that he was said to be one of those fellows who "eat" drops. Galt lifted the ball over the second-baseman's head. Rattleton tried to get back of it, but failed, and the ball dropped short of Gamp, the center-fielder, who was racing toward it. It was a safe hit, and Galt smiled jubilantly from first, while the Wabeek rooters turned up again.

Galt began to play off as Severing came to the bat. Hodge was watching him, and so was Swiftwing. The coach began to chatter. On the second pitched ball Severing swung at it without any intention of hitting it, and with a flourish of the bat to bewilder Hodge and bother him in throwing to second, for which Galt was racing. But Bart Hodge was not so easily bothered. As soon as the ball was in his hands he threw it with lightning speed to Rattleton, on second, and Rattles deftly pinned the runner on the slide.

"Out, second!" declared the umpire. There was a smart fire of hand-clapping, while a group of Merriwell rooters sent up a roaring yell.

Then Swiftwing sent in a swift rise, which Severing struck at.

"Two strikes!" said the umpire.

"Don't be fooled by those things!" Kirk yelled to Severing. "Let them alone. They're too high!"

The next ball sent in by the Indian pitcher was apparently a straight ball at the right height. Severing swung at it in great confidence, but it was not a straight ball; it was a drop.

"Three strikes!"

Pandemonium broke loose among the Merriwell sympathizers. The side was out, and the Wabeeks had not made a score.

"Dis is de way de lobsters do ye!" yelled an urchin. "You fellers ain't in it! See?"

The boys grouped around the Yale flag were screeching.

"Come off ther dump!" one of them howled.

"What's the matter wid Swiftwing now?"

It was heard high up in the grand stand.

"Swiftwing! He's all right!" came back in a deafening bray.

Bart Hodge could not resist the temptation to look, and he saw Lucy Livingston standing up, wildly waving her handkerchief, while a score of pretty girls grouped round her were doing the same.

"Crazy over that Indian!" he grunted. "Just crazy!"

Swiftwing's eyes were shining very brightly as he came in, and his chest was heaving, though that may have been the result of his recent exertions. But to the eyes of Bart Hodge, who saw him glance in Lucy's direction, this was evidence that Swiftwing was exultantly conscious that Lucy and the other girls were pinnacling him as a hero.

"That was all right!" Frank said, speaking to Hodge. Hodge did not say anything as Frank passed on to repeat his congratulations to the Indian pitcher.

"You learned more than football at Carlisle, Swiftwing!" he said. "That was all right. I knew how you used to play football, and I was sure that when put to the test you could pitch!"

"What's the use?" asked the Pueblo, with a wave of

the hand that made Merriwell think of the stories he had read of Indian oratory.

“What’s the use? Why, that was good work! Keep that up, and we are sure to win!”

“I mean what does it benefit me? I can be nothing but an Indian among white men, and nothing but a white man among Indians. Bart Hodge called me an Indian awhile ago! And ‘all the good Indians are dead!’ It is useless for an Indian to try to be a white man, and the little training I got at Carlisle spoiled me for being an Indian. But I suppose it’s all right. God made the white man and the Indian different. The mistake was in the white man coming to this country. He should have remained away; or, when he came, he should have killed all the Indians, since it was impossible for the Indians to kill the superior white race!”

This last clause was said in an indescribably bitter and scornful way.

“But the people are admiring your work,” Frank persisted, feeling that there was something of truth in Swiftwing’s declarations. “Hear them still howling! They have simply gone crazy over it. I want to congratulate you, Swiftwing.”

“What’s the use?” again with that wave of the hand. “What does it all amount to? They would howl the same way over a race-horse that had made a good run, or over a bulldog that was able to bite a little harder than the other bulldog. But the horse and the bulldog

would still be in their eyes horse and bulldog. The very people who are howling would probably make a kick if I should have a room next theirs, or eat at the table with them. The white men own the world, and they have even shaped the religion which tells us about the other world. I think if there is any other world there must be a separate place for Indians. And if I should ever get there, where would be my place? I am neither a white man nor an Indian! What's the use?"

Frank would have said more, but Swiftwing passed on, as if he did not want to hear more, while Frank looked after him with regret.

"The open flattery of those girls isn't salve enough to heal the old wound," he thought. "Yet I have seen him looking at Lucy Livingston in a strange way! Can it be possible that he is in love with her, and knowing that, because he is an Indian, he may never hope to approach her as a lover, causes him to feel this way? He seemed different the other day. She is doing him and herself a wrong by her present course. I hope no harm will come of it!"

Nevertheless, he felt uneasy and disturbed as he walked over and began to talk to Bruce and Bart.

"Did you see those crazy girls?" Bruce yawningly asked. "Regular lunatics over that Indian!"

Merriwell glanced round.

"Be careful, Bruce! Swiftwing went by then, and I

think he heard you. He heard something of that kind from Bart, and it has made him bitter. I don't want him to hear any more. I feel sorry for him myself."

"Oh, don't trouble about him!" growled Bart. "He likes flattery, and he is getting it in large and liberal doses this afternoon."

The boys were heard yelling:

"Merriwell knows the kind o' thing to put into the box! This Indian wayer is a corker! You Wabeeks is feelin' sore, ain't ye?"

"I want to compliment you on your throw, Bart. That was wonderfully quick and fine work."

Hodge's dark face brightened. Praise from Frank was always pleasant to him.

"I didn't intend to let that fellow steal second, if I could help it!"

Then Merriwell passed on to tell Rattleton that in catching and holding Bart's wonderful throw and putting the ball on the man he had covered the second base with glory.

"Oh, we'll do 'em, Merry! We'll rave 'em on the hun—have 'em on the run in a little while. If we can get two more scores in this inning, we can shut them out, maybe."

"We must try for it," said Frank; and then walked on to talk to other members of the nine and encourage them in their work.

CHAPTER XXII.

CONFIDENT CURRINGER.

In the first half of the second inning Bink Stubbs came first to the bat. The little fellow walked up with the proud air of a conquering hero—or a peacock.

“See me knock its eye out!” he gurgled, as Curringer turned to send in the first ball.

“Put it inter de lake!” yelled a boy near.

“I’m going to do that very thing, but as I’m not boastful I wanted to surprise you. What made you give it away? Now, we do ’em! See me!”

But the ball went wide of the plate, and Stubbs did not strike at it.

“I’m not hunting for ‘balls,’ but for hits!” he howled, shaking his bat. “There’s a hole near the end of this bat. See if you can put it through the hole.”

Curringer put it “through the hole,” and Bink fanned.

“That was one of my little surprises, but I’ll get you next time!”

Crack!

He did get the next one, drove it straight into the hands of the first-baseman—and was out.

“Of course, you can’t expect anything from that boastful runt!” said Griswold, taking the bat. “There

are always holes in any bat that he uses, and when he manages to hit the ball he can't get it beyond the diamond. If you want to see batting that is batting, fasten your eagle eyes on me!"

"And you'll see the most insufferable mouth-stretcher in the country!" Bink sneered. "If you'd hold your mouth once in a while perhaps you could think better."

"Nothing could ever make you think better! Your think-tank is full of water. Go buy some brains!"

"And lend 'em to you? I guess not! I've got a sufficiency. Pay out your own money for your necessities!"

"If I can't do any better than you, I'll eat my bat!"

"Then you're sure to die of indigestion!"

Curringer threw the ball, and Danny missed it.

"Whenever you take up a bat it becomes a regular sieve. Any old thing could pitch a ball that you couldn't get."

"Oh, shut up!" Danny howled. "You'd make an iron post nervous. Now I get this one, and take second!"

Curringer put the ball over the plate.

Crack!

Danny drove it straight into the hands of the third-baseman—and he was out. Curringer was grinning again. He began to feel sure that, after all, the "lobsters" were dead easy. The fact that two of the Mer-

riwells were out and no score made in this inning set the Wabeek rooters to roaring again.

"Get a brace on ye!" one of the boys yelled to Jack Ready, who was next on the batting-list. "You fellers ain't doin' nuttin'! Two or t'ree can't do all de work! Knock de cover off'n it!"

Ready looked the bat over very carefully, as if he were searching for holes.

"When I swing at it cover and all will disappear!"

It was Ready's hyperbolic way. If he knew that he was bound to fail, it would be just like him to say that he was "hot stuff," in ridicule of his own abilities.

"Here's where I bat you out of the box, Curringer! Send in a corkscrew twist! I just eat corkscrews. But I haven't had any lately, for the price of iron is up, and now I'm hungry! Yes, I'll take a corkscrew—and a bottle of something good, to make the corkscrew worth while! Send 'em in."

Curringer was grinning.

"Here is a double-twisted corkscrew, with a bow-knot in its tail!" yelled one of the boys, as Curringer put up his hand.

Ready hit the ball and sent up a long fly into the center field and sprinted for first. But Severing, the center-fielder, got under it and neatly gathered it in.

Jack Ready was out, and the side was out. The rooters of the Wabeeks were wild, and the Wabeek

nine came in from the field in a most cheerful and optimistic frame of mind. Curringer was exultant.

"Oh, ye needn't stick yer nose into de air!" a boy scornfully yelled at him. "You didn't strike out anything ner nuttin'!"

"They was hittin' you, all right!" yelled another. "'Twas field-work that done it, not you!"

Curringer gave the youthful group an angry glance, and they continued to guy him, ending up with derisive blasts from the horns.

But the Wabeek sympathizers continued to yell for him and for the fielders who had caught out the men, and this took away something of the sting planted by the gibes of the boys.

Swiftwing went into the box again, amid an outburst of applause. Putnam, of Dartmouth, a left-handed batter, came to the bat first. He was a clean-looking fellow and a good player, and he was said to be a descendant of "Old Put," of Revolutionary fame. He turned his right side toward Swiftwing as he got ready to strike, and held his bat in an easy and confident manner.

"See de Indian strike him out!" one of the irrepressible small boys yelled. Swiftwing gave him a black look, which made Merriwell know that in spite of his calm appearance the heart of the Pueblo youth was boiling like a volcano.

The speed with which he sent in the ball was some-

thing terrific. It was simply great. It went straight over the plate and had no curve. Putnam struck at it, but as he swung, the ball went plunk in the hands of Hodge.

A howl of satisfaction arose from the Merriwell rooters, and the crowd along the fences hammered the railing and yelled.

The Indian pitcher next tried to send in a corner-cutter, but it missed the plate, and one ball was called. He tried this again, and another ball was called.

Put was very wary, and hoped to get a base on balls. Then Swiftwing sent in another straight ball with such wonderful speed that, though Putnam belted at it, it was really past his bat before he swung.

"Two strikes!" called the umpire. And again the Merriwell rooters opened.

"I'll get you next time!" Putnam mentally gritted. Again the Indian pitcher sent in one of those hot balls, and Putnam, prepared for it, struck it fairly on the trade-mark and drove it into center field.

In an instant Frank saw that it was going far over Gamp's head.

"Back, Gamp—back!" he shouted. Putnam was a pretty and speedy runner, and he seemed fairly to fly down toward first. He crossed the bag and made for second as if his feet were winged.

A great roar broke out. The Wabeek sympathizers along the fence danced and hammered the railing and

shrieked. The coaches were yelling at Putnam and telling him to go on, though their voices were drowned in the babel that now became deafening.

Merriwell's heart sank, for he saw that Gamp would not be able to get the ball.

"A safe drive for four bags!" laughed Kirk, and it seemed that he was right. Bart Hodge was fuming, while Rattleton, on second, was dancing about like a lunatic, so nervously anxious that he could not stand still. Browning, on first, alone was placid, though his eyes were on Gamp, who had turned and was making a great run to get under the ball, though the thing seemed impossible.

Gamp glanced over his shoulder and saw the ball coming and made a wonderful leap in the air to get it. It touched his fingers and made a great jump from them, going straight on. Putnam crossed second base and flew toward third. Over by third the coacher, unable to make himself heard, was making frantic gestures. Gamp's long legs took him after the ball as swiftly as possible. It struck the ground, bounced, and raced away from him.

"Oh, he can't get it!"

"He can't get it in if he does!"

"A four-bagger, sure!"

The ball bounded into some bushes, and Gamp plunged in after it, and seemed to be digging round in a frantic endeavor to find it. The spectators were

howling. Some were shrieking with laughter. It was very funny to see that awkward New Hampshire lad chasing the ball as if it were a greased pig, and now digging after it as if it were a rabbit in a hole and he a frantic terrier. They were sure now, if they had not known it before, that the lank fellow in the center field could not play ball. He was one of the lobsters! He was a giraffe of Merriwell's menagerie.

In his frantic efforts to dig the ball out of the bushes Gamp seemed to fall all over himself. The coacher near third was laughing as Putnam crossed that bag and started for home.

"It's a score, Put!" he yelled.

And Putnam, seeing and hearing the frantic Wa-beeks, was also sure that it was a score. The ball, he knew, was somewhere in deep center—lost, probably—and he did not need to run his legs off. Still, he came on at a good gait. Curringer was grinning.

"This will break that Indian's heart!" some one shrieked. "He'll stop shooting rifle-bullets. He won't dare to try that again."

"They're onto him now, and they'll bat him out of the box!"

Every one supposed, of course, that Gamp, if he found the ball, must throw to Rattleton, on second; whereupon Rattleton would be compelled to catch the ball, turn and throw it home. The thing couldn't be done! Putnam might as well walk in. He was in no

danger. And Putnam thought the same, for the coachers had stopped shouting to him, and he saw Curringer's triumphant grin.

Then Gamp came out of the bushes as if shot by a cannon, and as he came he gathered himself for a throw. Then, with all his immense strength, he sent the ball.

What was the fool thinking about? That was the thought. For he had thrown toward the home plate, too high entirely for Rattleton to get it. But the ball did not really rise high in the air. At no time was it more than fifteen feet from the ground. It whizzed for home, and with such speed that it could hardly be seen.

A hush came over the spectators. That throw of itself, it did not accomplish anything—and they did not believe that it could—was something superb. The coachers saw the ball whistling along with a speed that seemed to increase as it flew over the head of Rattleton. Hodge was standing two feet from home plate, and somewhat to one side toward third, his eyes on the ball, and ready for it.

Suddenly the coacher near third awoke to danger.

"Slide!" he shrieked to Putnam. "Slide—slide!"

Then the other coacher shrieked:

"Slide, you idiot! Slide!"

The astonished and bewildered runner threw himself forward, as he heard something go whizzing by—it

could not be the ball!—and stretched out his hands for the plate. As he did so he heard a plunk and felt a thump on the back.

“Man out!” shouted the umpire, who could not himself remain cool.

Putnam felt that there must be a mistake—felt too dazed to rise. Out? When he was safe? It couldn't be!

But the bleachers and grand stand and the spectators everywhere were roaring—roaring. Even the Wabeek sympathizers seemed joining in. What was the matter? He was out? It couldn't be! Yes, he was out! He blinked blindly as he got up. Yet it seemed impossible. Out? What kind of a thrower was that long-legged, awkward center-fielder, anyway?

And he heard the shout from the boys:

“Wot's de matter wid long-legs?”

And then a wild howl:

“He's all right!”

Then another boy yelled:

“Use Pears' soap!”

“Pears' soap?” Putnam stammered, dazed and dizzy.

“What does he mean?”

A man near, who had been whooping and screeching a moment before, interpreted the slang for him, and grinned with delight.

“That's another way of saying, ‘Get off the earth!’ ”

CHAPTER XXIII.

SWIFTWING TURNED DOWN.

Mason, of Brown, the center-fielder, was next on the batting-list. He was nervous, but cautious, and Swiftwing, trying corner-cutters again, gave him a base on balls.

Feeling sure that he could throw corner-cutters, Swiftwing tried them again, and two balls were called on him. His heart began to rage, for it was evident that in this style of pitching the umpire would rule against him. He knew that one which had been called a "ball" was a "strike."

Mason, on first, was still cautious and afraid to try to steal second, remembering Hodge's wonderful throw in the first inning.

"Three balls!" called the umpire.

"Dat umpire has a bum eye!" yelled a boy.

Seeing that he would be compelled to put the ball over the center of the plate, the Indian pitcher sent in a swift one. Perkins, who was at bat, hit one down to first base, which Bruce should have handled without trouble. But the big fellow seemed to have fallen asleep, and the ball got through him. If he had handled it, Bruce might have made a double-play, putting the batter out and cutting off Mason by a throw to

second. Instead, he let the ball get away from him, and Mason passed second and went to third. Swiftwing was fuming, though his face was unreadable.

“What’s the use of pitching, with such work as that?”

The Wabeeks were regaining courage and yelling again. As Mason took third all their courage came back. Only one man out, and a man now on first and third, it seemed the Wabeek nine ought to bring in a score. Ogle, of Harvard, the right-fielder, came confidently to the bat.

On the first pitched ball Perkins tried to steal second, sure that Hodge would not dare to throw to second for fear of letting Mason home from third. But he was mistaken. Hodge threw low and straight and swift, and Rattleton, who was expecting it, caught the ball and instantly sent it back, without trying to put it on the base-runner, with the intention of cutting off Mason, who was racing for home. There was a moment of breathless silence, and a roar when it was seen that Hodge had stopped the man and put him out at the home plate.

Then Perkins, who had foolishly stopped and danced about between first and second, was caught in a plunge for the latter bag by yet another quick short-arm throw from Hodge, setting the crowd wild.

“Three men out! Side out!” yelled the boys, frantically waving their flag as the Merriwells came in

from the field. "How's that for the lobsters? How was that for a double-play?"

In the first of the third inning Gamp came to the bat, and, after a strike, drove one with crushing force against Curringer's shins. Curringer was already mad, and this made him madder, so that he fairly raved as he danced about, unable to keep Gamp from taking first.

As Browning came up, Curringer was not only mad clean through, but he was nervous, for he remembered Bruce's two-bagger in the first inning, and did not want it repeated. In trying to prevent it, he gave Browning a base on balls.

Then Hodge came to the bat. Frank, who had gone down toward first, signaled him to sacrifice. Hodge saw the signal with a grunt of dislike, for he was anxious to lace out the ball, but he crowded down his desire and sacrificed, and, while he was being thrown out at first, Browning went to second and Gamp to third.

Swiftwing came to the bat amid the admiring cries of the boys, and Frank signaled him to hit the ball out. He did not swing until two balls and two strikes had been called, then lined a terrifically long fly into center.

"Hold your bases!" Frank shouted, for he believed that the ball would be caught. Severing, who was racing for it, got under it and gathered it in. The moment it dropped into his hands the runners leaped

from the bases, Gamp flying for home and Bruce sprinting for third, amid roars of applause. Severing was no such thrower as Joe Gamp, and he was compelled to send the ball to Kirk, on second base, and Gamp scored, amid another yell of approval, while Kirk threw to third to catch Browning.

It was a wild throw, and, in a perfect pendemonium of howls and shouts, Bruce came home, making another score. There were now four scores to the credit of the Athletic Team, and Curringer's nervousness increased. He began to see that he had underrated "Merriwell's Menagerie." They were not lobsters, but men who could play ball.

He tried to control his shaking nerves as Rattleton came to the bat, making a desperate effort; and he succeeded so well that he quickly struck out Rattleton, and retired the side.

Swiftwing was also eating out his hot Indian heart as he went into the box, for he had heard more cutting talk. As a consequence, Ogle, who was first up, batted the first pitched ball toward short-stop. Bink fumbled it, and Ogle took first on the error.

"You'd better use Pears' soap!" yelled Danny, from right field, for Danny was jealous of Bink, thinking that he himself ought to have been assigned to the position of short-stop.

Then Kirk lifted a fly into right field, and Danny dropped it. Danny chased it round his feet, got hold

of it and threw to second, but the runner was there before the ball. It was another error, and Bink came back at Griswold with some hot talk that made the little red-headed right-fielder threaten to come across and spread Stubbs' nose all over his face.

Swiftwing was discouraged.

"What's the use?" he was thinking. "I can't do anything with such fielding!"

Compelled to cut the heart of the plate or have "balls" called on him, the Indian pitcher sent in another swift one, and Curringer, who was again at the bat, got a pretty single, which took Kirk from first to third and brought Ogle home from second.

The Wabeek supporters were howling again, while Swiftwing's disgust and rage grew.

"Here's where we've got 'em!" Severing yelled. "Here's where they go to pieces! We'll bat him out of the box!"

Curringer did not dare to try to steal second on Hodge, even though Kirk was on third, for he had a wholesome fear of Bart's throwing. And this was remarkable and showed how much he feared Hodge, for in such a case the runner at first nearly always tries to steal.

Though Swiftwing's face was still calm, his nerves were on fire, and, after one strike, Wadkins put a two-bagger into the left field, on which Kirk came home

and made another score, while Curringer went to third, in spite of all that Carker could do.

And still no one was out.

"Here's where we do you!" Curringer grinned.

"Here's where we bat your Injun out of the box!" cried another.

"Get a wooden, cigar-store Indian and set him to pitching!" some one howled from the bleachers. "He's no good!"

"Take him out of the box! Anything can hit him!"

The fickle crowd, which had so applauded the Pueblo but a little while before, was turning against him. Swiftwing glanced toward the grand stand, and Lucy Livingston fluttered her handkerchief encouragingly.

Galt took up the bat and promptly got a long single, which brought in Curringer from third and Wadkins from second, making two scores.

The scores now stood four for the Athletic Team and four for the Wabeek nine. And still not a man of the Wabeeks was out. The cries against Swiftwing were rising into a storm of indignation.

"Just an Indian." His hot heart boiled. "If the fighting bulldog doesn't always bite hard, his white owners promptly kick him!" and the thought caused his nerves to thrill strangely.

Severing walked into position, swinging the bat and smiling confidently. One ball and one strike were called; then, with a terrific stroke, he drove a three-

bagger into the right field, and while Danny was chasing it Galt made the round of the bases and scored.

Hodge, who had been all along fuming against Swiftwing, with his anger constantly rising, was ready to tear off his mask and refuse to play any longer. All the other members of the team were also stewing. Even Browning was droning his disgust from first, while Rattleton danced about on second, unable to stand still. The team was becoming all torn up the back, and there seemed not a ghost of a chance of winning the game. Merriwell saw it, and, while he was sorry for Swiftwing, he was determined that the Wabeeks should not win.

For a moment he looked at his swollen wrist, pinched and worked it; then he walked out into the diamond, spoke a few words to the Pueblo and took the ball. Swiftwing's face did not change, although his dark eyes were glittering.

"Hear them yell at the Indian!" he muttered. "Yes, I'm an Indian, and I might as well stay Indian and play Indian. What's the use?"

Frank heard him and would have said something, but Swiftwing walked away.

"This is all right, fellows!" Curringer was heard saying. "This is the man with the lame wrist! We'll bat him out of the box in no time! He'll be easier than the Indian."

Bart Hodge looked toward the grand stand and saw

Lucy Livingston descend from it as if she meant to go toward Swiftwing.

"That makes me sick!" he growled. "She'll go to him and talk with him and make him think that he's a hero, after all!"

Then Bart looked toward Frank, whom he was glad to see in the box, but about whose wrist he was anxious.

"Merry ought not to try to pitch! But maybe he can, if he'll let the double-shoot alone. If he tries that, I shall raise a kick."

The other members of the team were brightening wonderfully, though they, too, were fearful that Frank could not pitch and ought not to try. Putnam loafed up to the plate with a laugh and faced Merriwell.

"We're ready to do you, too!" he shouted.

Frank promptly sent in a double-shoot.

"One strike!" called the umpire.

Hodge vigorously and protestingly shook his head. A swift ball straight over the plate came next. Put struck at this, and fanned.

"Two strikes!"

The batter began to feel dizzy and wobbly. What kind of pitching was this, anyway, from a man with a lame wrist? Once more the double-shoot twisted across the plate. Putnam, seeing it was a strike, swung at it, and again missed.

"Three strikes, out!"

The smile had faded from old Put's face, and now his jaw dropped, while Merriwell sympathizers sent up a wild yell. The boys screeched and whistled, rang their bells, and blew their horns, swishing the flag so violently that there seemed danger that it would be jerked into ribbons.

Hodge walked down into the diamond and put his protest into words :

"You must stop that, Merry. Better lose the game than ruin your wrist! You know how it was this morning!"

"Don't worry, Hodge! We're here to win this game, and we'll win it!"

Protests were useless, and Hodge walked back, feeling, however, that Merry was a better judge of such things than he could possibly be, and with an increased admiration, if that were possible, for the captain of the nine—his long-tried friend and comrade, Frank Merriwell.

"I'll do my part," he determinedly gritted, while a look that was almost fierce came to his dark face; "and if Frank can stand that business, we'll do up this crowing crowd in short order!"

Mason was next up, and Frank tried him with straight balls, in an effort to save his wrist as much as possible. But Mason, having seen Putnam so quickly done up, was wary. Two strikes and three balls were called. Then Frank gave him one that looked to be an

easy out curve, but it twisted in the other direction as it neared the plate, and he fanned out.

Perkins, amid a din that was unearthly, took a bat and advanced to the plate.

"De feller dat said he never heard of de double-shoot is seein' it now!" yelled a boy. "Oh, dese things can't hit ye!"

Perkins looked uneasy. He knew of that double-shoot, and had seen its work before. But Frank did not try it first, and two strikes were called. He was sending the balls straight over the plate with a speed as great as that of Swiftwing. He felt that he would swing at the next one, and, for fear he might get it, Frank sent in an in curve which changed to an out as the batter struck at it.

Plunk!

The side was out, and the spectators were going crazy. Frank left the diamond and sought for Swiftwing. He could not find the Pueblo, nor did any one seem to know what had become of him. He looked up into the grand stand and saw that Lucy Livingston was also missing.

"She promised to come right back, but she hasn't done it!" he heard one of the girls in the group say, and knew they were speaking of Lucy.

A strange foreboding that he would not put into words and refused to harbor even in his thoughts

came to him. He heard Hodge talking about Swiftwing, but did not want to listen to what Hodge was saying, and looked at Curringer, who was going into the box, while the other members of the Wabeek nine were taking their places.

Curringer had steadied himself and began to pitch with wonderful nerve and self-control. He had never seemed to do so well, and Frank saw that it was to be a pitcher's battle.

"How's your wrist?" asked Hodge, looking anxiously at it.

"It might be better. But don't let that trouble you. We're going to win this game!"

Curringer in this inning came up against the tail-end of Merriwell's batting-list, and so had comparatively easy work. After two strikes had been called on him, Carker, who was first up, flied out to the first-baseman. Bink and Danny, who came next in order, were struck out with a bewildering swiftness that made their little heads swim.

Ogle was the first batter to face Merriwell, and, though he did not like the way Merriwell had been striking men out, he came up with a grin, for he thought he knew something of the kinks of that double-shoot. But Ogle went out on three strikes from three pitched balls that came at him in such an erratic way that he was not able to touch them, and he was quickly followed by Kirk and Curringer.

"I'll do you fellows up the same way," thought the Wabeek pitcher, as he walked toward the box.

But he did not. Ready singled into the right field, after two strikes had been called on him, and was followed by Gamp with another single that gave Ready third. Then Gamp stole second when Bruce came to the bat. Bruce, after one ball and two strikes, knocked one into Severing's hands, and Curringer, getting the ball quickly from Severing, put Ready out at the home plate. Then a fly from Hodge into the hands of the first-baseman retired the side without a score. And the score still stood five for the Wabeeks to four for the Merriwells.

The spectators went wild when Merriwell repeated his previous performance and struck out in succession the three men who faced him.

"He's the stuff!" the boys were yelling.

It required a nerve of iron to do this, for Merriwell's wrist was horribly painful. But he intended to win this game, as he had told Hodge, and, though the wrench to his wrist was sometimes enough to bring a cry from the lips of any other man, he only smiled as man after man went out and gave no sign.

Merriwell was first at the bat now, taking Swiftwing's place, and, though Curringer tried to fool him with drops and curves, Frank waited until he received a ball that suited him and sent a grounder past the short-stop and gained first.

Rattleton followed him at the bat, and, though closely watched by both Curringer and Galt, Frank made a steal for second on the second pitched ball. Galt promptly lined it down to Kirk, who was on second, but Frank threw himself forward in a desperate slide and had his hand on the bag a trifle before the ball struck in Kirk's hands.

"Out!" the Wabeeks were yelling.

"Safe, second!" said the umpire.

But Frank was not able to get away from second. He was narrowly watched. Rattleton and Carker struck out, and Bink knocked a fly into the hands of the third-baseman.

A fierce pitcher's battle between Merriwell and Curringer followed this, each doing such exceptionally fine work that the crowd went wildly mad, shouting and shrieking like maniacs, and no score was made by either side until the first half of the ninth inning, when Merriwell's team was again at the bat. Merriwell's wrist was getting worse and worse. He had never done finer work, though under such a disadvantage and in such pain. But his nerve of iron still sustained him, and he seemed in as fine condition in this opening of the ninth inning as at any time during the game.

Gamp came up first.

"I'll strike you out, you farmer, in short order!"

thought Curringer, for he had been doing that thing right along. And he struck Gamp out.

But he was more afraid of Bruce, for Bruce had a way of driving balls that was enough to make any pitcher nervous. Rather than have Browning get a chance to drive out a two-bagger or a three-bagger, Curringer deliberately gave him his base on balls.

Hodge came next and put up a high infield fly, which was collected by the first-baseman; and two men were out.

Merriwell took the bat in place of Swiftwing. Curringer was still in fine fettle and supremely confident. He grinned as Frank walked into position.

"I'll bet you a hundred dollars that you can't knock another ball into the lake, as you did in the other game!"

Frank looked at the lake. This distance was long, but he had done it once, and what has been done may be done again. Still, he did not answer Curringer's taunt.

"I'd be willing to bet you a hundred dollars that you can't hit me!" Curringer laughed, after the first ball had been sent in and was called a strike.

Then two balls were called, and still Frank patiently waited for one that he liked. When it came it was an out curve, and, catching it on the end of his "wagon-tongue," he drove it into the lake.

Bruce, playing off first in readiness, now fairly flew,

while Frank went blythely down to first, and on around to second, third and home, closely following Browning in. Two scores had been added to the Merriwells' list, which now stood six in their favor to five for the Wabeeks.

The boys howled, Rattleton reversed his words and sentences, so that his talk seemed gibberish, while Bink and Danny fairly hugged each other.

"Ain't he hot stuff!" one of the boys was heard shrilly piping.

Curringer felt sick and looked white round the mouth, but he managed to strike out Rattleton and put out the side.

CHAPTER XXIV.

A NERVE OF IRON.

As Merriwell went into the box in the last half of the ninth inning, both nines as well as the spectators knew that the tug of war had now come.

Kirk came up first, looking grim and determined, but Merriwell struck him out with balls that came even more swiftly than any ever thrown by John Swiftwing.

Curringer was next, and he forced a grin to his face as he stepped into position. He was not only a good pitcher, but a good batter, and the best ball-player in the Wabeek nine. Frank respected his abilities, and he had been forced mentally to admit that he had never come up against Merriwell's equal. After one ball and two strikes, Curringer got one of Merriwell's straight balls and lined it down to short-stop. It came so hot that Bink dropped it, and Curringer took first.

When Wadkins came to the bat Curringer began to play off toward second, and on the first pitched ball he made a desperate run. The coacher was shrieking and the crowd roaring as Hodge lined the ball down to Rattleton, and Curringer threw himself in a great slide.

"Out!" came from hundreds of throats.

But the umpire favored Curringer and called it "Safe!"

"Now, if luck favors us," Curringer was thinking, as he again began to play off, "we'll tie that score, anyway! I hope Wadkins will belt it into the lake!"

Wadkins was a good and hard hitter, and Curringer really expected something from him now. The excitement was feverish, as "One ball!" "One strike!" "Two strikes!" were called.

Then Frank signaled to Hodge and sent in the double-shoot, and struck out Wadkins. Curringer fumed, while the spectators howled hoarsely.

Galt, who came next, was also a good batter, and Curringer, closely watched by Frank, kept playing off for a good lead, while the coachers at first and third kept up a continual chatter in the hope of rattling the pitcher.

After one ball and one strike, Frank gave Galt a low drop, which he did not think he could get, and the batter lifted a long fly into the left field. The coachers became frantic, the crowd bellowed, and Curringer made a dash for third. Carker did not get well under the ball and dropped it. The coachers shrieked to Curringer to go home, which he did, and the score was tied.

The Athletic Team felt blue as they heard the yells of the Wabeek rooters, and Hodge was fairly sick with disappointment.

"Oh, if that had only been Joe Gamp!" he groaned. He had thought the game won. But Merriwell seemed

still confident, and smiled placidly, while his wrist throbbed as it had never throbbed before.

“We will do them yet!” was his thought. “We will do them yet!”

Galt was on first, and the next man up was Severing, whom Frank promptly struck out with the double-shoot. And the side was out. Curringer’s grin had something determined about it as he now went into the box, and he showed the stuff that was in him by quickly striking out Carker.

Then Stubbs came up, with a bored look on his face. Curringer nearly always expected him to be easy, but was often surprised. But everything seemed going on in the old way, for two strikes were quickly called, and the bored look lingered. Then Bink’s eyes suddenly flashed, as he saw a ball coming that he thought he could hit. He did hit it, sending it far out into deep center and into the very bunch of bushes which Joe Gamp had seemed trying to tear up just before making his great throw.

Severing was after the ball like a race-horse, but he did not find it readily, and when he threw he was forced to throw to the pitcher, instead of home. In the meantime Stubbs was going round the bases like a runaway automobile, while the coaches were shrieking and howling, and the spectators, with throats grown sore by over-exercise, were hoarsely bellowing.

Before Curringer could get the ball home Bink

scored, amid a perfect tempest of noise. The crew of the little steamer out in the lake had also witnessed the performance, and the screech of the steamer's whistle added to the unearthly din. The grin was going from Curringer's face, and he again looked sick, but he pulled himself together with iron determination, and quickly struck out Danny and Ready.

The second half of the tenth inning began with a score of seven to six in favor of the Athletic Team.

"We've one score in the lead, and we will keep it!" Frank determinedly thought, even though his wrist seemed weak and failing, and jumped with pain.

It was the nerve of iron!

"Don't swing until you're pretty sure!" Kirk whispered to Severing, as the batter went to the bat. Severing could never be sure, for every pitched ball, and there were only three of them, was a double-shoot.

"Three strikes, out!" said the umpire, and Severing threw down the bat in disgust.

"The devil can't hit him!" he growled.

"Well, I hope I'm not the devil, but I'm going to try!" said Putnam, as he took the bat.

But old Put went out on three pitched balls, each of which was the double-shoot. The Athletic Team was filled with joy, the boys were screeching, and again the crowd was bellowing.

Mason came up, looking pale and anxious, but reso-

lute. The ball whistled over the plate, and he did not strike.

“One strike!” said the umpire.

Then Frank gave him an out curve that changed to an in close to the bat. Mason did not swing. He knew that he was not to get any “easy” balls, but he did hope he could get something that would give him at least a chance.

“Two strikes!”

Again Frank’s arm went up, while the crowd grew as still as death. Not even a boy piped a note. The whole vast throng seemed to be holding its breath. Even the face of the umpire was shining and flushed. The ball came across the plate, and Mason swung at it, feeling that it was his last chance. It was an in curve, changing to an out.

Plunk!

Bart Hodge had the ball.

“Three strikes, out!” the umpire fairly shouted.

Then the ball-field went mad. Curringer walked down toward the pitcher’s box as the Athletic Team came whooping from the field. His air was deferential and admiring. He extended his hand.

“Merriwell,” he frankly confessed, “I have never met your equal. I never expect to see such pitching, unless I see you again in such a fight as this. You are the greatest baseball-pitcher in the United States!”

Kirk was crowding forward with words of praise,

with others of the Wabeeks, while baseball enthusiasts by the score began to fight their way toward Frank, eager to touch the hand that had done such wonderful work.

"Yale will be glad, when she hears of this!" Kirk declared, and his face, too, shone with enthusiasm. "Merriwell, you're all right!"

It was the end of the greatest ball-game ever played in the Adirondacks.

Scarcely had the enthusiasm subsided when the proprietor of the Lake View hurried up to Frank and excitedly whispered:

"I'm sure that Indian has carried off Lucy Livingston!"

It was staggering news. Bart Hodge heard it, and his face flamed with wrath.

"I've been expecting something of the kind!" he declared. "I have felt it all day. Merry, we must try to rescue her!"

"Certainly, Hodge, if——"

"No ifs about it!" Hodge furiously burst out. "I know that it's true. The red scoundrel. I'll——"

"I really think it is true, Merriwell," said the proprietor. "She went out to talk to him after he was taken from the pitcher's box. I think she meant only to say something that would make his failure in the box seem less painful to him. They walked away together in that direction; and neither has been seen

since. My wife was the first to take the alarm; and we have been making a search. I've found a place where a struggle occurred—and this!"

He held up a torn piece of the dress which Lucy had worn that day.

"Delancy is wild, and he charges it all to you for having the Indian on your team. She would not have noticed him as a guide, but she is crazy over athletes and men of that stamp."

Hodge started toward the timber pointed out.

"What do you mean to do?" Merriwell asked.

"I'm going to take a look, and I'm going to find John Swiftwing!"

The tone was terrible.

"I'll go with you," said Frank, looking troubled.

"Oh, I know it's so!" Hodge panted, as they hurried along together. "That's just the way he did with Inza, you'll remember."

"But he surrendered Inza."

"When he was pursued and he knew he could not escape, yes! How do you know that he would have done it otherwise? He's an Indian, and the Indian blood is there!"

Frank thought of Swiftwing's words as he walked from the box:

"I am an Indian, and I might as well play Indian!"

Merriwell had a foreboding of trouble, but he did not think the trouble would come in this shape. The

Lake View proprietor hastened after them, after speaking some words to a man who had come out with him. He called to Merriwell, and Frank and Hodge stopped to wait for him to overtake them. Then the three went on to the spot where a struggle was supposed to have occurred, and where the torn piece of dress had been found. Merriwell glanced at Hodge and listened to his words. He did not remember to have seen Hodge in a greater rage.

"Perhaps Bart has been more interested in that girl than I believed!" was his thought.

"Right here!" said their guide, leading them round a point which concealed them from the hotel and baseball-grounds.

"She must have screamed, of course!" the man continued. "But the people on the ball-grounds were howling so it couldn't have been heard, no matter what an outcry she might have made."

He was anxious and troubled, for he was not only an honest man and solicitous for the welfare of the guests of his house, but he had taken a strong and fatherly liking for sweet-faced Lucy Livingston.

"Where is Delancy?" Merriwell asked, as he began to look the ground carefully over.

"Out with a searching-party. Two parties are already out, and another is going. There will be others in the woods soon. We'll run the fellow down, and——"

He did not complete the sentence, but the break was more eloquent than words.

"He will be lynched?"

"Or shot on sight!"

"See here!" Bart cried. "Look at that, Merry!"

It was the imprint of the toe of a little boot, such a one as Lucy had worn.

"And this!" said Frank, picking up another torn piece of the dress that he had seen Lucy wear.

"And I'd swear that print was made by Swiftwing's shoe!" growled Bart.

The soil held an imprint of a pitcher's shoe, the toe-plate having made a distinct impression.

"Yes, Swiftwing wore that shoe!"

"I'm going back to the house and see about those other parties that are going out!" said the Lake View proprietor; and hurried away without further words.

Merriwell knew that in a little while the news of the abduction of Lucy Livingston by John Swiftwing would be in every mouth, and that the woods and hills would be filled with armed bodies of men hunting him down as they would have hunted down a rabid dog or a wolf. And he knew that, when overtaken, Swiftwing would be given scant chance to say whether he was innocent or guilty.

He began to search for a trail leading from the place, though beyond the clump of bushes and the timber belt the soil was hard and ledgy and the chances

of discovering anything were not good. Hodge followed him, looking everywhere for indications of the direction taken by Swiftwing.

They passed over the brow of a hill, and there found a broken twig, which seemed to have been snapped off in a struggle similar to the one whose indications they had so closely examined.

"There's a path just beyond there, where I stumbled into the other day," said Frank. "It leads to a cabin down under the edge of the mountain!"

Hodge leaped past him in the direction indicated, and Merriwell followed. Of course, he could not know that any further indications would be found in the path or at that cabin, though there was a possibility that Swiftwing might have taken the girl there.

The path wound here and there through the woods, which were tangled and difficult, dipping now under the brow of a cliff and then scaling a ledgy hill, leading on and on toward the heart of the Great North Woods. But no indications that Lucy or Swiftwing had passed that way were discoverable.

"The cabin is just below here!" said Frank, when they stopped at length near the crest of a hill.

Their surroundings were the wildest imaginable. Hills that were almost mountains rose near them, and the rocky surface was cut up with deep gullies and dry water-courses.

"The wolf would make for a hole like this!" Hodge panted.

"Only that it is too near the hotels! Still, we can't be absolutely sure that Swiftwing is guilty. I want you to remember that, Bart, if we should chance to come on him. Don't do anything rash!"

"Merry, you make me tired! You make me sick! You will try to stand up for that—fellow! That scoundrel! If I come on him, I'll simply hammer him to pieces!"

"It's always well to be sure!"

"I am sure!"

"You can't be sure, on this evidence. If Swiftwing is guilty, he deserves no mercy, and he will receive none from me!"

"He is guilty. I knew it as soon as the Lake View man spoke. Of course, he's guilty! He's simply a dog!"

He started on.

"Wait! There are two paths to that cabin. One lies across here toward that bluff. The other goes through that belt of trees. You take the first and I'll take the second. It will increase our chances of seeing him, if he should be there!"

Bart leaped along the path toward the bluff before the words were fairly out of Frank's mouth; and, seeing how he was hurrying, Merriwell took the other path and hastened on, too.

CHAPTER XXV.

A TERRIFIC COMBAT.

The path taken by Merriwell was the shortest, and he arrived at the cabin first, only to find it empty. A minute later Hodge burst into view, wildly excited.

"Swiftwing! There he goes!" Bart whispered. "He has taken the alarm and is cutting out."

Merriwell looked in the direction pointed out and saw the head of the Pueblo disappear some distance away in the bushes.

"But the girl?"

"Come on!" Hodge snarled, and leaped away like an unleashed greyhound. Merriwell followed Hodge, but the latter dived into some undergrowth to take a short cut, and when Frank gained the spot where he had vanished the only trace of his friend was a rustling of low boughs some distance ahead.

Bart was wildly anxious to overtake Swiftwing and dashed on without Merriwell, soon finding himself alone. But he continued straight on toward the point where he had seen the Indian; and there discovered a dim and almost undefined path leading along a bush-grown hillside.

He followed this as rapidly as he could. It soon vanished altogether, but still Hodge pressed on, taking

the general direction, hoping every moment that he would be able to overtake the man he was so fiercely pursuing.

"When I do come on him, I'll make him tell where the girl is mighty quick!" he kept growling. "I don't believe she is with him, he is traveling so fast!"

Then Hodge turned a rocky headland and came upon a scene that set him wild. A cabin stood in a cleft of the rocks, on the edge of a bluff—a hunter's cabin—and out of it reeled Lucy Livingston, closely followed by John Jackson, Pike Conner, and two other rough-looking men, all of them woodsmen or guides.

As she reeled out of the cabin in an effort to get away from her pursuers, Lucy Livingston gave a scream. Her clothing was torn and her manner frantic.

"You hounds!" Hodge yelled, as he made a mad dash for the cabin, feeling that these men were either Swiftwing's confederates, or that she had escaped from the Pueblo only to fall into their power. "Back, you dogs!"

Lucy heard the words and imploringly ran toward him.

She was light of foot, and fear gave her speed. But Jackson, the gigantic athlete of the Great North Woods, was close after her, with Pike Conner and the others at his heels.

"Save me! save me!" Lucy pleaded, as she reached Hodge's side.

Bart put her tenderly behind him.

"I will, or die trying!" he gritted, as he resolutely confronted Jackson.

"What's this to you?" Jackson howled. "I'll smash you!"

He flew at Hodge as if he would hurl him over the bluff which yawned frightfully near, but received a blow squarely between the eyes that knocked him backward against Conner. In another moment Conner came at Bart with the rush of a savage dog, only to reel back in the same way.

"Down with him!" Jackson commanded, recovering and again springing toward the defiant youth.

"Run for it!" said Hodge to the girl. "I'll hold them back." He stood squarely in the narrow path, courageously facing the four men, each of whom was larger than he.

The narrowness of the path was an advantage to Bart, for it kept the men from leaping all together upon him. It was wide enough for two, however, and three might have crowded along it.

In spite of Hodge's command, Lucy stood, or, rather, crouched, like one dazed, with her hands clasped and her face as white as marble. Jackson flung himself at Bart, with a sledge-hammer blow,

which the dauntless youth knocked aside. Then the iron fist again found the woodman's face.

The fight that followed was terrific in its fury. Again and again Hodge knocked down the men who came at him, receiving and returning blows with lightning swiftness, all four of the men pushing toward him and hammering at him. Twice Jackson went down, and Conner's nose poured a stream of blood. One of the other men was almost knocked from the bluff and only saved himself by catching at a projecting rock.

Bart brought into play all the skill he had gained at Yale; and, stilling his heart and throbbing nerves, he fought with a coolness and effectiveness that was simply marvelous. But a single youth, even though that youth was Bart Hodge, could not stand up long before such men as Jackson and his friends; and a blow from Jackson's fist finally sent him reeling and senseless into the path.

Lucy gave a scream and ran toward Bart when she saw him fall, apparently forgetful of herself and anxious only for the noble fellow who had so gallantly sought to defend her.

"Throw him over the bluff!" snarled Conner, looking like a fiend with his clothing covered with blood.

"That's right!" Jackson howled, beside himself with rage and pain. "Over with him!"

"You shall not!" Lucy screamed, throwing herself

upon Bart's unconscious form and clasping him as if she would protect him with her weak hands. "You shall not!"

"Won't we!" Jackson hoarsely laughed.

He reached forward to tear her from her position, while his face writhed with vindictive triumph.

The bushes rustled and a light step sounded, as a form sprang swiftly along the path.

"Back, you wolves!"

It was the voice of John Swiftwing.

"I have searched for you and I have found you!" Swiftwing hissed, as he swung at the head of Jackson, while his black eyes burned like coals of fire.

The smallest of the men, who had been sitting up and ruefully nursing sundry bruises and cuts on his face when the Pueblo appeared, scrambled to his feet and ran back toward the cabin for the purpose of securing a revolver which had been left there on a table.

Lucy screamed and protectingly clung to Hodge as she saw Swiftwing.

"You fool!" Jackson howled, evading the blow and striking back at the Indian youth. "I'll kill you!"

"Pitch him over the bluff!" yelled Conner, coming to his chief's assistance. The other woodsman also jumped at Swiftwing and sought to strike him with a club on which his hands had fallen when he went down that last time under Bart's hammering fists.

But Swiftwing had not forgotten the training he

had received at Carlisle. Football and baseball and athletics had hardened his muscles and given them skill, and his life since in the woods and under the open sky had strung his frame on sinews of steel.

Duckingly avoiding Jackson's sledge-hammer blow, he planted his right in Conner's bleeding face, and with his left doubled up the third man with a terrific punch in the abdomen, which hurled him back on the rocks and sent the club flying from the ledge.

The missed blow threw Jackson forward on his face; and before he could recover, Conner lunged over him, bloody and frantic, trying to hit the Pueblo.

"Take that!" he screeched, fairly screaming the words.

"And that!" hissed Swiftwing, coming again with that terrible left and lifting Conner from the rocks with a blow in the eye.

Conner went down like a collapsing house. But Jackson had gathered himself and again swung at the Indian. His blow missed, and he then gathered Swiftwing round the waist in a furious attempt to lift him from his feet and throw him from the bluff into the rocky brook-bed far below.

The Pueblo could not shake off that hold, and the combatants began to weave and stagger to and fro on the edge of the abyss, each exerting all his strength and skill to hurl the other from the rocks.

Lucy Livingston crouched in the path, wild-eyed

and panting, with dry throat and speechless lips, filled with an awful horror. It seemed to her that Hodge was dead, and she instantly expected to see the Pueblo hurled over to his destruction. Twice she staggered to her feet, as if she would rush into the combat to the assistance of the Indian youth, but each time her strength and courage failed and she sank down moaning.

The man who had gone for the revolver came running along the path, and the woodsman who had been knocked out with the blow in the abdomen writhingly sought to get on his feet. But Conner sat dully on the rocks with hands on his eye and seemed not to know what was taking place.

And the while Swiftwing and Jackson were struggling fiercely for the mastery. Neither spoke a word, but their heavy breathing and the tread of their feet as they reeled to and fro had an awful sound to the girl who crouched beside the unconscious form of Bart Hodge as if frozen in fear.

At last Swiftwing got Jackson by the throat and began to push him toward the edge of the precipice. Jackson gurgled and struggled in vain. Back, back, he went, inch by inch. Then the Pueblo gathered himself for a mighty effort, and with a hiss that sounded as deadly as the warning of a viper, he lifted the big woodsman.

A howl of fear went up from Jackson's throat.

Crush—crush!

The butt of the revolver came down on Swiftwing's head, followed by a blow in the ear from the fist of the other woodsman.

And John Swiftwing sank down as senseless as Bart Hodge!—John Swiftwing, who had never harbored a thought of carrying Lucy away; but, having heard her scream, had hurried back to her, found the signs of the struggle and of the abduction, and had dashed in pursuit.

The sight of the Pueblo stricken down in that way loosed the tongue of Lucy Livingston. She leaped up with a cry and started to run, but the woodsman with the revolver caught her by the arm and drew her back. Jackson dropped dangerously near the edge of the abyss.

“Shall we heave 'em over?” one of the woodsmen demanded, giving the Pueblo a kick. “Dead men tell no tales!”

The words brought Conner out of his queer mental state. He looked up, a frightful object, with his closing eye and bleeding face.

“No!” he hoarsely gasped. “Dead men hang people!”

A minute before he was ready to hurl these foes to their death; now the shadow of the hangman's noose caused him to pause and shudderingly draw back.

CHAPTER XXVI.

MERRIWELL TO THE RESCUE.

"What did we do it fer?" snapped Jackson, as if wishing to unburden himself, though no question had been asked him.

"Money!"

Bart Hodge had returned to consciousness in the mountain path, after being bound and subjected to ill-treatment and indignities, though he had not regained the land of sentient things so quickly as Swiftwing. Both were now at the cabin tied and held as close prisoners. Lucy was there also, and, though she was not bound, she was closely watched and dared not approach either Hodge or the Pueblo.

Swiftwing was once more outwardly composed and Sphinxlike, his brown face and black eyes showing nothing of the volcanic torrent that had flowed lavalike through his veins that day. Hodge was also still, though his face was shadowed with resentful impatience and hate. He did not yet understand the situation, and the looks he gave the Pueblo were full of questioning and a sort of maddened wonder. Why was Swiftwing bound?

"You won't get any money by keeping me tied up here like a bundle of hay!" growled Hodge.

"More likely to than if we let you go!" grinned Jackson.

Conner nursed his battered nose and sore eye, squatting on a camp-stool and smoking a black pipe. One of the other woodsmen reclined on a cot of pine needles and hemlock boughs in a corner cursing over a half-broken finger. The other sat moodily fingering the revolver in the cabin door. Jackson was the only one who had any desire to talk.

"Who are you expecting to get pay from for our release?"

"Nobody!"

"Who is the money coming from, then?"

"Delancy Livingston and Hammerswell—fer the release of her!" nodding his head toward the corner in which sat Lucy. "We're after some of that boodle they got t'other night from the New York bloods in that big card-game. We weren't big enough swindlers to beat it out of 'em at poker"—here Jackson grinned again—"so we thought we'd git it in a more honest way. We grabbed the girl when we had a chance and wan't no one lookin', and we've sent a note to Delancy tellin' him to cough up two thousand dollars of that wad and we'll send her back! You thought you was smart, mixin' into the thing, and you got yer head broke!"

"I'll break your head as soon as I get a chance."

"Thank ye fer your good wishes."

He was silent a moment.

"If no answer comes from that note, we'll send t'other one; and if none comes from that we'll heave the girl over one of these bluffs and jump the country. This is business! We are goin' to have some of that money. So, I guess it was a good thing that you and the Indian come along. You'll do fer messengers!"

He seemed to want to get Bart to talk, but Bart kept silent, moodily thinking and planning.

"Of course, when we let you go to send word, we'll shift quarters. Ain't fools enough to stay here after that! Goin' to move any way in another hour!"

There was no reply to this, and Jackson again became silent. The woodsman in the doorway clicked round the cylinder of the revolver and pointed the weapon at an imaginary foe out on a point of rocks. The rising wind swayed the branches of the tree that overhung the cabin, seeming to give the roof a thump now and then and a scraping sound that made Swift-wing glance upward.

"Where's Merriwell?" Jackson suddenly asked.

"He's here!"

A form dropped down from the roof upon the man in the doorway and tore the revolver from his fingers. The man tumbled backward with a howl, and Frank Merriwell arose in the doorway and leveled the revolver at Jackson's broad breast. Conner sprang up

and seemed about to plunge through the little window at the back.

"Shoot him down, fellows, if he comes through the window!" Frank shouted.

There was a clicking of rifle locks back of the cabin and the words:

"Let 'em come! We're ready for them!"

"Surrender!" said Merriwell, still covering Jackson. "You can't get away!"

Lucy rose up with a scream. Bart Hodge's face shone with joy and delight. Swiftwing's eyes brightened. Conner drew back from the window with a deep curse and turned to the door.

"Take care of Jackson and I'll take care of the other fellow," a voice seemed to say at Merriwell's back. "I'll plug him if he jumps for the door!"

Frank laughed.

"It's no use, Conner! The jig is up! We've run you down, and you'll surrender if you're wise. If not, we'll simply shoot you down like dogs. Surrender!"

This last was to Jackson, whose eyes were rolling, for he believed that the house was surrounded by armed men.

"Surrender, or I'll put a bullet through you, Jackson! Hands up!"

Jackson's face was white and his mouth oozed

foam. The sweat broke out on his forehead. But his hands went up.

"I surrender!" he gurgled.

Again Merriwell laughed, that dangerous, deadly laugh which friends and foes had learned to know.

"Untie Hodge!" he said to Lucy, turning the revolver on Conner. She jumped to the task, though trembling, and began to cast off Bart's bonds.

"Shoot the first man that makes a break to get out of the house!" Frank called.

And the answer came back:

"Let them come! We're ready for them!"

With Lucy's assistance, Hodge fairly tore himself out of his bonds.

"Now tie them up!" was Merry's next order, this time to Hodge.

The cords were ready, some of them removed from his own person and others taken from Swiftwing's hands and feet, and with these Hodge made the rascals fast, while Lucy sought for other pieces of rope and rawhide, and found them. In less than two minutes the abductors of Lucy Livingston, who had thought to hold her for ransom and secure a goodly sum of money from Delancy and Hammerswell, were Frank Merriwell's prisoners.

"Where are the others?" Jackson asked, as silence reigned out-of-doors, while he lay against the wall, bound and helpless.

Merriwell pointed to himself.

"Here!"

Jackson's eyes rolled, and he writhed till it seemed that he would snap his cords.

"Do you mean there ain't any other men out there?"

"None at all, Jackson! That was one of my little ventriloquial tricks. The whole force is here before you. But you'll not get away, now!"

Nor did they; for Merriwell, with Hodge and Swiftwing, accompanied by Lucy Livingston, marched the scoundrels back to the Wabeek, and there turned them over to the sheriff of the county to be held in prison for trial on a charge of abduction for ransom.

"Merriwell, you're all right!" Kirk repeated, again coming forward and taking Frank by the hand. "You can do more than pitch baseball! You're all right, and I'm proud to be numbered among your friends!"

THE END.

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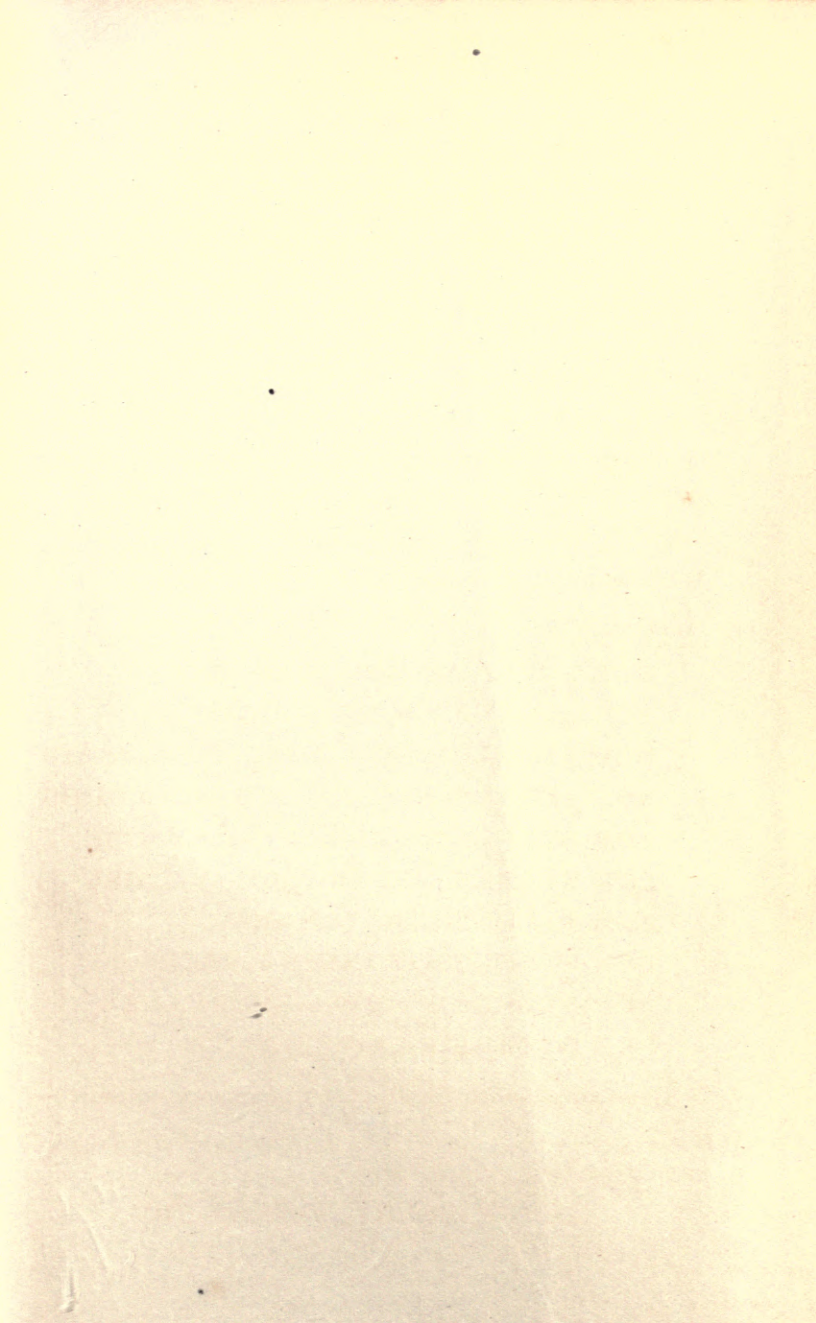
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