

FRANK
MERRIWELL'S
POWER



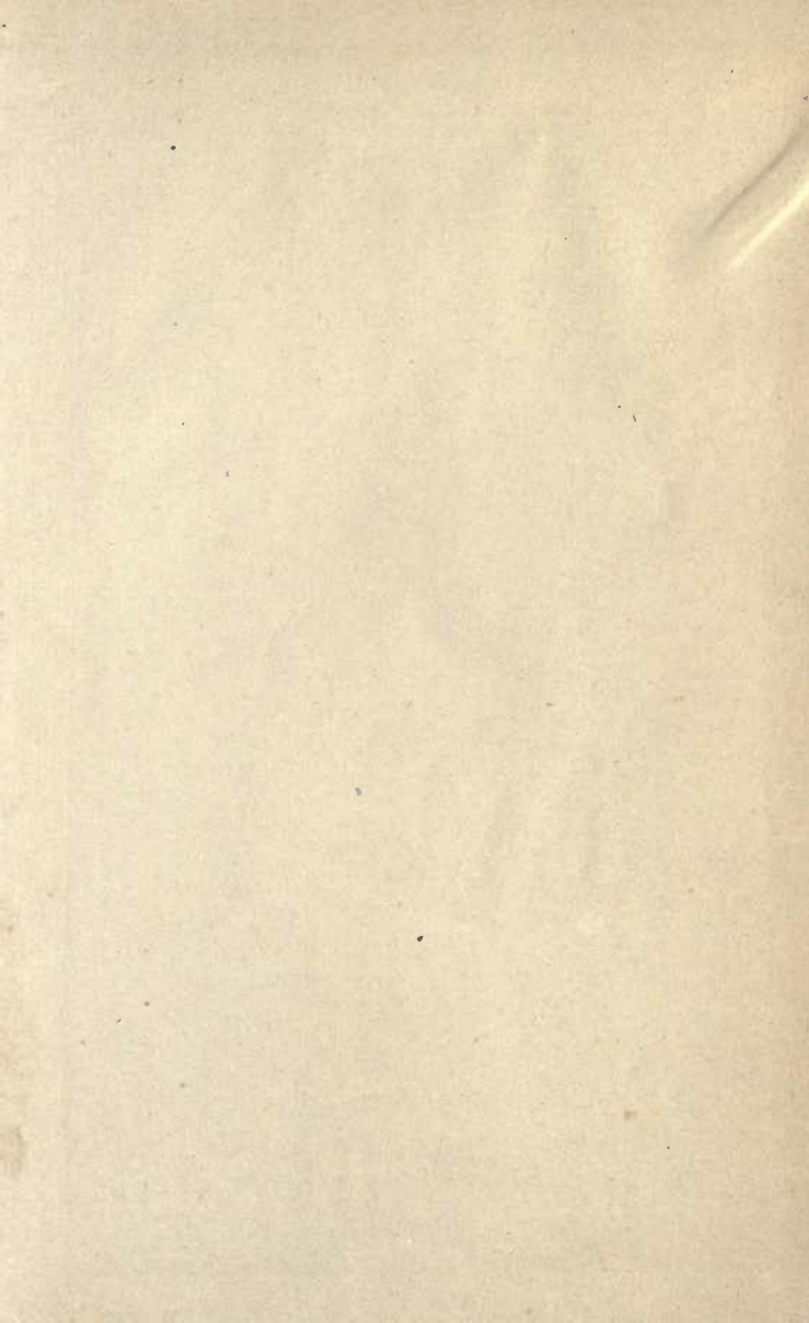
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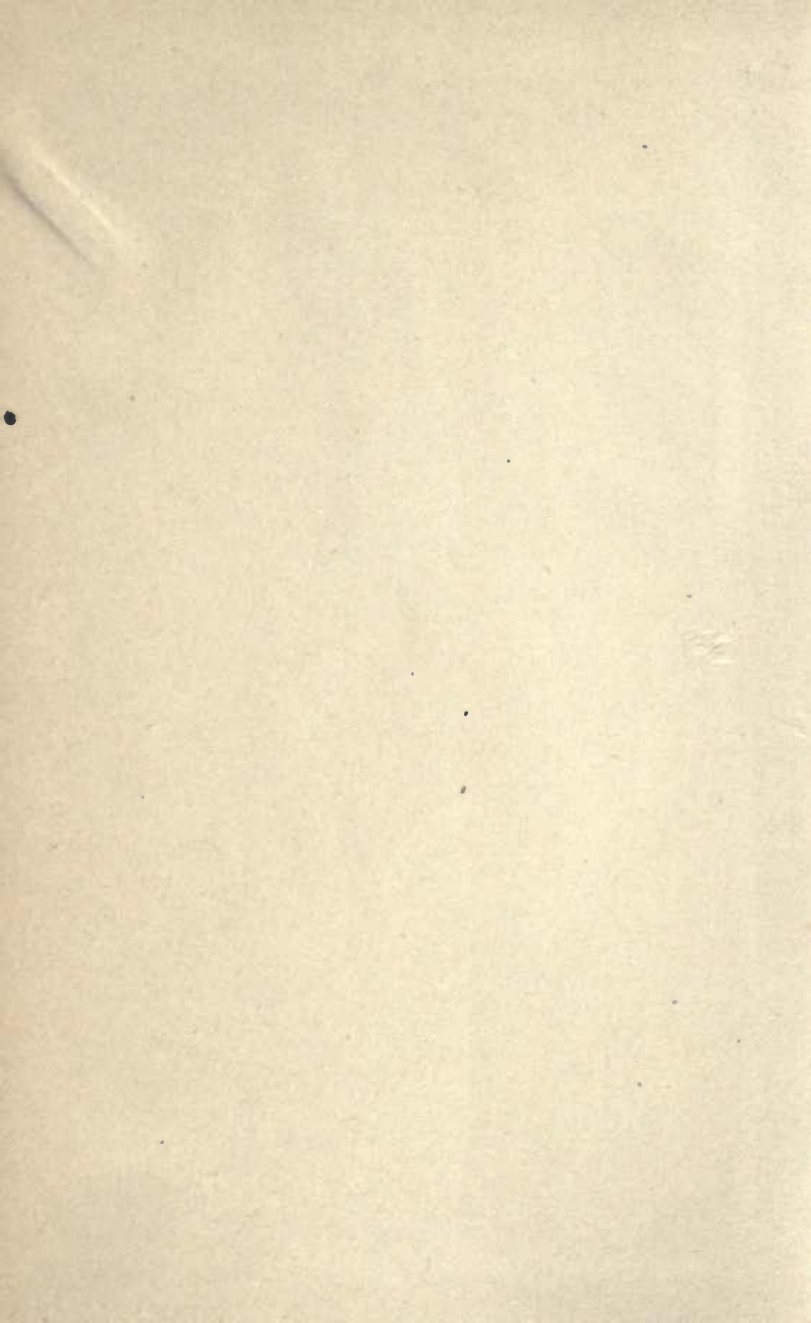


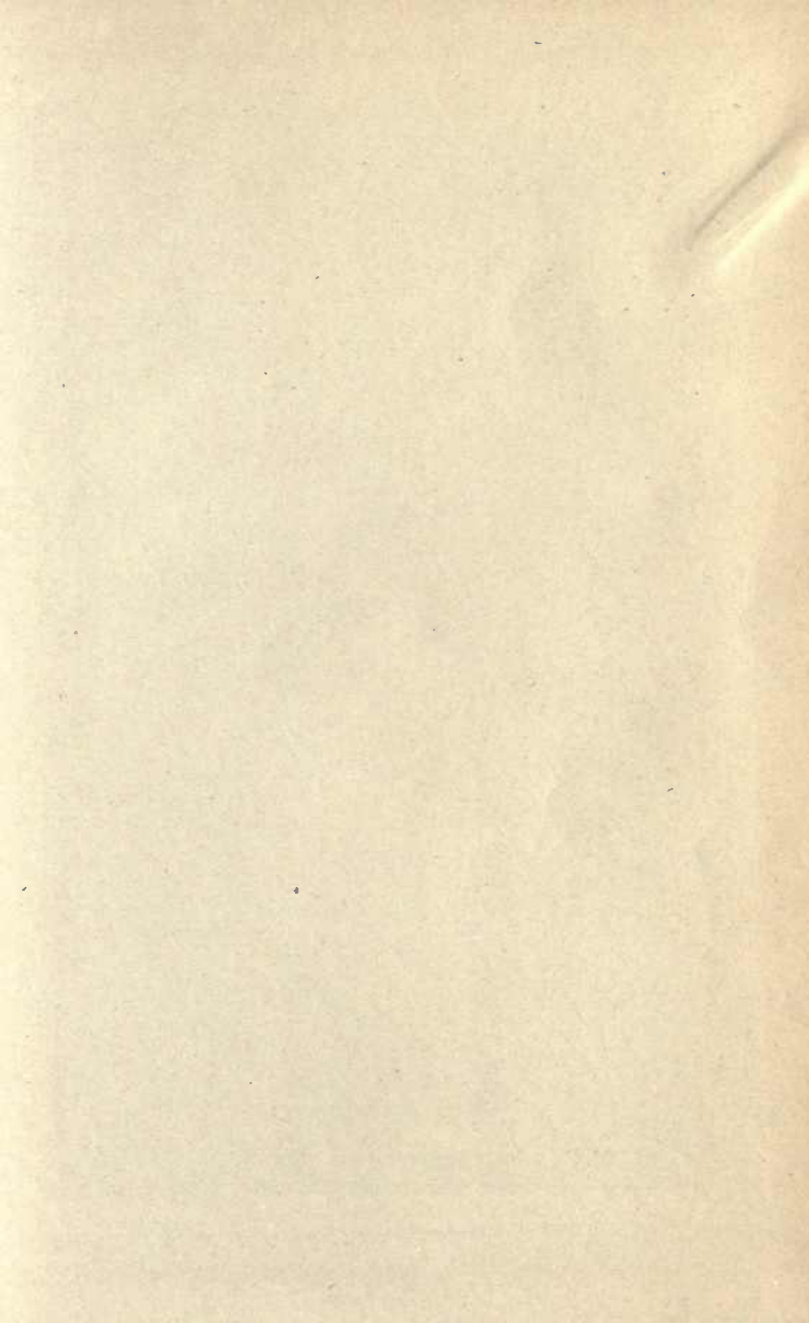
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Tarbox coming on with speed like a steam engine, won out handsomely.
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FRANK MERRIWELL'S POWER



A STORY FOR BOYS

BY

BURT L. STANDISH

AUTHOR OF

"The Merriwell Stories"

PHILADELPHIA

DAVID MCKAY, PUBLISHER

604-8 SOUTH WASHINGTON SQUARE

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—
Frank Merriwell's Power

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FRANK MERRIWELL'S POWER.

CHAPTER I.

A DANGEROUS SCHEMER.

Dade Morgan sat alone in his room. The moon rode high over the trees of the campus and the green, and the soft night wind, odorous of the sea, brought to his ears sounds of singing and laughter.

Seniors, juniors, and sophomores were making merry about the famous college fence.

Some juniors strolling along the pavement beneath his window sent up this snatch of song:

“Wrap me up in my tarpaulin jacket
And say, ‘A poor duffer lies low!’”

From a sentimental trio at the fence floated the words of another song much sung by Yale men:

“Nut-brown maiden, thou hast a bright blue eye for love!
Nut-brown maiden, thou hast a bright blue eye!
A bright blue eye is thine, love;
The glance in it is mine, love;
Nut-brown maiden, thou hast a bright blue eye.”

“Light heads!” Dade muttered. “But light heads are easily handled.”

Drawing back from the window and lowering the

blinds, he took from his pocket a letter which he had received by mail that afternoon and began to reread it by the light of his student-lamp.

He had no roommate and wanted none, for roommates expect confidences and he had none to give. The letter spoke of possible "tools," and gave a list of names of college men.

"Bertrand Defarge, Donald Pike, Roland Packard," Dade read, as he ran his eyes down the written page. "Packard? Oh, yes, that's the medical student I heard talking against Merriwell yesterday. He doesn't like the Yale king a little bit. I wonder how I'll go to work to handle him. I must find out his pet weakness."

There were other names in the list, and he read on:

"There's not much stuff in the Chickering set, outside of one or two fellows, perhaps, but they hate Merriwell, and it will stand you in hand to coddle them."

Dade Morgan smiled when he read this. He had met the Chickering set.

"I can work them on Dashleigh. As good luck would have it, I'm already acquainted with them, even though they are high and lordly juniors. All they need is a little patting on the back to make them swell up like the ox in the fable. They're just dying for popularity, and they get precious little of it."

"Gil Cowles, Mat Mullen, Lib Benson, Newt Billings, Chan Webb," he read on. "These were once open enemies of Merriwell, but he has squelched them. They pretend to be his friends, but they hate him like sin. Maybe you can use some of them."

"If only Morton Agnew were here," was Dade's thought. "He has some iron in his blood, and wouldn't stick at anything. But these fellows! Bah! I've already sounded some of them, and, though they are willing enough to have Merriwell done up, they haven't any sand. I'll have to do all the difficult things alone."

The name of a detective appeared in the body of the letter, and Dade looked at it curiously. Then he glanced at the signature, and read this in connection with it:

"For the sake of safety, I shall hereafter sign myself,
HECTOR KING."

When he was sure he had mastered the letter in all its details, he kindled a little fire in his grate and committed the writing to the flames.

He sat with half-lowered lids as he watched the letter curl and crisp and burn to ashes. The lowered lids and the sinister smile gave to his handsome face a distorted look.

"I don't know but I've been too reckless in my stabs at Merriwell," he ruminated, putting his hands

above his head and stretching out his feet as he stared into the fire. "I must use caution. The advice in that letter is good. If I use these tools, I must not let them know that they are tools. I must stir up their hate against Merriwell and then take care to direct that hate. I'll play the fine Italian hand."

His eyes glittered as he continued these musings.

"Oh, how I hate that fellow!" he hissed, as if speaking to the log that lay sputtering before him sending up a cloud of smoke and steam. "I'll wring his heart before I'm through here. Yale is a great institution! Oh, yes! I don't doubt that a bit, and I'll have to study to keep up, so that I won't flunk in the exams. But the study is just to enable me to stay here where I can strike at Merriwell. These other fellows that have locked horns with him haven't had the money to back them that I have, nor have they had the brains, nor have they hated him as I do. He's the king of Yale now, but wait a while! Just wait a while!"

He was thinking of the writer of the letter, and seemed to be growling these declarations and promises to him.

The burning stick broke in two and fell apart with a volley of sparks. Morgan straightened in his chair and lowered his hands.

"But I'll never do anything, if I allow myself to get excited in this way!"

The sinister smile passed. He arose and stood before the mirror, drawing his handsome form up to its full height and looking into his dark and strangely attractive face.

“Such frowns will spoil these good looks! In a fight like this, good looks and a seemingly amiable disposition are in the list of winning cards. ‘A man may smile and smile and be a villain!’ but if he wants to smile effectively in public he must continue to smile in private, no matter what he feels or thinks.”

There was a laughing light now in the dark eyes and a winning smile on the lips. He felt his arms.

“And biceps are not to be despised! I’ve got to go in for athletics more than I’ve been doing lately, for the time is coming when I shall want to try conclusions with that big freshman, Dick Starbright.”

He still smiled at himself in the glass, though he seemed to feel the rough grip of Starbright on his collar.

Dade Morgan was no mean athlete, and he had already taken elaborate lessons in the “manly art of self-defense,” but he felt that he would need every atom of ability and strength possible for him to possess in the struggle he saw coming between himself and Frank Merriwell.

He sat down again and continued to think and to plan.

“One of the first things to do is to get Bert Dash-

leigh in the power of the Chickering set. That ought to be dead easy."

He recalled these words from the burned letter :

"Dick Starbright's one weakness, according to the detective who has been looking up his antecedents, is an inherited love of drink."

"One wouldn't think it, to look at him. Of course, he has come here with a firm determination to keep away from everything of the kind. But I'll see to it that he doesn't. With the temptations round a fellow here, that ought to be easy, too!"

Then he sat thinking of Merriwell.

"I'll have to oppose him in every way. Every popular man has a host of enemies. Scores are jealous of him simply because he is popular. There seems to be a defect in human nature that makes it want to pull down every man who rises above the dead level. I'll use this feeling, and I'll use it for all it's worth. I'll become his rival and rally round me all the opposition."

There was no doubt in the schemer's head that he was equal to all this. He felt himself to be a born leader. In the school from which he had come he had contrived to put himself in the forefront of about everything. He had not only been a leader in sports and athletics, but in matters literary as well.

There could be no doubt that Dade Morgan was the

most dangerous enemy who had yet risen in Merriwell's path. He was especially gifted, a natural leader, an athlete and fighter of no mean skill, a fine football-player, and he hated Merriwell more fiercely than any enemy who had ever opposed him, though apparently for no reason whatever.

For a long time Dade sat there, outlining his cunning plans and mentally preparing himself for his fight to down Frank Merriwell. The sounds at the fence and in the campus died away. Still he sat there, with drawn blinds and low-burning lamp.

"I can do it!" he smiled, as he aroused himself at last and prepared for bed.

The next evening Bert Dashleigh bounded into the apartments which he occupied with Dick Starbright in Farnam.

"Just look at that!" he said, slapping a neatly written note down on the table where Starbright was engaged in study.

"That's great, coming from juniors to a freshman!"

Dick looked into his friend's smiling and exultant face.

"Better sit down and fan yourself a bit. You're wildly excited."

"Look at the letter!"

Dick looked at it and found it to be an invitation to a little "dinner" to be given that evening by the

Chickering set. It was written in a fine hand on delicately scented paper and requested the "honor" of M. Bert Dashleigh's presence.

Starbright's face darkened.

"I suppose it's all right, of course, even if a little unusual. But I shouldn't accept it, if I were you."

"Oh, bother! Why wouldn't you accept it? I know, though!"

"Well, they haven't been exactly nice to us since we've been here. You know that, as well as I do."

"But if they haven't treated me right in the past, that note shows that they're going to begin it now. Old boy, I'll speak a good word for you. Those fellows are rich and they're juniors. That makes it worth our while to know them, if we can."

He took up his guitar and began to thump it as if to cut off all objections.

"Oh, Solomon Levi! Tra-la-la, la-la-la, la!"

Dick Starbright turned back to his book and his study.

"Oh, saw off on that!" he impatiently exclaimed, looking up from the table after Bert had sung a verse or two.

"Well, I don't want you to study just now. I want to talk to you. I want your opinion about that invitation."

"You're going to accept it?"

"Yes; I'm thinking that I will. But you don't seem to like it."

Dick leaned back in his chair and stuck his thumbs in the armholes of his vest.

"My opinion is like that of Lincoln, when asked to recommend a certain book: 'For people who like that kind of a thing, it is just the kind of a thing they will like!' For people who fancy fellows like the Chickering set, the Chickering set are just the kind of fellows they will fancy. For myself, I don't fancy them, and if I should receive such an invitation I'd ignore it."

"That's because you don't know them. I thought I hated them, until I met Rupert Chickering himself this morning. Of course, he's something of a cad in his dress. I'll admit that. But he was the most genial fellow I've met since coming to Yale. I fancy I impressed him a little with a sense of my own importance, and the result is this invitation."

"Oh, I knew you would go!"

"Yes, I'm going. Such a chance doesn't come every day in the week, and I can't afford to throw it away."

Dade Morgan would have laughed could he have heard that speech, and he would have laughed more loudly if he could have seen Bert Dashleigh begin to dig out his collars and ties and lay out his best apparel.

An hour or so later Dashleigh was admitted to the

perfumed atmosphere of Rupert Chickering's aristocratic apartments, and was warmly greeted by Chickering himself.

Julian Ives was there with his darling bang, and Gene Skelding with his gorgeous necktie. Ollie Lord lifted himself on his high-heeled shoes to welcome the newcomer, and Tilton Hull smiled over his high choker collar.

"We've been waiting for you," said Rupert, in a manner that made Dashleigh feel that he was the only man at Yale worthy of such consideration.

And he saw that he was the only guest. Then he thought that perhaps the other guests had not arrived.

"Just one of the little feeds we have up here now and then," Chickering explained. "We thought we'd like to have you with us."

"I've been admiring you, don't you know, ever since the night of the Torch Light Wash!" Lew Veazie simpered, holding out his hand like the fin of a fish.

Bert Dashleigh was not particularly pleased with this reference, for on the night of the Rush he had been badly handled in the wrestling-match with Jack Ready, and was still sore on the subject. However, he showed nothing of this.

The tables were already laid in an adjoining room, and the dinner was ready and waiting.

Bert Dashleigh was a well-meaning fellow and honest, but he was somewhat rattle-brained and frivolous, and he liked attention and flattery. He had not received much of either at Yale so far, and the open compliments and honeyed words of these juniors were doubly pleasant to him on this account. It did not occur to him that they might have a sinister purpose in thus admitting him to the charmed circle of their friendship, and he had not been at Yale long enough to know the exact estimation in which they were held.

The handsomely furnished apartments, the glittering silver and glass on the tables, the immaculate dress of his hosts, and the elaborate dinner caught his fancy and intoxicated his imagination. He could no longer doubt that the Chickering set, in spite of all that might be said against them, were worthy of cultivation, and the belief came to him that the fellows who spoke so severely against them were moved to it through jealousy and envy.

Dashleigh did not care for wine, though he had no scruples against its use; but it was so persistently pressed on him, and he had such a fear of not doing just the thing he ought to do on this occasion, that he permitted his glass to be filled again and again, until his head took to itself a queer feeling, and the objects in the room began at times to assume a strangely wabby aspect.

By and by the talk turned to college athletics and

college men. Whenever the talk at Yale turned to these subjects, no matter who the speakers were, Frank Merriwell's name was invariably mentioned. Dashleigh mentioned it now, speaking rather favorably of Frank.

"I must say that I don't like Jack Ready," he confessed, for the wine he had taken made him incautious in his statements and caused him to give free expression to his feelings.

He had not liked Ready since the time Ready won from him in the wrestling-match. That had humiliated him and embittered him against the apple-cheeked sophomore more than anything else could have done.

"Merriwell isn't like Ready, though," he went on. "Ready is a hare-brained sort of fellow, I take it, who is simply stuck on himself."

"And Merriwell is in the same boat!" Gene Skelding declared, with a show of feeling that surprised Dashleigh.

But Chickering came purringly to the rescue of Merriwell's reputation. Chickering always pretended great fairness, though he did not feel it.

"Never speak ill of a person behind his back, especially if he is a Yale man!" he urged.

"Well, I don't want our friend Dashleigh to make the great mistake, at the outset of his career here, of becoming a worshiper of Frank Merriwell," said Skelding. "You'll want to keep away from him when

you know him, Dashleigh. That's straight. He has a lot of fellows trailing round at his heels all the time, singing his praises, but there is really nothing in the fellow—not a thing."

"We may as well admit that he's done some remarkable things," said Chickering. "I don't particularly like him, as you know. No one does who is not of his stripe. But I want to be fair to everybody. Of course, he was helped by an uncommon run of luck in that tour he took this summer with his so-called Yale Athletic Team."

"Yale team!" sniffed Ollie Lord.

"What right had he to call it a Yale team?" asked Julian Ives, squaring his shoulders to give himself a manly look.

"That'th what I thould like to know mythelf?" lisped Lew Veazie, taking a delicate sip of wine, for too great a quantity always turned his little head.

"He had no right to call it anything of the kind, I'll admit that!" was Chickering's answer. "They didn't represent Yale, but——"

"It was simply an exhibition of unbounded gall!" growled Skelding.

Dashleigh was beginning to feel that perhaps he had been wrong in rating Merriwell as a hero. These were Yale men who had known Frank for a long time. Consequently their words were entitled to weight. He was sorry that Dick Starbright could not be there

to hear this, for Starbright had become a Merriwell worshiper.

After dinner the party adjourned to the room which Dashleigh had first entered, where there was more talk about Merriwell, and the fact was developed that Frank was using all his exertions to become the captain of the football-team.

"You see, it's this way," Skelding explained. "Mark Alcott was chosen football captain, but his father has since failed in business, and Mark couldn't come back to Yale this year. That makes it necessary to choose a new captain, and Merriwell's friends have begun to pull strings for him to get him the place. He'll get it, too, unless a big fight is put up against him."

"He'th got eewebody nearly on hith thide!" Lew Veazie dolefully lisped.

"Yes, I fully expect to see the president of Yale college polishing his shoes before the month is out!" snapped Skelding.

"His own shoes or Merriwell's?" asked Chickering, who fancied himself something of a wit.

"Oh, this is no joking matter!" Skelding retorted.

"We won't quarrel!" Chickering said, as he slowly exhaled a cloud of cigarette smoke.

Julian Ives was daintily lifting his coat tails and standing with his back to the low fire that burned in

the grate, and at the same time admiring his full-length figure in the mirror opposite.

"We just want to put our new friend on guard against the brazen fellow!" he said. "It's so easy, you know, to get in with the wrong crowd, when one first comes to Yale."

Dashleigh was beginning to feel sure that Merriwell was not a proper man for captain of the football-team, though he did not see that he could do anything to keep him from becoming so.

Tilton Hull dragged out a mandolin.

"I hear you're something of a musician," he said, offering it to Bert.

"Yes, I intended to ask you to bring your guitar," said Chickering. "I neglected it when I wrote the invitation."

Bert rather prided himself on his skill with the mandolin, and the whole party began to listen to his efforts, to his great delight, and by and by to sing college songs.

Dade Morgan, passing beneath the windows of the Chickering apartments, smiled when he heard the mandolin and the songs, for he knew what it meant.

"I've a dozen little parties going like that to-night, and every one of them is working against Merriwell. It's a good beginning, and I'll keep it up. In a month I'll shatter the popular idol and lay his pride in the dust. There's nothing downs a man so quickly, as

public sentiment, and I'll work the sentiment of Yale against Merriwell."

It was a large boast, but Dade Morgan felt that he could do it.

"I must report this to Agnew," he whispered, as he walked on. "It will warm the cockles of his heart."

CHAPTER II.

TEMPTED.

That same evening Dick Starbright stumbled up against Roland Packard in front of the New Haven House. Roland had been waiting for him there, with an evil plan in his mind, suggested by Dade Morgan.

"Hello!" he said, extending his hand.

Starbright did not know Roland Packard, but he knew his brother Oliver and admired him. Both were students in the medical school. They were brothers and twins, who looked so much alike that only their most intimate acquaintances could tell one from the other. In addition to this they had a trick of dressing alike, even to the minutest details.

So when Roland thus addressed Starbright, and familiarly extended his hand, Dick took it without a thought that the speaker was other than Oliver.

"The football question fills the air like a fog," said Roland, as he walked along with Starbright, linking his arm into that of the tall freshman and looking up into his face. "But you're tall enough to thrust your head above any fog that may rise."

"Thanks! I hope I'm not tall enough to attract the attention of any modern Barnum."

"I saw Walter Camp go by a while ago. It's a big thing for Yale that he's here this year, if it's only as

an adviser, for what Camp doesn't know about the great game wouldn't fill a large book."

Starbright was willing to concede this, and said as much.

"I had a talk with Camp this morning, after I saw you."

Roland knew that Oliver had conversed with Dick Starbright on the football question that morning, and he knew what had been said, for Oliver had told him. He also knew that Starbright was the captain of the Andover football-team of the year before, and that he was considered at Yale the most promising of all the freshmen for football honors, with perhaps the exception of Dade Morgan.

"The big question this year will be to find a full-back, and I don't mind telling you, Starbright, that there is talk of you for that position. Yale is living in hope that the freshman class will produce good timber for that place. Anyway, I'm betting that you'll get on the team. You were captain at Andover last year?"

"Yes; I told you so, you'll remember, this morning."

"Ah! so you did. I thought you said captain!"

It warmed Starbright's heart to be spoken to in this pleasant manner by a man whom he believed to be worthy of his friendship.

"Yale abolished summer practise this year, you

know; and the team is going to have precious little time to get into shape for effective and winning work. But she can do it, if no breaks are made in making up the team."

"Well, I think I could name some good men."

"Who are they?"

"Merriwell and certain members of his Athletic Team."

Roland laughed.

"So you've got the Merriwell fever, have you? It's really wonderful."

"What's wonderful?"

"The pull that fellow has. It just beats creation. But if Merriwell goes on the team, in my opinion Yale might as well keep out of the games."

"Who is a better man?"

"Beckwith, for one!"

"He's sure of a place."

"I don't know about that."

"Who is another?"

"Dade Morgan."

"I don't like him."

"That's because you don't know him. You'll like him when you come to know him better."

They had passed down the street beyond Traeger's, but now turned back, walking slowly as they talked.

"I can't understand why you don't fancy Merriwell!" said Dick.

“You’ll understand, after you’ve been here a while. He’s popular with a certain class, that’s all. He has round him a lot of sycophants who are Merriwell worshipers, and who are ready to sneeze every time he takes snuff. You’ll find out by and by that is the truth. I’ve nothing personal against Merriwell. He’s a pleasant fellow, in many ways; but he won’t do to tie to in an emergency. Besides that, he’s got the swelled head. He took some of his chums out West this summer, and because they happened to buck against some weak ball-teams and win a lot of games, Merriwell thinks he owns the earth.”

Roland’s brother Oliver was to be away for a few days, and Roland felt that this, given as Oliver’s opinion, would remain uncontradicted for a little while, anyhow, long enough, perhaps, for it to have effect in certain ways. But he was not so much desirous of striking at Merriwell now as at the man with whom he was talking. He did not want Dick Starbright to become a member of the football-team, simply because he believed that Merriwell did want him, and it was his plan to prevent it if he could. He and Dade Morgan had talked the thing out that day, and there was a perfect understanding between them.

When they again stood in front of Traeger’s, he drew Dick toward the door that leads to the downstairs portion of that establishment and Dick went in with him. Here, at one of the small round tables

which fill the lower room, the talk about football was continued.

Dick could not agree with his supposed new friend in the latter's opinion of Merriwell, but he could agree with him on many other points, and the talk was exceptionally pleasant to the young and inexperienced freshman who was longing for sympathy and companionship.

Roland Packard showed a surprising amount of information concerning Yale's football timber and their plans, all of which was intensely interesting to the ex-captain of the Andover eleven.

Students came and went, and the two talked on in that genial way for a time, when Roland beckoned to a waiter. The waiter disappeared, soon returning with a bottle and some glasses. The bottle contained a fine grade of whisky.

Roland turned out a quantity in one of the glasses, and the odor smote strongly the nostrils of Dick Starbright. He grew as white as a sheet. Roland poured another glass, covertly watching the young freshman.

"Here's to the success of Yale's football-team, no matter who is in it!" he said, pushing one of the glasses to Starbright.

There was a strange light in Dick's eyes. His hands trembled and his form shook.

An almost overpowering temptation to lift the glass to his lips came upon him. He asked himself, where

was the harm? Why should he offend this genial friend by a refusal to drink this toast with him? Many Yale men drank liquor there at Traeger's. True, he knew that the temptation to drink was the black temptation of his life, and that if he began to drink he might not be able to stop.

Nevertheless, he put out his hand. Packard smiled encouragingly.

Starbright's hand stopped half-way to the glass. Merriwell's voice had sounded from the pavement. Frank was talking to some one on the street. He did not know that Starbright was in Traeger's, shaken by that almost overmastering temptation. The words themselves were trivial, but somehow they took hold on Dick Starbright like fibers of steel. The uplifting feeling that had come to him from Frank's words on the night of the great rush when he sat on Merriwell's knee between the bouts of the wrestling-match came to him again. It again gave him strength and determination.

He drew back the extended hand. His face was still white and his eyes bright as stars.

"No; I can't do it!" he declared.

"Why, what's the matter?"

Packard had heard that voice on the sidewalk, and he now wondered if it could have influenced the tempted freshman. He knew something of Merri-

well's powerful influence—his wonderful mastery of minds that were friendly toward him. He asked himself if the freshman had not given Merriwell some promise not to drink, which Frank's voice now recalled. From the room above came the words of the song:

"Here's to good old Yale! drink her down, drink her down!"

The song seemed to say to Starbright, "Drink! drink!" The fumes of the liquor cried to him, "Drink! drink!"

Roland Packard, sitting opposite him like a smiling fiend, was, by his manner, urging him to drink.

"Why, what's the matter with you, old fellow?" Packard queried. "Just a toast to the success of the football-team?"

"I could willingly drink the toast, but not in liquor."

"Oh, you're one of those temperance men!"

Packard said this with an impatient sneer that cut Starbright to the quick. But the color was coming back to Starbright's face and strength to his brain.

"I can't do it!" he said, in a trembling voice. "You must pardon me."

He felt that he must run, if he saved himself. He did not know how he got out of the chair; but he rose up, pushing back the liquor.

Then, with his heart hammering and his face on

fire, Dick Starbright stumbled up the steps and into the street like a man pursued.

Merriwell had passed on, but he felt that Frank's voice had saved him. He did not stop to look back. He could explain and apologize to Packard at some other time, if necessary.

Then he hurried blindly away, not stopping until he had gained his rooms. Here he paused, breathing heavily and looking reproachfully at himself in the glass.

"You aren't fit to live, Starbright! You just now insulted one of the few friends you have made since coming here! But, what else could I do? I had to get out of there!"

He scorned and hated himself and his weakness, feeling that he, the Andover athlete and football-player, was weaker and more cowardly than a child, and really needed a guardian.

Then he went to bed, where he lay tossing, until Dashleigh came into the rooms talking hilariously and volubly of the great time he had enjoyed in Chicker-ing's apartments, and with a breath smelling of the wine he had swallowed and the cigarettes he had smoked.

CHAPTER III.

THE MYSTERIOUS STRANGER.

A few evenings later Dade Morgan had a visitor. The man came to his rooms after nightfall, tapped softly on the door, and was cautiously admitted. Dade stared as the light revealed the face and figure, if a face may be said to be revealed which is disguised by heavy false beard, and mustache and wig.

"You wouldn't know me on the street?"

Dade stared again. The voice was disguised, too!

"I am not dead sure that I know you now!"

"You ought to know Hector King! I told you I was coming."

"No; I shouldn't have known you on the street in broad day. That's a funny disguise you've got on."

"Well, as you know, I've my special reasons for not wanting to be recognized here."

The man laughed as he said this and took the chair; and the laugh was disguised.

"You ought to go into the detective line."

"Thanks; but I've got one of the best detectives in New Haven at work for me. My part in this game is more important. How are you getting along?"

He had spoken in low tones, and now he glanced toward the door.

"Oh, we're all right," Dade said, seating himself.

"The fellows are all out at the fence or strolling about town. I ought to be getting the night air for the benefit of my health and muscle."

He smilingly glanced at some dumb-bells and Indian clubs and a strength-developing machine in the corner of the room. The stranger nodded and laughed.

"I'm plowing into Merriwell all I can," said Dade. "I'm working up a tremendous sentiment against him. He hasn't begun to feel it much yet, but he'll feel it by and by. I've been trying to think out a plan to throw Bart Hodge down. That would hurt Merriwell more than anything else. I think I can do it by and by!"

Then he told of Dashleigh and Starbright.

"I've got Dashleigh on the string all right, and I'll get Starbright. I came near getting him the other evening. I've a trick that's working now that will surely throw him."

He laughed like a fiend; then remembered himself and drew his features into a smile of apparent joy. Getting up, he looked at his handsome face in the glass.

"I keep practising this effective smile all the time. You don't know how powerful it is. It's already won me a host of friends, and will win me more. The fellows are coming over to my side. I'm Merriwell's open enemy now, and I'm stacking the cards against

him. He wants to be captain of the football-team, but he'll get it in the neck."

"Perhaps you can guess what brought me here?"

"To hear how I am getting along, and because you said you were coming."

"I'm going to help you crush Merriwell by spiriting away his father!"

Dade gasped.

"If Frank carries out his plans, he must be right here on the grounds; but he won't remain here, if his father suddenly and mysteriously disappears."

"But the old man has gone away in that queer manner before. It won't work."

"Merriwell thinks that his father is all right now; and he is all right. But when he suddenly drops out of existence Frank will be alarmed, for he will think that one of the old streaks of insanity has attacked his father, and he will devote his energies to the work of finding him."

"You are going to spirit him away?"

The disguised laugh that followed was so harsh and cold-blooded that Dade shuddered.

"Yes, I shall spirit him away—and to-night. My plans are all laid. That's why I came to New Haven to-night. I shall strike in the dark and disappear in the dark. That's why I am in this disguise. That's why I am Hector King, instead of my real self."

"But——"

The right name of the man before him was on Dade's lips, but the stranger seemed to divine it and held up a finger warningly.

"That name must never be spoken by you until I give permission. I am Hector King! Understand! That is my name to you, and you must not even think of any other name."

"How are you going to get Charles Merriwell away from his room at the New Haven House? He stays there pretty closely."

"I shall not try to get him away from his room. He takes a walk through the green every evening. I shall find him there. Eleven o'clock is his favorite time. Sometimes, when he does not sleep well, he is to be seen there at much later hours."

He laughed, so falsely and in such a disguised voice that Dade Morgan shivered.

"To-morrow morning you may begin to tell the fellows that Charles Conrad Merriwell has had another of his insane spells and has skipped out. Work this for all its worth. Insanity runs in families. Merriwell has done queer things in his time—Frank Merriwell, I mean. Pull that string; and show that he is not a fellow to be trusted. Say that it was a crazy streak that led him to organize his chums into an Athletic Team for an advertising tour. You can work it."

"I will work it!" Dade tremblingly promised.

"I knew you would. Now I'm going!"

"So soon?"

"Yes. I'll see you again; and if I don't, I'll write. If you want detective help, go to the fellow named in my letters. He's shrewd and capable, and he knows how to hold his tongue when he's well paid."

The disguised man rose to his feet, softly opened the door and slipped away, leaving Dade staring at vacancy.

CHAPTER IV.

A BLOW THAT HURT.

Dick Starbright received a letter the next afternoon which took all the strength out of him. The envelope was addressed in a delicate feminine hand and post-marked in an interior town, and Starbright tore it open with eager impatience. It held but a few words, but these stabbed him like a knife.

“You will please discontinue your letters to me, for we shall be henceforth only strangers.

“ROSALIND THORNTON.”

Dick's fingers shook as he read the letter over and over. His face whitened, and there were lines of pain round the firm, true mouth, but that was the only outward sign of anguish.

“I have been afraid of it,” he muttered.

He folded the letter, put it back in its envelope, carefully stowed it in an inner pocket, as if it were something precious, and began to pace the floor.

“I might as well get out of Yale now!” was his thought. “What's the use?”

His mind went back to the glorious summer days recently past and to the time when he had first met Rose Thornton. It was at a little village in a notch of the White Mountains. He had been boarding and

lounging there, when the girl, who had since become so much to him, had come to the place with her aunt for a few days' stay.

He went over in memory that first meeting, together with the other meetings that followed. They had played tennis and golf together, they had walked together along the rim of the hills and through the woodland paths, they had ridden and driven together. He had said some words to her that might mean a great deal if the fates willed, but which became meaningless now.

Rosalind Thornton had been in his dreams when he came to New Haven. Thought of her had spurred his ambitions. A desire to do something and be something for her sake had nerved his hand and his brain.

She had relatives in New Haven. The aunt with whom she had visited the White Mountains was a resident of that city. For this reason he had expected to be able to meet Rose more than once during his first college term. He had thought of her as he walked about the New Haven streets through those first homesick days at college.

But it was all over now. They had been unfortunate enough to quarrel a few weeks before, but that had been patched up. He had been fearful, though, since.

"It's all over!" he said, as he tried to pull himself together.

He did not blame Rose for putting in no word of explanation. Certain things had been told her against him before. He knew that, for she had so informed him. They were true. Something else had now been told her. Perhaps that was also true.

"Well, I won't get down on my knees and beg her to let us remain as we were!" he grimly declared.

Then, feeling miserable, he left the room and went out for a stroll. The afternoon was a half-holiday. He might have remained in for study, but he knew that he could not study. He wanted to get away from himself and from thoughts of Rosalind; yet he knew that, wheresoever he wandered, this was impossible.

Down by the New Haven House he once more met his evil genius, whom he again mistook for Oliver.

He could not know that Roland was expecting him, with an assured feeling that he would come sooner or later, and that he was but the victim of a plot hatched in the cunning brain of Dade Morgan, for the letter had been unmistakably in the handwriting of Rose Thornton.

He had kept away from Packard since the evening of that visit to Traeger's, but he now welcomed the warm grasp of Roland Packard's hand. He was in a reckless mood, too. He was telling himself over and over, "What's the use?"

Seemingly, there was no use. What if he did fail in class and athletic honors at Yale? It made no difference now. Nor did it matter much if he went to the dogs over the shortest possible route.

Packard again linked his arm warmly in Dick's, and they turned down the street together. Packard did not seem to notice that they were walking toward Traeger's. Dick Starbright noticed it, and he did not care. He cared nothing now to drink that toast to the success of Yale's football-team, but he would not have pushed the glass from him.

But Packard was crafty, and pulled him by Traeger's without so much as looking at the place. He had failed in his previous effort at Traeger's, and he purposed now to steer his intended victim into Morey's, for many freshmen like to get a view of the interior of that famous old tavern, a privilege which is not accorded them unless they are accompanied by an upper classman.

Roland Packard was well acquainted with Morey's and the keeper there. Starbright was going along willingly enough, thinking of Rosalind and telling himself that nothing in the world was of any use now.

They crossed Temple Street and turned down that thoroughfare. Just then there was a whirr of wheels and the buzzing sound of an automobile, and Frank Merriwell's voice came out of the noise:

"Starbright! I should like to speak to you a minute!"

Again, as it seemed, had Merriwell drawn Dick Starbright back from the power of the insidious tempter.

"Just a moment!" said Starbright, turning from Packard, who uttered a low and bitter curse under his breath.

"The scoundrel!" Packard hissed, as Dick was walking off. "Merriwell is always turning up at the wrong moment. How the deuce did he know?"

It was a queer mental question, yet Roland Packard could not help the feeling that Merriwell had in some manner divined his intentions. Frank spoke a few words to Starbright, then called out:

"I have invited Starbright to take a little ride with me, Roland, and he has accepted. See you later—perhaps!"

"Roland?"

Frank Merriwell's automobile had started on with Dick at Frank's side, leaving Roland Packard white with wrath. The question was from Starbright.

"You thought the fellow was Oliver. I guessed as much!"

Merriwell had guessed a good deal more, had in truth seen perfectly through Roland's sinister intentions, though he did not care to say so just then.

“Do you mean to say that was not Oliver Packard?”

“A very different fellow from Oliver. Oliver is a gentleman. Roland is a scamp that any one will do well to keep away from. I was sure you were mistaken. They are twin brothers, and their most intimate friends find trouble at times in telling them apart. I can't always do it, but I knew it was Roland as soon as I saw him heading in that direction. Not but that Morey's is all right in many respects, but I think Oliver does not go there.”

The automobile was spinning along the firm roadway, and the motion, together with Merriwell's strengthening presence, seemed to lift the young freshman out of his depressed state. Again he felt that influence which Frank was able to exert over those who desired to have his help and become his friends.

Starbright had taken no stock in the stories which the Chickering set had diligently poured into the ears of Bert Dashleigh and which Dashleigh had repeated to him. He still believed in Merriwell, and wanted to be numbered among his friends and adherents. He had been called “Frank Merriwell's New Protégé,” and the title, which seemed destined to stick, had drawn him nearer to Merriwell than anything else.

Frank headed the automobile out into the country, when the streets of the city were left behind. The odors of autumn were in the air and the brush of the

great painter, Nature, had given to the trees an infinite variety of gorgeous tints.

The two young fellows had been chaffing of college subjects, especially of college sports, but nothing had been said for some time of Roland, though the events of the afternoon were constantly in Dick's mind.

"I was about to make a fool of myself," he declared at last, in a sudden outburst, for something in Merriwell's manner invited the confidence. "Perhaps I might have had strength to resist after entering the place, but I doubt it. A man never resists anything unless he wants to resist, and the desire to resist had been taken from me. You don't mind, if I tell you of myself?"

"No; I want you to. Perhaps I can be of service to you."

Dick thought of Rosalind Thornton, and felt that here Merriwell could not help him.

"I was about to do the one thing of all others that I ought not to do—go into Morey's and take a drink as a bracer."

He waited for Merriwell to say something; then went on:

"That's a thing I've got to fight against, Merriwell, though I'm ashamed to say it."

Frank urged him to go on.

"The desire is in my blood, and I inherited it from my father. There seems to be two natures struggling

in me continually for the mastery—that of my father and that of my mother. My father had but one fault—he was a drinking man.”

He was stumbling on as if he feared he would lose his courage.

“Father was a sea captain of the old style. Bluff, gruff, brave, and jolly. He was generous to a fault, and I think it must have been his generous disposition which led him to drink, for when he sailed the seas, drinking was common among seafaring men. He was in the China trade, and he made a fortune in it and came home to enjoy it. But he could not get away from drink. It killed him and almost broke my mother’s heart. Yet, knowing all this, I have a craving for the stuff. I must have inherited it from him, for I never did anything to acquire it.”

Frank Merriwell, looking into the open, honest face, unsullied and unpolluted, could see that this was so.

“That’s all, Merriwell—at least, all that’s pertinent now. I’m a mixture, and the devil fights within me for the mastery.”

He could feel Frank’s sympathy, and it strengthened him, though no word was spoken. Frank was thinking of his own peculiar temptation, against which he had been compelled to wage an unrelenting warfare—the temptation to play cards and gamble.

“I know how it is, Dick. You must just make up your mind to keep away from the stuff. Shun the

companionship of fellows who drink. Come to me, whenever you feel pressed, and I think I can help you."

"I take my great size and height from my father; that is to say, my physical strength, and along with it this weakness. I don't look weak, Merriwell, but I am!"

Suddenly Starbright uttered a cry:

"Rosalind!"

The name came from his lips before he could check it. Just ahead of them was a narrow bridge over a stream. On this bridge, coming toward them, was a young woman on a bicycle.

A horse was dashing along the bridge on the farther side, drawing a buggy. Frank saw in an instant that the horse was running away.

The young woman became aware of the same thing at that moment, and, turning her wheel to the railing, dismounted. The railing gave way as she did so, for she fell heavily against it in her excitement, and the next instant she went plunging downward from the bridge.

Dick Starbright leaped from the automobile before Frank could stop it. The girl who had fallen from the bridge was Rosalind Thornton.

The runaway horse came tearing along, with the man hanging frantically to the reins, grazed a wheel of the automobile, then dashed madly down the road.

Frank had brought the automobile to a stop, and now sprang after Starbright. He feared the girl had fallen to her death, for the drop from the bridge seemed a big one. On the impulse of the moment, without realizing the dangers, Starbright leaped from the bridge for the purpose of jumping into the stream to rescue her.

As Frank reached the first boards, he was greeted by a shout, which he was sure was not a shout for help or a cry of despair. Then he saw Starbright standing up on a load of hay, wildly waving his hat, and with the other hand supporting the girl. This was so different from what Frank expected that for a moment he stared.

By some miraculous chance, a farmer with the load of hay had chosen to ford the stream rather than the bridge. When Rosalind went off the bridge, she fell upon this load of hay, which was just below and at the side of the bridge, and Starbright had leaped after her and landed at her side.

The stolid driver had pulled his horses to a stop and now sat in front on his load of hay, staring back at Starbright and the girl as if he could not understand how they came to be there.

This unexpected development of what might have been a grave accident was so much like a scene out of a comic opera that Frank laughed, then swung his cap and sent back a cheer.

CHAPTER V.

MR. MERRIWELL'S DISAPPEARANCE.

"I was foolish enough to believe a slanderous letter about Dick that I received from an acquaintance here in New Haven."

Frank Merriwell's automobile was spinning homeward. Dick Starbright and Rose Thornton were seated in it, side by side, holding the bicycle. They had taken time for a talk, which had resulted in an understanding and a restoration of the old order of things.

Rosalind was a pretty girl of seventeen, with dark, laughing eyes and a winsome smile. But Merriwell could see that she could become intensely jealous on slight provocation.

"It was from Grace Garcelon. She has pretended to be my friend all along. I ought to have known enough, though, not to believe anything she would write about Dick. She was up in the White Mountains with me this summer, and I had enough chances to know her!"

Frank concealed a smile. He knew that Dick Starbright had also been in the White Mountains. Rose's manner told him that she was jealous of Grace Garcelon. He knew, now, why Dick had been so depressed. There had been a quarrel of some kind between Dick

and Rose, and the result had been to make Dick despondent and somewhat reckless. Thinking along this line, as the two chattered on in the back seat, he suddenly remarked:

"Perhaps Dick has some enemy in Yale who has told false stories to Miss Garcelon about him?"

As usual, Merriwell's keen discernment had struck right to the root of the matter. Through the machinations of Dade Morgan, Grace Garcelon had been led to write the letter to Rosalind, which had brought the discouraging note to Dick Starbright.

Merriwell understood, too, another thing. Rose had been introduced to him by Starbright as from another town than New Haven, and as being on a visit to her aunt, Mrs. Virgil Throckmorton. She had arrived in New Haven only that morning; and Merriwell knew that her desire to learn the truth of Grace Garcelon's account had drawn her to the city.

She had ridden on her wheel out into the country, merely because she was too nervous and upset to remain in the house or in the New Haven streets and stores; and, by a happy chance, she had encountered Dick in that wholly unexpected way, and so there had been brought about a talk and an understanding.

"Dick is safe from Roland Packard and Dade Morgan for a while," was Frank's conclusion, as he sent the automobile on toward the streets of the college city.

Dick and Rosalind left the car when they reached Church Street to go to Mrs. Throckmorton's, and Frank set out for his rooms in Vanderbilt Hall.

He found a number of friends there, awaiting him in much excitement. Hodge was there, with Browning, Ready, Carker, Carson, and others.

"Do you know what Dade Morgan is telling?" Hodge asked, and his excited and angry manner showed that he was aching to punch Dade's head.

Frank dropped into an easy chair, as smiling and undisturbed as a May morning.

"I'm sure I shall not let myself get excited over anything that fellow may say!"

"Well, he started in this morning, and it's all over Yale, that your father became violently insane last night, and has disappeared mysteriously from his rooms at the New Haven House, and from the city."

"Which can be easily disproved by any one who will take the trouble to go down to the New Haven House."

"But we've been there!"

"And he isn't there?"

"No. That's just it. He went out for a walk in the green last night and failed to return. His room showed that he was not in it last night. No one down there knows what has become of him."

Merriwell was disturbed, in spite of his declaration that nothing Dade Morgan could say would have that

effect. He remembered the time when Dade stretched a rope across the path of Charles Merriwell at night in the green and tripped him. A sense of impending ill came to him.

"Have you made any inquiries?"

"As much as we could without exciting undue suspicion," said Browning.

"Have you found out how Dade Morgan obtained his information?"

He felt sure that Dade Morgan knew more than he had declared.

"He says he saw your father on the green last night wandering round raving mad and muttering to himself that he was going to get out of New Haven."

"Of course that's a lie!" said Hooker.

"A lie right out of his black heart!" Hodge panted.

"That part of it is a lie," said Frank, "but I'm afraid there has been some underhanded work."

"Dade Morgan is at the bottom of it!" Bart fiercely declared.

Merriwell rose from his chair.

"I'm going to look into this thing."

Hodge followed him out into the hall, though uninvited.

"I want to go with you, Merry. Perhaps I can help you!"

The others trailed out after Hodge.

"Hodge and I will look into this thing. Just keep

mum, fellows, until we make a report. There's no use in scattering the news."

"Oh, Dade Morgan's doing that, you bet!" grunted Browning. "It makes me want to shake that lying tongue out of his head."

"I'll hammer it down his throat, if I run up against him!" Hodge asserted.

"You know how Dade has been working against you, Merry!" Hodge continued, after they descended from the Hall.

"Anything new?"

"Well, he's using this against you with the football men, and all his clackers are retailing the same thing. They're saying that you are crazy at times, that you take it from your father, and that it would be suicidal to put you in as captain of the team."

"I'm not anxious to go in as captain, if I'm not wanted."

"But you are wanted."

"Then these stories can't hurt me."

"But they are hurting you. Your friends want you for captain of the team, and they are going to put you there if they can, whether you care anything about it or not. We're going to fight for it. Dade Morgan is against you, and he has rallied every man who ever fancied you did him an injury, and that other great lot of fellows who have always been jealous of your popularity."

"That doesn't matter."

"It does matter!"

"You know, Bart, that in football I'm only anxious to have Yale win. I've no personal feelings in the matter, no ax to grind, no enemies to punish."

"Well, I want you to punish Dade Morgan!"

"In football?"

"Yes; he mustn't go on the team. You can keep him off, if you will use your influence. He's pulling every string he can against you, and you ought to strike back."

Frank smiled, in spite of his anxiety about his father.

"It would be a strange thing if I, a senior, should range myself against that freshman in such a contest. It's simply ridiculous."

"Then he will go on the team!"

"If he adds strength to the team, I'm willing."

"Merry, you make me tired! That kind of talk makes me sick!"

"He's said to be a fine football-player."

"I shouldn't care if he were the finest on earth, I'd never let him have the satisfaction of going on the Yale team, if I had my way!"

Merriwell was striding on as if this subject did not concern him.

"Why, look at what he's doing! He is telling all sorts of stories about you; and not only that, he has

in some manner got every man who dislikes you to telling the same. They're doing everything they can to rub dirt all over you, to smirch your character, and to injure you in the eyes of all Yale men."

Frank turned toward a street-car when they reached the line.

"Where are you going?" Hodge impatiently asked.

"To see Seltón Dirk, the detective," answered Merry quietly.

CHAPTER VI.

A VISIT TO DADE MORGAN.

Merriwell saw Selton Dirk, talked with the proprietor of the New Haven House, questioned quietly the officers at the railway station—in fact, left no stone unturned to locate his father or determine what had become of him, but without avail. Charles Conrad Merriwell seemed to have dropped out of existence.

Frank was deeply disturbed and distressed. No one would have guessed it, however, from any outward sign. Only his friends knew how the disappearance troubled him. He could not hide from himself the fact that there might be more than a grain of truth in Dade Morgan's statement that Charles Merriwell's mind was deranged. But Frank was determined not to believe this until it was absolutely forced on him as the truth.

"I shall proceed on the theory that there has been some foul play, of which Dade Morgan is cognizant," he said, speaking to Bart, as they turned toward Vanderbilt, at the end of their wearying and fruitless search.

The day had passed and night had again descended on the elms of the college city. Freshmen were

skurrying about the streets and college grounds, and the seniors and juniors were gathering at the fence.

"I just want an opportunity to take the scoundrel by the throat!" Hodge growled. Suddenly Frank stopped.

"What is it, Merry?"

"I'm going over to see Dade Morgan."

"Good! I'll go with you! We'll choke the truth out of the scoundrel!"

"That's the trouble with you, Bart! I don't think you're the one to go with me in that mood. That may be the very worst course to take."

"Run it to suit yourself, Merry!" Hodge impatiently grumbled. "That's my way of doing business, though!"

Frank knew that he had no better friend than Bart Hodge.

"You're all right, Bart; only you're fiery. We'll go over there, and I'll do the talking. If the fellow knows anything——"

"Knows anything? The scoundrel is at the bottom of the whole business!"

"I think so, myself. Come on."

Dade Morgan's room was not far away, and they soon reached the building. When they mounted to the floor on which his room was located they found his door open and Dade in. He looked surprised and

somewhat perturbed by the unexpected call. But only for a moment; then the smile returned to his handsome face. Hodge wanted to choke him for that smile.

"Be seated, gentlemen!" he invited. "To whom am I indebted for the honor?"

Merriwell dropped into a chair, but Hodge remained standing near the door. He had a notion that Dade might try to make a break for the outer air, and he wanted to be where he could stop him in that event.

Frank sat down and began to talk on indifferent things, all the while looking into Morgan's handsome, smiling face, but making no mention of the subject uppermost in his mind.

Morgan was a good talker on any subject. He was wonderfully well informed. He fancied that Frank was trying to take a mental measure, and he tried to make as brilliant a showing as he could.

By and by it began to seem to Hodge that Frank had entirely forgotten the subject that brought them to Dade's room. He grew impatient and anxious, but he did not sit down, and he never left the vicinity of the door.

"Why does he amble on in that fashion?" he mentally grumbled. "My way is to go right to the point at once." He did not see that Frank was trying to get Dade under his powerful and subtle influence for

the purpose of then extracting all the information he possessed concerning Frank's father.

But Dade Morgan knew it and understood. His eyes wavered away from Frank's as they talked on, but always came back. Finally Frank began to think that he was about to accomplish his purpose.

But suddenly Dade aroused himself with an apparent effort, and, picking up a heavy book, hurled it straight at Hodge's head. It fell short, striking Hodge on the shoulder and almost knocking him down.

With an enraged roar, Hodge sprang at Dade Morgan's throat.

"You villain!" he snarled.

Dade rose to meet him, now thoroughly aroused and on the defensive. He cleverly evaded the blow that Hodge launched at his head, met it with a counter blow on Hodge's cheek, and tried to drive his heavy left into the pit of Hodge's stomach.

But Bart's rush was irresistible. It carried Morgan off his feet; and in another moment they were rolling on the floor, with Hodge's hand searching for Dade's throat.

Frank knew that Dade had roused himself in a desperate effort to break the spell that was being woven round him.

"You scoundrel!" Hodge was panting. "I'll choke the black heart out of you!"

Merriwell quietly closed and locked the door, to shut out from the other rooms the sounds of the struggle. Then he turned to the combatants.

Hodge was not having it all his own way. Dade had hurled Bart aside, pushed back the outstretched hand, and, with his fingers in Bart's hair, was forcing back his head.

The freshman was a fighter. He planted a blow on Bart's cheek that brought a red welt. Then he broke from Hodge's grasp and backed into a corner of the room. Here he put his back against the wall, lifted his hands in a defensive attitude, and called to Hodge to "come on."

There was a sound of hurrying feet in the outer hall, together with cries and calls. Frank heard the word "Proctor." He did not want Hodge to be found fighting with the freshman, and, with a leap, he put himself between the belligerents.

"Drop it!" he commanded. "This thing must not go on. Drop it right here and now!"

The words were quietly spoken, but there was deep meaning in them. Hodge drew himself up with an effort.

"He began it, Merry! I don't care a fig for the authorities. Let me get at him!"

"Drop it!" Merriwell commanded; and Hodge, picking up his cap, turned sullenly toward the door, that red welt showing plainly on his face.

"I'll see you again!" he growled, turning to Dade Morgan. "Then we'll settle this thing."

"Any time and place you please!" Dade retorted, with a cold, taunting smile.

A rap sounded on the door. Frank opened it. The man outside bowed and smiled when he saw Merriwell.

"Anything wrong in here, Mr. Merriwell?" he asked.

Frank answered the question, Yankeelike, by asking another:

"What's the row?"

"There were sounds of fighting along here somewhere."

"Well, I haven't been fighting, as you can see!"

"Certainly not. I didn't suppose that you had, Mr. Merriwell. I beg pardon for interrupting you. But it was along here somewhere."

Then he bowed apologetically to the famous senior and went on his way, searching for the culprits. Frank turned back to Dade Morgan. There was no further use to disguise the cause of his visit to the room.

"Mr. Morgan, my father is missing from his hotel and from the city. You know what stories you have been telling."

"They're all true!" Dade hotly declared.

"Pardon me, if I tell you that you lie!"

Dade had tried to coax the smile back to his face, but now his cheeks flamed. He wanted to launch himself at Merriwell's head, but he did not dare.

"I know nothing about your father, more than I've told, and if I did I should refuse to tell you."

"Oh, I've got to get at him, Merry!" Hodge panted. Merriwell pushed his friend back.

"There's no friendship lost between you and me, Merriwell!" said Dade. "You know that, even if I am only a freshman and you a senior. I've set out to down you, and I'll do it. Put that in your pipe and smoke it!"

He was white now and shaking like a leaf, yet he was still defiant and courageous. He looked like a stag at bay. Frank saw that it was a mere waste of breath to try to extract anything from him. Choking and blows would not have dragged from Dade Morgan's breast any of its secrets.

"The next time Hodge goes at you I hope it will not be necessary for me to interfere," said Frank grimly.

He turned toward the door.

"I don't want you to interfere. If he ever tackles me again I'll teach him a lesson that he'll never forget."

"Bah!" Hodge sneered.

Merriwell was unlocking the door. Hodge stopped as if he still had a thought of going back and trying

conclusions with Morgan. But Frank pulled him through the doorway.

"Come on," he said. "I've other work to do to-night. We don't want to have the room raided while we're here. Cork up, and come on!"

"You allowed him to defeat you!" Hodge grumbled as he followed Frank from the building.

"He hasn't defeated me. I shall strike in another direction. I must have time to think. There's no use following a trail when there's nothing at the end of it, merely to gratify a desire for revenge. I've other plans to work to-night. If he feels that he has defeated me, I shall be glad to have him think so."

CHAPTER VII.

IN THE HANDS OF HAZERS.

Jack Ready hopped into the rooms occupied by Dick Starbright and Bert Dashleigh.

"Say, fellows," he chirped airily, blowing out his cheeks, "if you want to see something that's more fun than a dog fight, just chase your faces down to the front entrance."

The hour was late, and Starbright had been on the point of retiring. Dashleigh jumped up to follow Ready. Dick opened his window and looked out. The moon was shining brightly and the night was still, except for such sounds as were made by various groups of rollicking students.

"What's the row?" he asked.

Dashleigh was following Ready along the hall, and Dick now chased unsuspectingly after him.

He did not once think of hazers. Continued security had caused a lack of caution, and, besides, knowing that Ready was a particular friend of Frank Merriwell, he expected no hazing trick from the apple-cheeked sophomore, notwithstanding the fact that sophomores are the sworn enemies of new freshmen.

When he reached the entrance he was unceremoniously picked up in the arms of a half-dozen stalwart

sophomores, among whom he recognized Ralph Bingham. Dashleigh was already in the toils and had ceased to struggle. Dick looked round on this sophomore contingent, as he felt himself caught up.

"Gentlemen!" he drawled, assuming an imperturbable manner. "I learned to walk a long time ago. There doesn't seem to be any particular necessity for carrying me."

His coolness struck the sophomores favorably.

"If you'll go along peaceably, we'll let you down!" said Bingham.

"Use him tenderly, for he's my—friend!" said Ready. "Don't jab pins into him, gentlemen! For pity's sake, don't! Observe the proprieties and it will make you feel bigger than other people. Yea, verily!"

Dashleigh appeared to be inclined to make a struggle. Dick gave him a word of advice:

"No use rowing! If there's any medicine to take, take it and have done with it."

They had talked this matter over in their first days at Yale and reached the conclusion that if they were caught by the sophomores the best thing was to submit as gracefully as possible and implicitly obey all orders, no matter how ridiculous. And really this is the only way to escape severe hazing.

Another party of sophomores had approached the freshman boarding-house occupied by Dade Morgan.

"You can't come in!" the landlady declared. "It's

a perfect shame the way you soph'more fellers bamboozle the poor freshmen!"

With this she unceremoniously slammed the door in their faces. Only a few moments later she came running out of the house, shrieking.

"I'll have the police on yer! Come down from that ladder in a minute, or I'll pull it out from under yer!"

At the top of the long ladder, which reached up to Dade Morgan's room, were two strong sophomores, who had unceremoniously invaded the premises through the window.

"Madam," said a calm voice from the top of the ladder, "there is no necessity for such exuberance on your part. Kindly let go of the ladder or I'll drop on you!"

"Sarah! Sarah!" she screeched, looking toward the entrance. "There goes two more of the rapscallions inter the front door."

More than two went in, and the irate landlady frantically gathered up her skirts and sprinted for the front stoop, wildly declaring that she would call the police.

With sophomore foes to the front of him and sophomore foes to the rear, and more coming, Dade Morgan wisely decided that it was useless to kick, and he calmly prepared to submit.

The landlady was telephoning for the police, shriek-

ing her woes into the instrument in so frantic a way that a whole platoon of the blue-coated gentry hurried to the scene; but like every other well-conducted organization of the kind, they arrived when everything was quiet again, and the freshman, sophomores, and ladder were all gone. When they understood, the guardians of the peace smiled at the woman's woes.

"They may git kilt!" she sobbed. "Yer never kin tell what them college fools will do."

"I guess he'll not be so much killed but that his room rent will go on," was the answer.

Two other freshmen, big Hawaiians, whose room had been invaded, put up a stiff fight before they yielded, and, as a consequence, had scored up two sophomoric black eyes. This was a heavy tally, and had their youth been brought up in regions less remote from civilization they would have known that to inflict such injury was only to punish themselves with tenfold severity.

In this way a press-gang of thirty or more freshmen was gathered under the glare of an arc light on the green. They were a fantastic and unique company, and they made a sorry spectacle, with their coats turned inside out and their trousers rolled up to the knee. Each of them was armed with a broom, which he was required to handle as if it were an army rifle.

The sophomores who formed the escort of this

meeek and grotesque array were congratulating themselves on the splendid round-up of the evening. Not for a long time had such a number of freshmen been beguiled from their rooms to undergo the trials that were about to be put on them.

As the freshmen were being lined up and set in marching order, Frank Merriwell appeared on the scene. Some of the sophomores were disguised in various fanciful ways, and among these, Frank, also disguised, smuggled himself. He smiled in a grim and mysterious way when he beheld Dade Morgan. He had a little plan to trip Dade Morgan, and he was there to work it out.

Frank's influence as a senior and popular Yale man would have been sufficient to bring about Dade's release from the toils of the sophomores. But Frank did not want that.

"Hep! hep! hep! Company—halt! Parade—rest! No levity, freshmen; no levity!"

The entire sophomore class had gathered on the green to witness the public humiliation of the freshmen, and a swarming rabble of Townies was there for the same purpose.

Merriwell recognized the big sophomore who was shouting the orders as Ralph Bingham. In fact, Bingham seemed to be the leading spirit of the inquisition, for such was the character this demonstration was soon to assume.

"Company, 'tention!" Bingham shouted. "Line up for inspection! Carry—arms!"

The fun had begun.

The freshmen fell into a long line on the asphalt walk and "carried arms" at such various angles that the whole row presented a ridiculous rear view of white legs, variegated backs, and bristling broom-heads.

Bingham, as drill-master, had many lieutenants, all armed with keen switches, and he and his lieutenants were literally whipping the freshmen into line.

"Stand up straight! Bunch up! Head erect! Eyes to the front!"

Swish! swish! swish! went the switches.

"Wow!" Dashleigh exclaimed, as the switches cut his legs.

"No levity, freshman!"

Swish! swish! swish!

"Wipe off that smile!"

This to Dade Morgan, who was still putting into practise his belief that "a man may smile, and smile, and be a villain still."

"Trim down those piano legs."

"I'll trim you down!" was shouted back.

Swish! swish! the switches fell on the "piano legs," making the owner dance a hornpipe.

"No back talk, fresh! If it hurts, that's what it's meant for."

Dick Starbright and Bert Dashleigh, near the center of the line, were hopping up and down like chickens on hot coals, but Dick knew enough not to use any "back talk."

The two big Hawaiians near the head of the line were being unmercifully castigated. They were boiling mad. They wanted to fight, and would have done so if the sophomores had not been round them in overpowering numbers.

"Gentlemen," said Bingham, when the line had been switched into some sort of shape, "this is a very pleasant occasion. It gives me great pleasure to say that it has never before been my privilege to look upon such a mean, raw-boned, poorly-developed, knock-kneed, scared-to-death aggregation of freshmen!"

Bingham's speech was punctuated with howls from the sophomores of "Footless freshmen!" "Rotten!" "Pie-eyed!" "Dopes!" and similar uncomplimentary things. The freshmen moved restlessly under these epithets, and one of the Hawaiians audibly growled his resentment.

"Give 'im another for me!" ordered the sophomore whose nose had been hammered by the Hawaiian.

Swish!

The Hawaiian got it and took it with wrath at the boiling point.

"Yes, gentlemen, you are a lovely set!" continued Bingham. "And now we are ready to proceed with

the physical examinations. If the surgeons have their knives in readiness——”

Shouts of “Fruit! fruit!” interrupted him.

“Exactly!” assented Bingham. “We are now about to operate on and remove the ‘appendix togae,’ popularly known as the ‘fruit.’ The results of these several operations will be sold at auction sale at 64 Vanderbilt to-morrow afternoon, the object being to make this ‘fruiting’ as systematic as possible.”

Two sophomores came up behind the Hawaiian, while Bingham and four others approached the head of the line. One of the sophomores carried an opened penknife in his hand, and he thus addressed the big Pacific Islander:

“Does your mouth trouble you while eating?”

“No!” angrily.

Thump! thump!

The two sophomores behind the Hawaiian brought their knees up against him with jarring force.

“No, what?” demanded the man with the knife.

“No, it doesn’t——”

Thump!

“Trouble me——”

Thump!

“My mouth!”

The confused freshman stammered and gulped, for at almost every word those jarring knees came up against him.

“One moment, if you please, surgeon,” interposed Bingham. “I don’t think the gentleman understands the question. Freshman, will you listen carefully to what I say?”

“Yes,” replied the Hawaiian.

Thump! thump!

“Yes, what?” demanded Bingham.

“Yes, I’ll listen carefully!”

Thump! thump!

“You are very stupid,” said Bingham, with condescension. “But try to open the avenues of your intellect to my words while I tell you that it is customary when addressing an upper classman to say ‘sir.’”

“Oh!” exclaimed the Hawaiian.

Thump! thump! “Oh, what?” shouted the man with the knife.

“Oh, sir!”

“Right!” cried Bingham.

“Have you heart disease?” asked the surgeon.

“No, sir!”

“Ever been in Philadelphia?”

“No, sir!”

“Then let the operation proceed!”

Two sophomores held the big fellow’s arms, and another seized the tag at the end of his shirt bosom, which appendage bears the name of “fruit,” and this the man with the knife deftly removed.

"Now," said Bingham, who wanted to humiliate the big fellow all he could for what he had done, "being a prominent man, we desire people to know who you are. Put your arms about yonder light-pole and continue to call as loud as you can, 'I am a greasy Kannaca!' Do you understand?"

"Yes—yes, sir!" said the subdued Hawaiian, who proceeded to follow out his instructions, while the ministers of the inquisition passed down the entire line, removing the fruits as they went.

Starbright and Dashleigh let them take away the tags bearing their initials without a word of protest. It was better so. The work occupied some minutes, but all this time the big Hawaiian clinging to the electric-light pole was shouting with the best power of his lungs:

"I am a greasy Kannaca! I am a greasy Kannaca!"

If he paused for a moment he was urged to it again by hissing switches, which played familiarly about his calves. Truly enough, he was paying dearly for those blackened sophomore optics and bleeding proboscis.

Finally, the public humiliation being completed, the freshmen were turned into regimental columns of fours.

"Carry arms! For-ward march!" shouted Bingham, and the freshmen began to move on to further troubles, with the great crowd of "muckers," which had gathered to watch the proceedings, following and

surrounding the dejected and ridiculous-looking company amid hoots and yells.

“Hep! hep! hep!”

The freshmen were marched from the green and gyrated up Elm Street toward “Billie’s.”

CHAPTER VIII.

HAZING AT BILLIE'S.

The indignity which was thus being thrust upon the freshmen was the relic of a barbarous form of hazing, which has been so ceaselessly agitated and legislated against that it has fallen into disrepute and disuse.

Hazing as practised in the past has completely unnerved many a strong man and has not infrequently terminated in violent death. Nevertheless, when the jolly old grayhead of 'umpty-eight returns to see the old place again and there falls in with the jovial old fellow of 'umpty-nine, they will laugh over their Toby at Morey's, or their Musty at "Heibs," as they recall the wild, rollicking history of the days that were truly hazing days—a history that contains many bits of humorous, startling, and grave story.

Mounting the steps of the low frame building, Bingham swung back the door and disclosed the interior.

A narrow, low-ceilinged room whose mural decoration consists of red and yellow cuts depicting pugilistic champions and scantily appareled histrionic beauties. The ceiling is dingy and dark.

Dividing this room in half runs a long maltreated bar, over which a single light burns in a red globe. Opening at the rear are several doors which lead into a maze of little rooms.

Behind the bar, with his back leaning against the bottle-shelves, stood the little man of the place, with his sleeves rolled to his elbows and his round stomach, covered with a spotless white apron, resting against the inner rail of the bar. He was a jovial little fellow, smiling genially and constantly, with a head profanely called "the human billiard-ball," shining merrily beneath the red globe.

Bingham held the door open, and the sophomores and freshmen began to pour into the room, which was reeking with fumes of liquor and tobacco.

"Line up, freshmen!" shouted Bingham. The freshmen wheeled into crowded line, broomsticks and all, to face the broadly-smiling Billie.

"Billie," said Bingham, "the honor, sir, has devolved upon me to introduce to your excellent notice this congregation of pusillanimous warts, representing the freshman class."

Billie smiled till the smile became a grin.

"Freshmen," commanded Bingham, "bow to this august gentleman!"

The freshmen, broomsticks and all, bent forward in a ludicrous salaam.

"Freshmen," continued Bingham, "this is honest Billie. If there is one thing he longs for more than your happiness it is your money."

Merriwell was closely watching Dade Morgan. The crowd began to surge back through the little rooms, with Frank close to Dade, and soon they reached a wide open space, covered by a canvas roof, beneath which ran a long line of heavy tables.

In a moment this summer-garden was filled to its limits. Bingham stood up on one of the tables and addressed the freshmen, saying that, as it would shortly be their duty to uphold the honor of the university on the water, they were therefore about to receive some instructions in this noble sport.

Eight freshmen, among them Dade Morgan, Dick Starbright, and the big Hawaiian, were now seized and set astride the long tables and made to use their brooms in the manner of oars. Dick had the position of "stroke," while the Hawaiian was set to coxswain the unhappy crew.

"Now, fresh, ready, row!"

The freshmen began to swing their bodies and arms furiously, sweeping the eight brooms with vigor

through the empty air. Immediately cries of derision filled the tent.

"Coach there! Give the time!" commanded a number of sophomores, speaking to and crowding about the big coxswain.

"Hi, whoop!" cried the unlucky Pacific Islander.

Thump! whack! whack!

"Hi, whoop what?" they yelled, beating him lustily about the shoulders.

"Hi, whoop, sir! Hi, whoop, sir! Hi, whoop, sir!" sang the miserable Hawaiian, swinging his body in time with the crew till the perspiration stood out on his brow in great beads.

Then came admonitions from the coaching line.

"Steady, 7!"

"Don't rush that slide, 4!"

"Quicker on the catch, 2!"

"Leave a little water in the pond, 6!"

"No bucking there, stroke!"

"Whoop, now, all together!"

And all the while the freshmen swung to their work with enough energy to send a boat flying over a course.

"Now," shouted Bingham, "we are ready for the great four-mile race with Harvard. Freshmen, upon your right is the Harvard crew waiting for the signal. The word 'go' releases you both, and the honor of Yale hangs upon your efforts." The freshmen bent

forward for the catch. The crowd waited in breathless suspense.

"Go!" cried Bingham.

Back swung the freshmen, forward swept the brooms. Cries, yells, and howls rose from the spectators. Many of the sophomores stood on chairs, waving their hats and yelling encouragement to the laboring crew.

"Hi, whoop,, sir! Hi, whoop, sir!" sang the Hawaiian.

"Go it! Hit it up. You're gaining. You're ahead! Go it! Go it!" cried the crowd in a frenzy, as the crew was rowing its phantom course so fast and furiously that the entire summer-garden trembled and strained on its foundations. Suddenly the sophomores bawled into the boating-song:

"And if it's a girl, sir,
I'll dress her up in blue,
And send her out to Saultenstall
To coach the freshmen crew.
And if it is a boy, sir,
I'll put him on the crew,
And he shall wax the Harvards,
As his daddy used to do!

CHORUS:

"I'm a son of a, son of a, son of a,
Son of a gambolier;
I'm a son of a, son of a, son of a,
Son of a gambolier.
Like every honest fellow,
I take my whisky clear;
I'm a rambling rake of poverty,
A son of a gambolier."

"One-half mile from the finishing-line!" howled Bingham, swinging his arms wildly about his head. "Pick up your stroke now. Hit her up! Make the water boil! You're gaining! You're ahead! One scant length! Hold your stroke. Steady. Yale! Yale! Pump your very hearts out! Still gaining! Full length! Length and a half! Magnificent spurt! Oh, you're beauties! You've got 'em going! They're cracking! There's the flag! Just a little further! Give it to her, my hearties! Go over the line like heroes! Don't break now! Not a crack! Steady! Throw her over the line with a jump! Splendid! Once more altogether now for old Yale! You've done it! Yale wins by two and one-half lengths!"

The speaker ceased.

Panting from their violent exertions, the freshmen came to rest on their ungainly oars. The crowd had increased its uproar tenfold. All the previous noise was but the dinning of a tin horn compared to this stentorian outburst.

A rush was made for the victorious crew. Each was dragged from the table and congratulations were rained, poured, thumped, and pounded upon him till he staggered about like a drunken man. Especially did the Hawaiian seem a mark for these muscular congratulations, for his admirers, not satisfied with slapping him on the back, drove home their appreciation with closed fist and shoe-toe.

The hazing had not ended, however. When the cheering and noise had subsided Bingham clapped his hands as a signal, and two sophomores appeared bearing an oak board with keen knives set in it, points upward.

The freshmen looked at the ominous thing with a shiver, for they heard the sophomores whispering that the freshmen were to be made to leap on these knives with their bare feet.

Starbright, Dade Morgan and other freshmen selected for this trial were hurried away, and the big Hawaiian, against whom the efforts of the sophomores seemed to be now principally directed, was commanded to remove his shoes and stockings.

He seemed about to rebel, as he looked at the shining knives in their cruel array. Other freshmen were hurried away, and the sophomores crowded round the board with the knives as if for the purpose of keeping the freshmen from seeing what was about to be done.

Looking at the Sandwich Islander, Frank saw that his yellow face was covered with perspiration, and that his eyes held a hunted and distressed look.

Suddenly Frank stripped away his disguise, bringing wondering cries from the crowd, for his presence had up to that moment been unsuspected.

"Fellows! You've gone far enough with this chap."

The sophomores fell back when they beheld the face of Merriwell, the senior. They stood in awe of all

seniors, but more in awe of Merriwell. Even those who had been arrayed in opposition to Frank through the machinations of Dade Morgan, felt the influence of his presence, and not for a moment did one of them think of disobeying him, save Jack Ready.

"Oh, I say, Merry! Let's have this thing. We want to prove his courage. It takes courage for a man to jump barefooted on those knives. I don't believe the Kannaca will do it. If he does, he will prove himself to have the heart of a knight of old."

"Let the Hawaiian go, and bring on some other fellow!"

The Sandwich Islander gave Frank a grateful look. He was a man who would remember such a favor. Instantly there arose a cry for Dick Starbright. And Starbright was brought forward, while the Hawaiian, once more breathing easily, was pushed back and ordered to "rehabilitate his corns!"

Frank looked into Dick's face as the big freshman came forward. He saw Dick glance unquailingly at the knives, as he was instructed to bare his feet and get ready to jump on them. The board with the knives was also given him to examine, that he might be sure they were real knives and their points sharp.

There could be no doubt that they were all of shining cold steel, with points like needles.

But Starbright stripped off his shoes. Again the sophomores crowded round, for the apparent purpose

of hiding the performance from the other freshmen who might be called to undergo the same ordeal later, and therefore should be kept in ignorance concerning it.

A stool was brought for Dick to stand on in taking the leap. He mounted this as requested. There was a deep silence—the silence that seems to precede a tragedy. Frank caught Starbright's eyes. They were clear and calm.

“The fellow has infinite nerve!” was his thought. “He will make the jump!”

“Freshman,” said Bingham, again assuming authority, “you will proceed to jump with your bare feet upon those knives. You have seen that they are sharp. This is a test of freshman courage. If you fail in this ordeal we will know that you are a craven. Freshman, jump!”

Without an instant's hesitation Starbright jumped straight out from the stool in his bare feet and descended on the murderous-looking oaken board. A groan went up from some of the spectators who still believed the knives what they seemed.

But Starbright's feet struck nothing more dangerous than knives of rubber, which bent under the pressure and inflicted no wound. Frank pushed forward and took the big freshman by the hand.

“Did you know what they were?” he asked. “Did

you see the sophomores change the board with the real knives for this one?"

"No," Dick answered, "but I was dead sure that there was a trick somewhere, for no men in their senses would ask any one to jump with bare feet on real knives. So I jumped!"

Others were called on to undergo this ordeal; but many of them quailed and refused to do so, and, when that occurred, the offender was picked up bodily and jammed down on the dangerous-looking knives. More than one of the freshmen shrieked with fear when thus forced to sit down on the rubber knives.

Again there were shouts for the Hawaiian, followed by a rush for him. But Frank once more interposed, for he saw that the nerves of the big fellow were so badly shaken that it was worse than cruelty to force him further.

Then there was a bustling about, and excited whisperings. Frank put up a hand and called for attention.

"The hazing has gone far enough to-night!" he declared.

"But we've got a whole lot of hair-raisers left in store!" Jack Ready howled. "Why, we haven't begun! We've some other things stowed back here that will make those knives lose their glitter."

But Frank Merriwell was obdurate; and when he said positively that the merriment had gone far enough, that great mob of sophomores, who could

have ridden over him and done as they pleased by sheer force of numbers, meekly yielded.

Merriwell had said it, and Merriwell's word was law in this thing. Not even his enemies offered a word of protest, but meekly submitted.

Dade Morgan heard the outcry, and this show of Merriwell's influence and mastery was almost more than he could bear. He had fancied that he was swinging the power of the most influential of the sophomores against Frank, but this exhibition taught him his error. He saw that Merriwell was the same unsubdued, conquering, and invincible Merriwell as of old.

"Well, we must have this then!" chattered Ready, motioning toward Dade, who, held far in the rear, had not been able to see or understand the trick of the rubber knives. The sophomores looked at Frank; and, when he did not object, a half-dozen of them rushed back for Dade, pounced on him and dragged him forward for the knife ordeal.

At this moment Frank put up his hands in a peculiar way. Then Dade, mounted on the stool, saw a form rise up from the midst of the sophomores opposite.

It was the form and face of Charles Conrad Merriwell. Dade stared. He thought Charles Merriwell had been spirited away. But he showed no other sign.

Frank was watching him with the eye of an eagle.

"Not the guilty one!" he murmured. "Whoever did it, that one was not Dade Morgan!"

Dade was as fearless as Dick Starbright and took the leap upon the seeming knives without a shiver.

Then there was a rush for the outer entrance. Frank linked his arm in that of his father and hurried out, being among the first to pass through the doorway.

A young man had walked stealthily along outside and stopped in front of the doorway, where he stood, listening to the sounds within and furtively watching those who came out.

When he saw Charles Merriwell, with his remarkable face and snow-white hair—a face that could not be mistaken anywhere—he uttered a cry, and fell backward. The young man was Morton Agnew!

Agnew fancied he had seen the ghost of Charles Conrad Merriwell. The plot hatched in the brain of the mysterious stranger, Hector King, Agnew had in fact sought to carry out, though without King's knowledge or the connivance or knowledge of Dade Morgan.

King had planned to capture Charles Merriwell in the green and spirit him away, but had been baffled, for the reason that Merriwell did not that night walk in the green. He sent word by mail to Dade of his failure, but Dade was industriously spreading the story when the letter was received.

Morton Agnew, knowing nothing of King's plot, had by a mere chance encountered Charles Merriwell walking at night along the wharves. With the assistance of a disreputable sailor who was in his pay, he had secured Merriwell and put him in a rowboat, with the rather wild and foolish idea that he could smuggle him aboard the *Whippoorwill*, a schooner lying not far from shore with sails up and on the point of sailing for the Bermudas.

But Charles Merriwell had struggled so much that the boat was upset as it neared the schooner, and the entire party was thrown into the water.

Agnew had seen Charles Merriwell, with hands bound, sink, as he believed, to a watery death.

But the man was a magnificent swimmer, and managed to reach a rowboat, to which he clung while the tide carried it out of the harbor. His cries were heard and he was rescued by a fishing-schooner.

As soon as he arrived in New Haven, which was the next night, he had communicated with Frank.

What followed was largely of Frank's planning. Knowing from Ready that Dade Morgan was to be hazed, Frank planned to have his father appear before Morgan in that spectacular way, believing that Morgan would not be able to conceal a show of fear if he were guilty.

He knew now that Dade Morgan, whatever else he had done, was at least innocent of this. Agnew was

the guilty man. But Frank was not at once able to punish the rascal, whom he had driven out of Yale the previous year, and whose undying enmity he had earned in consequence.

He sought to lay hands on him, but, even while uttering that telltale and frightened cry, Agnew stepped backward, and, the tide of excited sophomores and freshmen pouring out and around Frank at the moment gave the man an opportunity to escape.

"I unveiled the real villain, anyway," Frank thought, as he walked homeward from Billie's, "and I'm glad to know that it was not Dade Morgan. He is capable of it, perhaps, but he didn't do that!"

CHAPTER IX.

THE NEW CAPTAIN.

“Merriwell, Merriwell, Merriwell! Hurrah!”

The cry went up from hundreds of throats as students came rushing out of Alumni Hall, cheering madly and waving their hats and caps.

Men were running hither and thither across the campus, yelling joyously as they ran, as if seeking to hurriedly convey good news of some sort. Waiting groups rose and howled and danced like wild Indians. Windows of the quadrangle flew open on all sides, and heads of students filled them; these took up the cheering.

“He’s got it!” shouted the excited students at one another. “We knew he would! Hurrah for Frank Merriwell!”

Suddenly a part of the great throng broke into a familiar tune, to which the following words had been improvised:

“Here’s to good old Frankie—drink it down!
Here’s to good old Frankie—drink it down!
Here’s to good old Frankie,
Who’s never mean nor cranky,
A true-born, true-blue Yankee!
Drink it down! Drink it down! Drink it down!
down! down!”

A tall, handsome youth was seen in the midst of one

group, and it was evident that he was the leader. This was true, even though he had already graduated, for he was Jack Diamond, of Virginia.

Being in New Haven, he had found time to work hard for the interest of Frank Merriwell in the struggle that had been taking place at college. Jack, somewhat to his surprise, had discovered that he could wield a powerful influence among the students who had known him, and he had exerted that influence to its full extent.

It was plain that he had prepared his particular friends for the outcome of the struggle, for now, at a signal, the group that surrounded him began to sing the tune of "Dixie," a song that quickly evoked a perfect whirlwind of enthusiasm. Others rushed over to the group, and soon it seemed that the entire body of students were singing:

"Rally, fellows, round our Merry,
All his foes we'll help to bury!
Cheer up! cheer up! cheer up for Frankie!
We are to our captain plighted,
With him on the field united—
Cheer up! cheer up! cheer up for Frankie!

"Arise! ye men of Eli!
Hurrah! hurrah!
Join our band and take your stand
For vict'ry, Yale, and Frankie!
Rise up! rise up!
All those who stand by Frankie!
Rise up! rise up!
And cheer for Yale and Frankie!"

The spirit and rhythm of the tune set their feet to tramping, and soon that vast throng was marching round the quadrangle as they sang, Jack Diamond at their head, his fine face glowing, and his heart thumping.

This was the day and hour he had waited long to see. His heart had told him it must come, but disappointment had followed disappointment until at last it began to seem to the Virginian that even at Yale, for all of her boasted democracy, real genuine merit seldom obtained its just due.

The freshmen knew little of Diamond, but the spirit of the tune, the words and the occasion seized upon them, and they fell in at the rear of the procession, singing with the others.

In front of Vanderbilt Hall they stopped. Up went Jack Diamond on brawny shoulders. His head was bare, and he tossed back his long dark hair as he flourished one hand, crying:

“Gentlemen, brothers, comrades, men of Old Eli this is one of the grandest and most glorious occasions Yale has ever known. Though that glad, sad, longed-for and regretted day of commencement has made me an ‘old grad,’ yet my heart is here, and I feel that I am still one of you in spirit.

“To-day a victory has been won, and that victory shall lead to others grander and more glorious. In this college there has been one qualified from the

close of his freshman year to become your leader in all lines of manly and athletic sports, and especially qualified to be the captain of the football-team. To him can be traced the winning of more than half of the football games accredited to Yale when he has been one of the players.

“This is a strong statement to make, but the record will prove that it is the sober truth. Yet this man has, for some reason, been kept down as far as it was possible to keep such a man down. He has been subjected to the whims and caprices of captains and managers. He has been moved about from position to position. He has been relegated to the second team. And never has he been given a single opportunity to show what he could do as a leader, free and untrammelled.

“At last, as it seems, Fate determined that he should have his opportunity. That this opportunity came through the misfortune of another who had been regularly elected captain of the eleven, but who is no longer able to be here in college, no one can regret any more than does Frank Merriwell himself. He used his influence most generously to bring about the choosing of Mark Alcott for that position. In return, Alcott expressed a strong hope that Merriwell should be chosen to fill his place.

“You all know how much influence was brought to bear against Merry, but the time had come, and all the scheming of his enemies could not defeat him. He

has been appointed captain of the eleven. Not only that, but he has been given the assurance that his advice will be followed in whatever policy the management of the team may decide upon, and it is safe to say that at last he has reached the position he is so thoroughly competent to fill to the glory of Old Eli.

“Under the leadership of Frank Merriwell, Yale will again take her preeminent position on the gridiron. He will lead to victory! Three cheers for Frank Merriwell, captain of the eleven! Ready—now!”

It had been almost impossible to repress the enthusiasm of the crowd till Jack finished his speech, and now the students again burst into the wildest cheering for the new captain of the eleven.

“Where is he?” was the cry, when, after some time, the cheering had abated somewhat.

At that moment Frank himself, dressed in a handsome, rough gray suit, came out through the doorway and paused on the broad stone steps.

A roar of admiration went up from that great throng! The hot blood mounted to the cheeks of the young athlete for whom this ovation was meant! He was thrilled, and a mist blurred for an instant his clear eyes!

It suddenly developed that a committee had been chosen to notify Frank of his election. The committee pressed forward and attempted to do their duty formally, but the chairman was forced to cut it short.

Somebody yelled for Merry to make a speech, and then the crowd bellowed for a speech.

"Fellow students, brothers of Old Eli," he began, his voice clear and steady, "I am in no mood for speechmaking. There has of late been much talk, my friends say, as to what my policy would be if I were elected to fill the vacancy made by the unfortunate failure of Mark Alcott to return to college. I want to say now and here that in no way shall I permit personal feelings and my own likes and dislikes to have anything to do with the making up of the eleven. Be he friend or foe, every candidate for the team shall have a fair chance and a fair trial, for my policy shall be to put the best team possible into the field and to fight to the last gasp for Yale."

That was all; it was enough. They knew he meant it, and it struck a responsive chord in their breasts. Jack Diamond came up the steps and grasped Frank's hand. Others followed, and for all of his protests, Merriwell was lifted aloft, carried down the steps, and borne out through the archway of the gate on the shoulders of his singing, shouting, cheering admirers.

CHAPTER X.

A PRECIOUS PAIR.

Of course there were students who did not join in this demonstration. Two of them had paused by the fence before the appearance of Merriwell. They were Roland Packard and Dade Morgan.

“What do you think of that?” asked the medical student, with a sneer.

Morgan’s lips were pressed together, and the pleasant smile he so assiduously cultivated had been banished from his face, which now looked black as a storm-cloud.

“I think there are a lot of duffers in this college,” he said harshly. “But they are like the great mass of human beings; they long for a golden calf to worship. It is strange how men love to be led about with rings in their noses. But it suits my purpose that such is the case, for I am manufacturing a large supply of rings. When the time comes, I shall put them all to use.”

“Hear the fools cheering for Merriwell!” snapped Packard. “Doesn’t it make you sick?”

“A trifle,” admitted Morgan; “but what can you expect of such cattle! At this moment Merriwell is the popular hero, and they have gathered around him. But every popular hero stands on a dangerous pinnacle. As long as the weather is fair, he may be able to keep

his balance and retain his position; but when storms arise and the winds blow, it is a much more difficult task. Let him topple and tumble and great is the fall thereof. Sometimes a popular hero falls because he is pushed. Mr. Merriwell wants to be constantly on his guard. We are open enemies, and I'm able to do considerable pushing."

"But you were not able to keep him from being chosen to fill Alcott's place as captain of the eleven?"

Dade bit his lip, his eyes flashing with suppressed rage.

"No," he grated. "Last night I would have sworn I had him. The pipes were placed."

"But you failed."

"Yes."

"Why?"

"Through my own carelessness!"

"How was that?"

"I'd never met that fellow Diamond. None of our class knew him. When he dropped into Jackson's, I mistook him for some upper-classman who was in with me, and I talked over matters before him. He got onto the game, and he defeated me. Frank Merriwell can thank Jack Diamond for his success in obtaining his position."

Packard was regarding Morgan wonderingly.

"You're a dandy," he finally declared. "I don't believe any other freshman ever would have thought of

trying such a trick against a senior. I don't believe any other freshman who ever entered Yale could have wielded the power you have here."

Something like a grim smile of satisfaction flickered about Dade's hard, firm mouth.

"I reckon not," he agreed.

"How do you do it? That's what I'd like to know."

"My dear fellow, if I were to tell you, you'd not know any better than you know now. It is mental caliber and power; a will to dominate and command. I possess it. I know I was born to lead, I am determined to lead, and I do lead."

"But you could never lead Merriwell."

"Perhaps not!" snarled the freshman. "I don't want to! I want to crush him!"

"See here, Morgan," said Roland, his wonder increasing, "I can't understand you at all."

"I know it. If you could, if I were open as a book, so any one could understand me, my power as leader would be gone."

"What I cannot understand is your intense hatred for Merriwell. Now, if you had known him for some time and had been given any apparent reason for hating him, it would not be so strange; but you seemed to hate him from the very day you entered Yale."

"I hated him before that."

"Ha! Then you knew him before you came to college?"

"No."

"You had never met him?"

"Never."

"Has he ever done you a wrong?"

"Never."

"Ever wronged any of your relatives?"

"No."

"Well, it beats anything I ever heard of!" admitted Packard. "It must have been instinctive hatred. Otherwise there can be no real reason why you should hate him so."

"That's where you're wrong; there is a real reason for my hatred—a good reason, too."

This was more bewildering than ever for Roland, but Morgan had no notion of explaining at that time, so the medical student remained in the dark as to the underlying cause for Dade's enmity toward Merriwell.

"They've gone to cheer under his window," muttered Morgan. "They have gone to tell him that he has been chosen captain of the eleven. Listen to that!"

They could hear the clear, ringing voice of Jack Diamond as the triumphant Southerner made his speech before Vanderbilt.

"I'd like to shoot him for spoiling my plans!" snarled the freshman.

"And I'd like to shoot him for other reasons," said Roland, who remembered an encounter with the Vir-

ginian that he longed to forget. "I have a score against him."

"But I can't afford to waste my time on him," Morgan averred. "He is no longer in college."

"Why is he back here?"

"Perhaps he contemplates taking a post-graduate course."

"I think not. I believe some other reason brought him to New Haven."

"Well, whatever it was, it ruined my well-laid plans. He must have worked like a tiger to upset 'em."

"Well, what will you do, now that you are beaten?"

Morgan turned his piercing eyes on his companion, his look one of rebuke.

"Beaten!" he exclaimed. "I am not beaten!"

"But Merriwell is captain of the eleven."

"Yes."

"Then——"

"Do you think I'm going to lay down now? Not much!"

"What will you do?"

"I'll do him before I have finished, or my name's not Morgan! I shall not waste my time on small fry, like this Diamond. Let Diamond have his little victory now. I shall wait till the right time comes, and then I'll strike straight at Merriwell. When I strike, he shall fall!"

"In the meantime——"

"Let whoever may, think I am defeated. Let them think I've given up. It will suit my purpose all the better."

"I believe you had some ambition to get onto the eleven?"

"I not only did have, but I still have."

"What—with Merriwell captain!"

"Merriwell is captain to-day. Long before the season ends he may not be anything."

"Morgan," cried Packard, "I like your style! You're a stayer! You are the first man I've ever met who didn't show weak spots."

"Thanks," said Dade dryly.

"Of course," Roland continued, "you're a freshman, and that counts against you."

"Rot!" said Dade shortly.

"It does," persisted Packard. "If you were even a sophomore it would be different, but a freshman—that's bad."

"Blithering rot!" Dade asserted.

"Call it what you like, you can't swing men same as you might if you were advanced a class or two. Sophs will not affiliate with freshmen."

"But juniors——"

"They pretend to back up the freshmen, but that's only to keep the ball moving and make plenty of sport. They really regard freshmen with contempt."

"There's one freshman they'll not regard with con-

tempt when they come to know him," grated Morgan. "If you shy at being seen with me, Packard, a fig care I. You'll find other upper-classmen are not so snobbish."

"Oh, you quite mistake me!" Roland hastened to assure. "I was just telling you so you'd understand how——"

"I've been here long enough to get my eyes open. I knew how it would be before I came. But I'll open your eyes later when you see the influence I wield. I'm not boasting; you'll find I never boast. In the meantime, our hatred for Merriwell ties us together. I may depend on you when I want you?"

"Sure thing."

"Good! There's Merriwell on the steps. He's saying something. Hear the fools yell! Look at them rushing up to shake hands with him!"

"They've lifted him on their shoulders," said Packard. "They're going to carry him round the campus that way."

"Then I think I'll move. I don't care for any of them to see me just now. So long, Packard. Remember we're united in a common cause."

* * * * *

After the ovation given him by his fellow students, Frank turned toward his room, accompanied by Diamond, Hodge, and Browning. Never in all his life

had the loyal Southerner been happier than he was in that hour of Frank's triumph. His face glowed, his blood was leaping in his veins, and he walked with a bounding, springy step.

"I couldn't believe it would never come," he declared. "Something told me you would get there, Merry. Now the bill is filled, and I shall leave New Haven perfectly happy."

"I have heard," said Frank, "how you pulled for me, Jack, and I want you to know that I shall not forget."

"Even though he may his foes," said Hodge, with a short laugh.

"I do not forget them, old man," declared Merry. "I may hold my hand from revenge, but I never forget."

"I'm glad I'm not one of the hand-holding kind. Now, there's that whelp Morgan; if I were in your place, I'd wring his neck. The idea of a freshman presuming to try to play the game he's been at ever since the fall term opened! He came mighty near succeeding, too."

"But, thanks to Diamond and other loyal friends, he was frustrated. Perhaps that will settle him."

"Don't you think it," broke in Jack. "You can't settle a fellow of his caliber so easy. I'd like to run against him once more before leaving."

"Why does he hate you, Merry?" grunted Bruce

who betrayed amazing few symptoms of his old-time chronic laziness, and who, having trained steadily since the close of the summer vacation, was rapidly getting rid of his superfluous flesh. "That's something queer?"

"It is queer," admitted Frank; "and it interests me in the fellow. I know there must be some underlying motive, yet what it is I cannot fathom."

"Well, one thing is certain," said Bart.

"Mr. Morgan's ambition to get onto the eleven is knocked in the head now."

"Why?"

"Why? Because you have been elected captain. That cooks his goose."

"In what way?"

"Why," cried Bart, astounded, "you don't mean to say you'll let him make the team? You wouldn't do a thing like that?"

Frank smiled quietly.

"Hodge," he said, "didn't you hear me say in the presence of that crowd that personal feelings and prejudices should have nothing to do with that matter. I am a Yale man, and I'd fight for the glory of Yale shoulder to shoulder even with Morgan, if necessary."

They were ascending the steps of Vanderbilt.

"But it isn't necessary!" exclaimed Bart. "There are others who are better——"

"Let those others prove it, and Morgan will never

make the eleven while I am captain. Let him prove himself a superior man for any particular position, and he'll fill that position if I can put him into it."

Bart actually ground his teeth in rage.

"Talk about not understanding Dade Morgan!" he grated. "I've known you a long time, Merriwell, and I've not begun to understand you yet."

"I suppose Merry is right," admitted Diamond, as they passed into the building and climbed the stairs; "but I do not believe there are many fellows in Yale who could take the stand he has."

"Yale will play football this fall to win," said Frank unswervingly. "I shall be glad to see any of my friends make the team, but friendly feelings will not put one of them onto it over another fellow who is better qualified."

"Are you satisfied with the make-up of the first eleven as it stands now?" asked Bruce.

"Hardly," admitted Merry. "Of course, Murphy knows his business, and I think his scheme of pulling the heavy men back from the line may pan out great, but there are fellows on the second eleven who should be on the first. If you keep up your work of the past two weeks, Bruce, you're bound to get a chance on the first team, mark what I say." He paused with his hand on the knob of his door to add: "I didn't think it was in you to work as you have, but I knew you could win if you'd try. After getting into shape as

you did this summer, it will come easier than ever before to train down for the eleven. Keep it up. Come in, fellows."

He opened the door and walked into his room, followed by the others. A surprise awaited him.

In that room, ready to greet him, were Dolph and Juliet Reynolds, Inza Burrage and Elsie Bellwood.

"Hail to the conquering hero!" drawled the young Englishman, with a placid wave of his hand. The girls came forward together. Frank's cap was off, and his manly face glowed with the pleasure he felt.

"Elsie! Inza!" he cried, extending a hand to each—the right to Elsie, the left to Inza. "Why, when——"

"We came in while they were raising the rumpus over you out on the green, dear boy," Dolph explained. "A little surprise party, don't y' 'now."

"A surprise party indeed!" laughed Merry. "I did not even know you were in New Haven."

"Then Mr. Diamond, my friend from Virginia, didn't tell you? I wasn't sure he could keep it to himself."

"Did he know—the rascal?" cried Frank, turning on Jack, who was smiling. "He never murmured a word."

"I was pledged to silence; my lips were sealed," explained the Southerner.

"That's right," smiled Dolph, with a queer look to-

ward his sister. "I happened to witness by accident the sealing process."

Juliet blushed furiously, giving Dolph a reproachful look, which caused him to chuckle softly, as if he fancied it all a splendid joke.

"You see," the young Englishman explained, "we three sail for Liverpool next Monday."

"Three?" exclaimed Frank.

"Yaas; Juliet, myself, and—Jack."

"Diamond?"

"My friend from Virginia."

"Why, how does that happen?"

"Simple, old fellow—simple. Jack is going over with us at my invitation. I'm going to show him a little shooting down in Surrey, and we're talking of a visit to Paris and a trip to Italy. We'll manage to worry away the winter. Perhaps," he added slyly, "perhaps he may like England well enough to settle down over there."

Hodge had remained in the background with Browning, but Frank drew them forward now, and there was more handshaking.

"I suppose," said Dolph, "that Yale will now recover her former position of glory on the gridiron. In fact," he added, "I'm blooming sure of it, don't y' 'now, for I am well aware of Mr. Merriwell's ability as a manager. Thanks to him and his unconquerable baseball-team, I've enjoyed a delightful outing this

summer, spent all the money any man could wish to spend, and I'm going back home with a fat little purse. Next year I'm thinking of taking hold of baseball on the other side myself. We've just begun to pick up the game, don't y' understand, and I rawther fawncy we'll like it after a while. Now, if I could get Merry to bring over a team——"

"Oh, that would be just perfectly lovely!" exclaimed Juliet, with sudden effusion.

"It's too far ahead to plan such a thing now," smiled Merry. "But we can sit down and talk over old times."

This they did, and a right jolly party they were. After a time, there came a confident little rap, and the opened door revealed Jack Ready outside.

"Refuse me!" he cried, when he saw those within the room. "I'll call again. I'm so shy!"

But they urged him to come in, and, in his own original way, he finally did so, murmuring:

"I know I shall be stolen. How can those girls resist the temptation when the full radiance of my dazzling beauty dawns upon them! I really need an armed guard constantly about me. I fear I may be forced to wear a mask."

Jack was as refreshing as a cool breeze on a hot summer day. He expressed his pleasure at meeting old friends again, shook hands with Dolph, and, hand on his heart, bowed very low to the girls. Then, re-

remembering certain events at Niagara, he turned and gave Diamond a sly, meaning wink.

But, for some strange reason, the Virginian was not jealous now, and he simply smiled kindly, possibly a bit patronizingly, on the flippant collegian. There was confidence in his manner. Ready seemed quick to realize the real situation. At the very first opportunity, he slyly said to Diamond:

"Congratulations, old fellow. Send cards to my address. May Heaven bless you."

"Go on!" muttered the Southerner, his face flushing. "Why do you try to be a guy all the time?"

"Natural; born that way; can't help it. Ah! but this is a great day for Yale. At last our chieftain has come to his own, and my heart is full to overflowing. Alas! however, my purse is as empty as usual. 'Twas ever thus."

His laughter was followed by a sigh.

"Poor fellow!" exclaimed Elsie. "Permit me to loan you a nickel."

"The price of a single hot dog. Even that would not fill my stomach. Ah! never mind the nickel; give me but a smile from those ruby lips and I'll——"

"Look here!" laughed Frank; "there is such a thing as being too fresh."

"Squelched!" sobbed Ready, with a gesture of anguish. "It's the same old story. I always get it that way."

"Then you are not lucky in love?" said Juliet, possibly with a bit of malice in her manner.

"Lucky?" cried Ready. "Oh, yes, I am!"

"How's that?"

"Why, I've been refused by seven different girls within a year. Talk about being lucky; I'm it!"

"Don't you think that rather unkind in the presence of ladies?" put in Diamond, who could not resist the temptation to prod the breezy sophomore.

"Perchance, it may be thus construed," admitted Ready; "but I am ever truthful. It's a way I have. I've never deceived anybody or told a lie in all my life."

"My!" cried Inza. "You'll be frightfully lonesome in heaven with just George Washington for company."

Then all laughed merrily. The conversation flowed on till football became the topic.

"I say, Dolph," cried Frank, "can't you postpone your voyage over, long enough to stay and witness our game with Columbia?"

"My deah boy," drawled the young Englishman, "it'll be impossible."

"I suppose," said Elsie, "that now you are captain, Frank, you'll have all your friends on the eleven?"

"If they are better men than other candidates, yes; if I find others better than they, no. Football cannot be run on the basis of friendship. There's often too much of that kind of business in it."

"But your enemies," came quickly from Inza; "surely you'll keep them off the team?"

"Not if they are better men than other candidates. But I'm not the entire management, you must remember."

"You'll be just about that," Browning asserted. "I know. Your policy will be followed in everything, and what you say about the make-up of the team will go."

"I have some friends," admitted Frank, "whom I should like to see on the eleven."

"Many thanks," said Ready, rising and bowing. "Kind of you."

"Oh, you've nerve enough to get there without any assistance from me," Merry laughed. "The former leader of the freshmen is now a mighty sophomore, and his road to the eleven lies wide open if he can but travel it. There is, however, a new man in Yale, a freshman, whom I'd like to see have a show on the eleven. I believe he's capable, and he is just the kind Mike Murphy is looking for to fill a position back of the line."

"We know whom you mean!" exclaimed Hodge. "You're thinking of that big boy Starbright."

"Correct. I've watched his practise work, and he's all right. He's remarkably agile for such a giant, has wonderful strength, can run and kick, and I believe

he has sand and staying power. I hope to see him one of the backs."

"I should think the team would be all made up by this time," said Dolph. "You are going to play in another week, and yet you talk of the make-up of the team. By Jawve! I don't understand it."

"You take these opening games too seriously, Dolph," exclaimed Merry. "They are only practise, so that we may be in condition for the great games to come. Sometimes it happens that no more than two or three of the men who begin the season on the first eleven are able to hold their places till after the Thanksgiving game. Others prove themselves better, or injuries put the original men off the field. There are fifty men in college, every one of whom has hopes of making the eleven before the season ends. There are something like thirty fellows, substitutes and all, who are working on the first and second eleven now. A man on the first eleven to-day may be transferred to the second eleven to-morrow or dropped entirely; his position is never secure."

"And can you get the best work out of them under such uncertain conditions?" the Englishman asked.

"The very best. Every man is supposed to be working for the glory of Yale, not for his own personal glory. If he is dropped because a better man can be found for his place, he is supposed to entertain no hard feelings, but still to pull for Old Eli."

“Is that always what happens? Do none of the dropped candidates entertain feelings?”

“I regret to say,” admitted Merriwell, “that sometimes a man is so sore that he can’t get over it.”

“Don’t talk football any more,” entreated Juliet. “You’ll have time enough for that after we’re gone. Sing some of your college songs, please. I love them!”

“Yaas,” drawled Dolph. “They’re great, don’t y’ now. Give us some of them.”

Being urged, the boys finally consented, and soon they were singing the old favorites. The girls joined in every chorus. Time flew swiftly till there came a knock on the door, and there stood Bernard Burrage, Inza’s father, who had come for the girls.

CHAPTER XI.

THE TEAMS IN PRACTISE.

The coaches had put various candidates "through their paces" on the field. They were beginning to work the men hard, and the aspirants for football honors stood all kinds of criticism and abuse with the patience and meekness of cattle.

Then the first eleven, with Frank Merriwell in command, lined up against the scrub. Everybody was anxious to see what Merry would do with the team. Chickering and his chums were on hand.

"Now," sneered Julian Ives, brushing back his glorious bang, "we'll behold an exhibition of Merriwell's ability as a commander-in-chief. Doesn't he feel that he's the whole push!"

"He maketh me thick!" lisped Lew Veazie. "He ith thimply nautheating. Give me a thigawette, Ollie."

"Yes, chummie," said Lord, handing over a package and then affectionately passing his arm over Lew's shoulders. "We shall need something to steady our nerves."

"Bah!" growled Gene Skelding. "I hope he'll make a mess of it."

"Don't, fellows!" murmured Rupert. "If the poor fellow can do anything, don't be too hard on him."

"There's Morgan playing on the scrub," said Gene.

"Why, he's a better man than Merriwell ever dreamed of being, but he's only a freshie, and he's Merriwell's enemy, so he hasn't a ghost of a show to make the eleven. It's no use for him to try."

"They're going to begin," said Julian. "Now, keep watch."

The scrub and the first eleven were lined up against each other, with the ball in possession of the scrub. There was a hush, and then the practise game began. The scrub kicked off, and Frank, playing right half, returned the kick. After some volleying of this sort, Hodge attempted to advance the ball, but his interferers were mowed down, and he did not make five yards before he was slapped to the ground by Jack Ready.

There was a careful line-up, under the direction of the coaches, and the ball was sent back to Frank, who tried the scrub's center. Browning was on the scrub, and he blocked Merry in handsome style, holding him for a down. Frank's friends on the second team were showing up strong.

Next time the ball went back to Deerfield, who was playing left half, and he tried to go round the end with it, but Dade Morgan was there, and Deerfield went down with a slam that knocked the breath out of him. This gave Chickering's set an opportunity to yell, and they accepted it.

Another down would give the ball to the scrub, so

it went back to the full-back, the big sophomore Beckwith, for a kick, and he slammed it far down the field.

Then there was some hot work, out of the midst of which Dade Morgan shot with the ball, went through the first eleven's line, got past Deerfield, and seemed to have a clear path to the goal-line. Half the length of the field he ran amid a great uproar, and then Merriwell caught him with a flying-tackle and stopped him fifteen yards from a touch-down.

But Morgan had won the attention of everybody by that run, though he was inwardly furious and raging because Merriwell had been the man to stop him.

Now, Frank showed his generalship by anticipating and blocking every move the scrub attempted. He seemed to divine in advance just what would be tried, and his rushers were ready to tear to pieces the interference of the scrub, so that the ball quickly went to the first team on downs.

From that time on the ball remained in the possession of the regular team the most of the time, though it was not without a hard fight that Hodge was finally pushed over the scrub's line for a touch-down. Merriwell kicked a goal handsomely.

The scrub was unable to score, though it seemed once or twice that it had a fair show of doing so. At the same time, it made a far better showing than usual against the regulars, and Merriwell's enemies were duly elated.

But, between the first and second halves, Frank took the head coach of the eleven aside and had a serious talk with him.

“Now, what do you thuppoth that meanth?” lisped Lew Veazie, whose natural curiosity was whetted to a keen edge.

“Something’s up,” nodded Chickering anxiously.

“Merriwell’s working for a change on his team,” Skelding declared. “I’ll bet on it. He’s trying to pull some of his friends over from the scrub. See if I’m not right.”

But no one was prepared for the violent change about that took place before the second half began. The coach notified Starbright that he would take Deerfield’s place on the regulars, while Deerfield was shifted to the scrub. Following this, Jack Ready came over to center on the regulars, and Browning was given the position of right guard.

“Didn’t I tell you!” laughed Gene Skelding sneeringly. “I knew what would happen. Merriwell shot off a lot of wind about giving everybody, whether friend or foe, a fair show; but I knew all the time that he’d make the team up wholly from his personal friends.”

“Defarge is still in the line at right tackle,” said Ives.

“But he’ll fall in the next slaughter,” prophesied Gene. “Merriwell hates him, and his head will come

off. Oh, Yale will have a fine football-team this year, made up of Merriwell's pets."

"I think that would be a thplendid name to call them, 'deah boy," came from Veazie. "Merriwell'th Peth. He! he!"

"What's this?" exclaimed Ives. "Look at this! By Jove! Morgan is—no, it can't be!—yes, he is going onto the regulars, too! Now, that can't be Merriwell's work!"

In truth, Dade Morgan had been taken off the scrub and transferred to the first eleven. This wholesale shift about was making some of the old-timers stare, and it had created a buzz of excitement on the field.

"Merriwell never did that," declared Skelding. "He wouldn't think of bringing Morgan over. That was somebody else's idea, and I'll bet my life on it!"

"Ah!" sighed Chickering, "you will not give the fellow credit for a single generous impulse."

"Not one!" snarled Gene. "He pulls for his friends, and that's all the generosity there is in him."

"Then the shift of Morgan must have come through the manager," said Rupert.

"Without a doubt," nodded Ollie Lord knowingly, as he lifted himself high as possible on his high-heeled boots.

"I wonder how Merriwell will play the new men?" breathed Ives, consumed by curiosity.

This question was answered in a few moments, for

the regulars lined up with Starbright, the big Andover freshman, at left half, Ready at center, and Browning on his left hand as guard. Dade Morgan was given the left end of the line. Hodge had the right end, Defarge and Beckwith being between him and center.

"Now, we'll see what they can do," muttered Ives, again caressing his pet bang. "I hope the scrub will make an even better showing against them."

But his hope was vain. Frank had spoken a few moments to the new men, and each one seemed ready for business when the final half of the practise game began. The regulars went at the scrub in whirlwind style, and Merriwell himself made the first touch-down in just a minute and a half.

Nothing could hold the regulars. At center, Ready was quick as a flash, active as a panther, and savage as a tiger. Browning slammed his huge bulk into the line of the scrub like a catapult, and Morgan was a perfect mass of steel springs and gunpowder. Starbright did not have an opportunity to distinguish himself till near the close of the game, but he finally made a most sensational run through the scrub for a touch-down, dodging or flinging off tacklers with a skill that caused the spectators to rise up and howl with approving delight.

The new make-up had proved most effective, the work of the regulars in the final half being the most satisfactory of anything seen on the field thus far for

the season, and even the coaches were free with approval and praise.

Merriwell had found the right men, and he had placed them correctly at the very outset. The men who had been shifted to the scrub to bring about the change felt that their chances of being shifted back were decidedly slim.

Immediately at the close of the game, Merriwell hurried to Starbright, grasped his arm, and earnestly said:

“That was a great piece of work, my boy! You ran like a wild horse, and you dodged or threw off every tackler in handsome style. A run like that is enough to win any game. I thought you might do something of the kind, if given a chance, and I worked to give you the chance. I think you’ll stay on the eleven.”

“If I do,” said the big freshman, his boyish, handsome face aglow, “I’ll owe it all to you, and I won’t forget the debt, Captain Merriwell.”

CHAPTER XII.

THE MYSTERIOUS MR. KING.

Dade Morgan sat alone in his room, his eyes fastened on the floor, a book resting open on his lap, while a perplexed and angry scowl disfigured his peculiarly handsome face.

"I don't understand it," he muttered. "I can't believe he would do such a thing. I'd not do it for an enemy of mine, and why should Merriwell do it for me? He knows I'm his bitter and uncompromising foe."

Flinging the book aside, he rose to his feet and savagely paced the floor.

"There's something back of it," he muttered. "I know it! He is playing some sort of game, and I must be on my guard."

Morgan judged others by his own measure, which made it impossible for him to understand the new captain of the eleven. At length, happening to pause before a mirror, he observed the black scowl on his face, and his manner underwent a swift change.

"That won't do, my boy!" he exclaimed, speaking to the reflection. "You have forgotten your winning smile. That smile is worth millions to you if you work it. It wins you friends whom you can use for

allies and tools, and it disguises and hides your thoughts. Smile, Morgan—smile!”

Standing there, he did smile, and the mirror showed him a handsome youth whose face bore a most kindly and winning expression.

“That is quite enough to fool the keenest of them all,” he said. “Has it fooled Merriwell? Who knows? Even as I have not fathomed him, I am sure he has not sounded me. He won in our first struggle, and it may be that he thinks I have given up. Ha! ha! If so, he’ll find out his error. Dade Morgan never gives up!”

“That’s right,” said a strange, hollow voice that sent a chill over the freshman, despite his steady nerves. “It’s in the blood. Never give up!” Although startled, Morgan had not betrayed it by jumping and turning.

Still facing the mirror, he saw that a tall, dark man, wearing a long coat and a hat slouched over his eyes, had entered the room with the step of absolute silence.

“You have come,” said Morgan, forcing himself to speak with perfect steadiness. “Sit down.”

Then he slowly turned about and motioned toward a chair, his face wearing that same pleasant, guileless smile. The man did not obey immediately, but stood with folded arms intently regarding the student.

“One bit of advice I have to give you,” he finally

said, his voice seeming to fill the room with queer echoes. "Don't talk too much to yourself. Think, but do not let your thoughts pass your lips. The habit of speaking your secrets aloud, even to yourself, is a bad one. Quit it."

"Thanks. I have no doubt but you are right. Still, no other living being could have entered this room without my knowledge."

"That may be true, but even walls have ears. There was a time when I had the habit of muttering to myself, but I learned my lesson, and it cost me dear. 'Let not thy right hand know what thy left hand doeth.'"

"A quotation from such a source sounds queer from your lips, my dear——"

"Stop!" commanded the stranger, with suddenly outflung hand. "Be careful! Remember my name is Hector King."

"My dear Mr. King," Morgan pursued, as if he had not been interrupted. "Now, if there were in print any book whose author was Satan himself, it might be that you——"

"That will do! Don't be too free with me! You were expecting me?"

"Not exactly; still, I fancied you might call."

"I am here. So, despite your efforts, despite our schemes, Frank Merriwell was chosen captain of the eleven?"

"Yes, confound him!" said Dade, forgetting his smile for a moment.

"He is powerful here. I told you—I warned you it would be a hard struggle to drag him down. But it must be done!"

"Don't worry; I'll yet succeed—with your aid, my dear—Mr. King."

"With my aid; you'll need it. But how is it that you were given an opportunity to play on the first eleven?"

"Then you know about that?"

"I know every move that is made."

"Then perhaps you can answer your own question. How did it happen that I was taken from the scrub and placed on the regular team?"

"You do not know?"

"No. Frank Merriwell brought over three of his friends from the scrub, but I was taken onto the regulars at the same time."

"Well, it is certain he had no hand in your transfer."

"On the contrary, everything seems to indicate that he did."

"It is not possible!"

"So I thought myself."

"It can't be true!"

"I have asked the coach, and he declares that I was taken onto the regulars at Merriwell's particular request. More than that, he says that Merriwell would

not agree to give the sophomore, Jack Ready, a chance at center unless I was placed on the end of the line opposite Bart Hodge. You are clever in fathoming motives, my dear—Mr. King; fathom that.”

Hector King began to pace the floor, his dark face wearing a singular expression. All at once he paused, turning sharply and fixing his penetrating, changing eyes on Dade.

“I see it!” he declared, pointing a long finger straight at the waiting freshman’s eyes. “I read him!”

“Well?” questioned Morgan, calmly sitting down.

“He recognized your ability, he saw that you were qualified to play on the eleven.”

“Well?” Dade repeated.

“He has pledged himself to give every candidate a fair show.”

“Yes.”

“He knew that, playing on the scrub, you were destined to make a strong showing against the regulars. It was you who were mainly instrumental in causing the regulars to show up so poorly against the scrub in the first half of the practise game to-day.”

“But he would not——”

“Wait! This Merriwell is shrewd. He saw where the strength of the scrub lay, and it was his first day as captain of the regulars. It was absolutely necessary for him to make a good showing. Every move of his was a crafty one. He weakened the scrub by his great

change, and he strengthened the first eleven. He used you as his instrument in bringing this about; that's all. You helped him do what he wished to do."

"Perhaps that is right."

"Of course it is right. There is no doubt of it."

"But am I not on the 'Varsity eleven?"

"You are on it now, but you'll not remain there. I see his plan. He has still other friends on the scrub. One week from Saturday last Yale plays Columbia, but you will not play on the Yale team."

Morgan leaped to his feet.

"Why not?" he demanded.

"Because it is not Merriwell's policy to play you. You will help make the team strong in practise, but, at the last moment, he will fill your place with another—one of his friends."

"By heavens! I believe you are right!"

"Ha! ha!" laughed King hollowly, "I know I am right. Why, you are permitting this fellow to use you as a tool, and he is laughing to himself over your blindness."

"Laughing, is he!" grated Morgan furiously. "Well, I'll give him something to laugh about!"

"How? What can you do?"

"Tell me—tell me what to do! I can't afford to lose my place on the eleven by playing poorly to spoil his plans."

"That's true; he knows it. Oh, yes, he's clever! But we'll checkmate him."

There came a sudden sharp knock on the door.

"A caller!" whispered King. "I must not be seen here!"

"Behind those curtains," whispered Dade, pointing to some portières, and the man disappeared from view with the silence of a phantom.

"Come in," Morgan called, when he had settled himself in a comfortable position with his book on his lap.

The door opened and Roland Packard strode into the room.

"Good evening, Mr. Packard," greeted the freshman, looking up with that winning smile. "This is a surprise."

He arose and offered Roland a chair with the utmost courtesy.

"Look here, Morgan," growled the visitor, whose flushed face and vile-smelling breath denoted that he had been drinking heavily, "I didn't take you for a soft mark!"

"I hope I am not a soft mark," said Dade, as he again sat down, Packard having accepted the chair.

"It looks like it—by the gods of war! it looks like it!" Roland asserted.

"In what way?" coolly inquired Morgan.

"Why, you are like all the others; you're ready to pick up with Merriwell at the first opportunity."

"I fail to see why you should think anything of the sort."

"Why, hang it, man! didn't you jump at the chance to get onto the eleven with him?"

"Not at all. I have been working to make the eleven ever since college opened. It was my object before I came to Yale. I have played football since my first year at high school, and, away back in those early days, my one hope was to some day win a place on a college team. I was confident that I'd make the Yale team sooner or later. I fail to see how Frank Merriwell has anything to do with it."

Packard's lips curled in a sneer.

"You have pretended to hate Merriwell, haven't you?"

"You know very well that I do not love him."

"That's it; you pretended to hate him, but now you say you do not love him. You are softening down."

"You never made a bigger mistake, Mr. Packard," asserted Morgan, still smiling serenely.

"Well, I know how it looks. You jumped at the chance when he took you from the scrub and gave you a place in the rush-line of the 'Varsity team."

"Why shouldn't I? It's just what I've been working for."

"But, Merriwell did it!" persisted Roland.

"Mr. Merriwell did not personally request me to play with the regular team."

"Nor did he personally request any one else to do so, but he has boasted that he'd run the eleven to please himself, and would play such men on it as he liked. He told the head coach to try you. It's that way always. He gets round his enemies by his slick ways, and turns them into friends. He has performed the same trick with one after another of them. He did it with the only powerful enemy he ever had in Yale, Buck Badger.

"Badger seemed to hate Merriwell with a fierce and undying hatred. He was an athlete and he had influence. Merriwell saw it, and he began working his hoodwinking tricks on Badger. He made the fool believe he was indebted to Merriwell for many favors, and, little by little, he tied up Buck's hands till he could not use them. Then Badger was disarmed, and he lost power and influence. Instead of becoming an independent leader, he became a Merriwell henchman, a tool, a groveling, a nothing! He performed brilliant athletic feats, but Merriwell was his leader, and Merriwell received the glory. It is thus that Merriwell has built up his reputation since entering college; he has taken to himself the credit for everything done by the poor fools he has made to serve his purposes. And you—you are falling into the same trap!"

"No!" cried Dade, with sudden fire.

"Yes!" insisted the medical student. "You may not see it, but I do. He is captain of the eleven. Last year Yale failed to maintain her old-time position on the gridiron through incompetent management. This year it is almost certain she will win back her lost prestige, and Frank Merriwell will receive the glory. Are you going to play into his hands by helping him do this?"

"Do you think I'm going to ruin my own chance of ever getting a show on the eleven by throwing up now? I'm not built that way, Mr. Packard."

"Then you will play into that fellow's hands? I didn't think it of you! That is, I didn't think it at first; but I might have known you were like all the others!"

Packard sprang up, with a furious gesture, and Morgan rose quickly, facing the medical student across the table. The freshman was cool and collected.

"Don't be hasty, Mr. Packard," he advised. "Let's talk this matter over a little."

"What's the use of talking!" cried Roland. "He's got you! You are on the eleven now, and you'll be bowing and scraping to him pretty soon. Why, it won't be long before you'll be trying to get into his flock! Let him wipe his feet on you, if you want to! You're just what I called you—a soft mark!"

Morgan went round the table at a bound and placed himself between Packard and the door. His eyes were

flashing and there was something in his manner that gave Roland a queer feeling of surprise. The smile had vanished, and Dade was grim and stern.

"Sit down!" he commanded, pointing to the chair from which Packard had risen.

Roland hesitated.

"Why should I?" he asked.

"Because I say so! Sit down!"

The medical student felt like seizing Morgan by the collar and hurling him aside, but he did nothing of the sort. Instead, he was seized by a sudden, strange conviction that he was in the presence of his master.

"All right," he said, forcing a broken laugh. "I'm in no great hurry."

And he sat down!

Dade walked over slowly and resumed his position at the opposite side of the table, but he did not take a chair.

"Packard," he said, "you have made some talk to me that I do not like. I know I'm nothing but a freshman, but we're alone here in this room, man to man, and, were you any one else on earth, I'd not let you go till I had given you a blazing good thrashing. As it is, I shall overlook your words this time, and I do so because I am convinced of your real and undying hatred of Frank Merriwell."

"You might have been convinced of that long ago," said Roland.

"Being satisfied," Dade pursued, as if the visitor had not spoken, "I'm willing to make some talk to you. As I told you, I'm not a fool enough to ruin my own chances, now that I'm on the eleven. Frank Merriwell may have taken me on to use me as his tool, but he'll find he has made a big blunder. I shall hold my place—if I can. But the very fact that I am on the eleven, of which he is captain, makes it even easier for me to strike him. I don't know at the present time just how I'll work the trick, but my plans will develop later."

"You might do him up in a scrimmage!" hissed Packard. "It would not be so hard. A knife thrust—who could tell who did it?"

"Would you do a thing like that?"

"Give me a chance! That's all I ask!"

"But I'm known as his enemy, and it would be easy to trace the thing to me—to pin it onto me."

"I'm known as his enemy, too; but give me a chance. If I were on the eleven, if I played the position my Sunday-school brother is filling, I'd find an opportunity in the very first game."

"But a knife—that's too dangerous."

"Oh, there are other things! I've seen chances in football scrimmages where one man could break the neck of another in the slickest way. All that's necessary is to know how to do the trick and to have the nerve."

"Do you know how?"

"Do I? Well, I'm a medical student, and I've made a special study of such tricks. I know just how to get an arm about a man's neck, a hand under his chin, give a twist and a wrench—and it's done! Hundreds of such chances occur in football-games. Who could say it was done intentionally?"

Dade Morgan's eyes were dancing with a strange light.

"You are a man who hates after my own heart!" he cried. "No knife business; but this other is all right."

"It's all right, but I have no chance to work it. You have, Morgan! Will you do it?"

"I don't know how."

"I'll teach you! Will you do it?"

"Wait? To-morrow I will give you your answer. Packard, I wish you were on the eleven."

"But I'm not."

"I once mistook your brother for you."

"Many do that."

"Give me time to think of this matter. Good night."

It was a dismissal. From another freshman Packard would not have taken such a thing; but he had felt Morgan's strange power to command, and he rose quietly, moving toward the door.

"Don't get squeamish thinking of it," he entreated.

"If I made some rough talk about your being a soft mark, forget it. I was pretty hot when I came in. Won't you come out with me and have a drink?"

"Not to-night, thank you. Haven't the time to spare. Take one for me. Good night."

Packard went out, and Dade closed and locked the door behind him. When he turned about, Hector King was sitting beside the table on which burned the student's lamp.

CHAPTER XIII.

READY FOR THE DEED.

“An ally worth having,” said King, “yet one who should be directed and governed. His fierce hatred might lead him to make false steps.”

“You heard all?”

“Every word.”

“What do you think?”

“Many things. He spoke of a brother who is on the eleven.”

“Yes, his twin brother.”

“They look alike?”

“So much alike that it is sometimes almost impossible to tell one from the other. Besides that, they have a trick of dressing alike. People who know them intimately are often deceived.”

“Their names?”

“This one is Roland, the other is Oliver.”

“Are they alike in other respects besides looks?”

“Unfortunately not; they are as dissimilar as two persons can be. Oliver is a goodie.”

“Then he could not easily be influenced to strike Merriwell?”

“No; of his own free will he would not think of doing such a thing. He is one of Merriwell’s admirers.”

King was silent for some moments as if buried in thought, and the young freshman watched him closely. When the man looked up, his shifty eyes were contracted till they seemed strange and fierce and inhuman.

"I have not planned to kill Merriwell at a single stroke," he said, his voice awakening queer echoes in the room; "but everything seems leading to that."

Despite himself, Dade paled somewhat. For all that he had seemed so cool about it when Packard was talking of breaking the neck of Frank Merriwell, Morgan had not fancied such a thing would be carried out. Now, however, he understood the full seriousness of it.

"But it was your plan to injure Merriwell—to drag him down step by step and little by little," he hurriedly said.

"I know," nodded the strange visitor; "but he is mounting steadily upward. At one stroke, in the midst of his glory, he may be left dead on the football-field. Ha! ha! That blow would tell—that would wring the heart I long to crush!"

Dade shrugged his shoulders.

"It can be done without your hand appearing in it," King asserted. "In fact, you need have nothing to do with it."

The freshman breathed easier.

"How can you bring it about?" he asked, curious to

know the scheming of this strange man to whom he seemed somehow attached.

"Through the brothers."

"How?"

"I know how. I must see this Oliver. I must discover a way of distinguishing one from the other."

"You'll make a serious mistake if you try to influence him to injure Merriwell."

King arose, drawing his tall figure erect.

"I'll make no mistake," he declared. "I have resolved upon this plan. Many serious accidents happen on the football-field. This will seem to be one of them; but in truth one of the Packards shall kill Frank Merriwell the day that Yale plays Columbia!"

* * * * *

Little did Frank Merriwell dream of the black plot against his life. His heart was in the work of putting the best possible team on the field for Yale, and day after day he trained and worked with the men on the field.

The coaches were enthusiastic over the remarkable progress Yale was making thus early in the season. Some were inclined to attribute it to Mike Murphy's new policy of pulling the heavy men back from the line; but more declared that the rapid advancement came through the spirit and vim which Merriwell had

infused into the eleven. Besides, there were still two heavy men in the line, the guards, Beckwith and Browning.

For once in his life, Browning worked like a slave. He was determined to keep his flesh down, though he feared it might be a hard task now that he was compelled to lay aside his pipe. Many a time, having a phenomenal appetite, he left the training-table feeling, as he expressed it, "as empty as a bass drum." Always the possessor of gigantic strength, this severe and persistent work seemed to make him stronger and more formidable than ever. In response to Merry's words of encouragement he would say:

"I wouldn't do it for any other two-legged man on earth, but you're captain of the Yale team, and you must come out on top of the heap."

Another man of wonderful strength on the team was Starbright, the young Hercules half-back. Starbright was even lighter on his feet than Browning, could kick better, and had just as much bulldog grit.

Not a few had prophesied that the young Andover man could not retain the position that had been given him, having such rivals as Deerfield, Hazleton, and Pinkney; but no practise game passed that the fair-haired giant did not make his hold stronger by some piece of work that won the admiration of the old-timers.

At quarter Oliver Packard demonstrated his fitness

by handling the ball with cleverness, taking it surely from the center, passing it swiftly and accurately, and being constantly alive to the movements of the work cut out for the team.

Bingham, the big full-back, could kick and run handsomely and capture a long punt in fine style. It was arranged that he should divide the most of the kicking with Merry.

The two tackles were Bertrand Defarge and Berlin Carson. Defarge was no friend of Merriwell's, and, to Bart's annoyance, played next to Hodge on the line. He had tried to make the team before, but never till now had he been given a chance on the first eleven.

Carson, the young Coloradian, surprised even his friends. It had been his object to make the nine, but, encouraged by Frank, he had tried for the eleven, and now he was to have a show thus early in the season.

In many respects, the ends seemed alike. They were Hodge and Morgan, both dark, compact, supple, and fierce as untamed tigers. And they hated each other with a hatred that was unforgiving and undying. Indeed, Hodge had threatened to withdraw from the team immediately if Morgan was not dropped, and it was only through expostulations and urgings that Merry induced Bart to remain.

"You'll be sorry for it, Merriwell," Hodge grimly declared. "See if I'm not right. That fellow is a

scoundrel, and his place is in the penitentiary, instead of on the Yale football-team."

"But you must acknowledge that he fills the position handsomely," said Frank.

"In practise, perhaps; but he's not to be trusted. Mark what I say. He hates you, and he'd do anything to injure you."

"At the same time, I believe he will fight like a fiend to aid the team in winning."

"Perhaps he may; but I'm not sure of that. The first game will tell. He has plotted against you, and I have no idea he's given up his underhand tricks."

"He has failed in every move made against me, and he'll fail in the future."

* * * * *

It was the morning of the day before the Yale game with Columbia. In an hour the 'Varsity eleven would take the train for New York. In his room Oliver Packard was packing a dress-suit case and preparing to start.

Without warning, the door opened and a tall, dark man entered with noiseless step.

"I beg your pardon," said the stranger, and his hollow voice caused Oliver to start and whirl about.

"Hello!" exclaimed the young medical student. "Who are you? What are you doing here?"

"I believe your name is Oliver Packard?" said the

stranger. Somehow, the young medic was seized by a sensation of danger.

"That's my name, sir," he answered stiffly.

"Ah, yes; I have some business with you."

"Then you'll have to be brief about it, for I can spare but a very few moments. Your name is——"

"It is concerning your mother," the visitor murmured.

Packard stiffened.

"My mother!" he exclaimed, his cheeks flushing.

"Why should you——"

"Softly, softly," said the man. "It is not serious."

Oliver showed instant alarm.

"Is mother ill?" he questioned. "Who are you? How does it happen you come to me about her?"

His suspicions were fully alive.

"It is possible," said the man, "that your mother may have told you of an uncle who was supposed to have died in India."

"Yes, I have heard her speak of such a brother. Are you—you cannot be that brother—my uncle?"

"Sit down," directed the stranger, with a gentle yet commanding wave of one hand toward a chair beside a table. "It will take but a few moments for me to explain."

Although he felt like refusing to be seated, something seemed to draw Oliver to that chair, and he sank upon it. The stranger sat down on the opposite

side of the table, fixing his remarkable eyes fairly on those of the student.

"Ah, yes!" he said, his hollow voice seeming to come from a distance. "You have but a slight resemblance to your mother."

"Remember my time is limited," said Oliver impatiently. "I must catch a train."

"Look straight at me that I may better study your features," came placidly, almost soothingly from the man. "Your mother is not ill, but she requested me to bring you a message. Don't take your eyes away. She fears you are working too hard. She says that you must have plenty of rest. I can see that you are tired now."

Oliver Packard felt a strange sensation creeping over him, and now he could not take his eyes from those remarkable orbs even if he so desired. Something held him staring thus, while he felt that a part of himself was passing from his body. His will was slipping from him and being replaced by that of another.

Then it was that he sought to throw off the spell that was coming upon him, but those eyes held him like bands of iron. He could look into them and see strange shadow-figures like flitting ghosts, and he was fascinated as the bird is fascinated by the eyes of a serpent. Still that hollow, voice, seeming to come from far away, sounded in his ears:

"You shall have the rest that you greatly need. It

will do your body and soul good. It will be sweet and soothing. You must fall into gentle slumber, from which you will awaken when I bid you. So close your eyes and sleep—sleep—sleep.”

The eyes of the student drooped and closed at the command of the mysterious visitor, and the last word sounded faint as the whisper of a summer breeze amid green leaves.

The stranger leaned across the table and made some mysterious passes before the face of the youth, a low, terrible laugh sounding from his lips.

He then rose from the chair, lifted Oliver in his arms, bore him into the adjoining bedroom, and placed him on the bed. When this was done, he advanced to the door that opened into the passage, flung it wide, and said:

“It is done. Come in.”

Roland Packard came in immediately.

“Where is he?” he asked, looking around. The man motioned toward the other room, and Roland hastened in and stood beside the bed on which his twin brother lay.

The mysterious stranger came and stood near. Roland wheeled about, fiercely snarling:

“If you have hurt him, I’ll have your heart.”

“He is unharmed,” assured the man; “but he will sleep there till I awaken him. When you leave this room and lock the door, he will be safe. No one will

disturb him, for it is supposed that both of you will be in New York during the game. I have given you your opportunity to finish Frank Merriwell. You will find a chance during the game to break his neck, and no one can ever dream it was anything but an accident. Get into your brother's clothes and hasten to the station. Be on your guard not to betray yourself in any way."

"Trust me," said Roland. "I have played Oliver before."

"Are you sure your nerve will not fail you when the time comes?" demanded the stranger.

"I know it will not," declared Roland. "Frank Merriwell is as good as finished."

"Then," said the stranger, striding softly to the door, "farewell till the deed is done."

He was gone, and Roland Packard was left to carry out the dastardly plot.

CHAPTER XIV.

“THE DEED IS DONE!”

Yale had sent a great crowd of rooters to New York, for the result of the contest between these two teams the previous year had awakened all the pride of Old Eli. The score must be wiped out, and Yale must regain her lost prestige.

Up Fifth Avenue rolled a tally-ho coach bearing a merry party of students and girls, all wearing the Yale blue. On the coach were Elsie Bellwood and Inza Burrage, already throbbing with the wild thrill of the occasion, their faces flushed, their eyes bright. Harry Rattleton was with them, for he had turned up in time to take in this game, and, try as he might to talk straight, he seemed to get his sentences twisted worse than usual.

“It’s a glorious eel for Old Dayli,” he chattered; “I mean a glorious day for Old Eli! We’ll stug without a wingall—no, win without a struggle! Solumbia will be in the coop—rats! Columbia will be in the soup!”

“Let it go!” laughed Inza. “Yale will put Columbia in a coop to-day.”

“What if Yale should lose!” breathed Elsie.

“Lose!” cried the dark-eyed girl. “With Frank Merriwell captain of the team! Impossible!”

“But he has enemies on the team.”

"Morgan and Defarge—yes. But Frank says those men will sacrifice their limbs, their very lives, if necessary, to win for Yale; and when Frank says a thing like that, he knows what he's talking about. Yale can't lose to-day!"

"That's right!" cried the delighted students. "Hurrah for Inza Burrage and Yale!"

The coach was able to obtain a splendid position from which the party it bore could witness the game and all the exciting events of the great day.

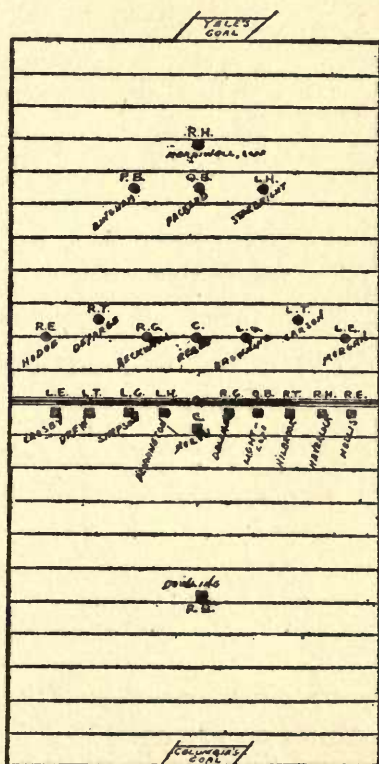
The crowd was a picture for the eye. Everywhere were flags and streamers, chrysanthemums and violets, bright neckties and sunshades, flashing the rival colors back in an ever-moving kaleidoscope.

In the midst of the great crowd of spectators, having obtained a particular vantage-point, was a dark-faced man with powerful, piercing eyes. His hollow-cheeked face was calm and tranquil, but it seemed that there was upon it a look of satisfaction and anticipated triumph.

Suddenly a great roar of welcome went up from students and spectators. Out onto the field rushed two squads of shaggy-headed, stocky-looking lads. A moment later they were indulging in warming-up practise, unmindful of the thunders of greeting from the mass of humanity round the field.

Things moved swiftly now. A little group drew aside, a coin was flipped, and the choice fell to Yale.

A sudden lull fell on the crowd as the two teams lined up for the kick-off. This was the line-up of both elevens:



There was a sudden wild burst of sound, for Columbia's center had driven the pigskin down the field against the wind. The ball wiggled and squirmed along in the teeth of the breeze and fell into the hands of Packard, Yale's quarter-back. Without attempting

to return the kick, Packard tried to run, but he was downed by Crosby before he had made five yards.

Both the Yale and Columbia stands burst into a roar, but the play was not allowed, for Columbia's line had been off-side on the kick-off, so the ball was given to North for another try.

Again Columbia's big center kicked the yellow egg with the full strength of his powerful leg, but again the wind seemed to catch and destroy the momentum of the ball; for a second time Packard caught it on Yale's twenty-five-yard line, and was downed in his tracks, this time by Delome, the big guard.

Then the two lines swung into action. Merriwell's very first play was to give the ball to the young freshman giant, Starbright, for a plunge against Columbia's right tackle.

Starbright hit the line like a battering-ram, and fairly plowed through it for seven yards, which set the Yale rooters wild.

Under ordinary circumstances, a variation of this would have followed the first down; but Merry seemed satisfied with Starbright's showing, and another mass play was tried, but without gain.

Then Defarge was called back of the line, apparently for some new interference formation. However, a surprise play was attempted, for Defarge tried a short kick.

This time Columbia was on her mettle, and it seemed that her entire line was upon Yale's tackle before he could kick. Simpson plunged at Defarge and partly blocked the kick.

Beckwith was well in the play, and, despite his size, showed remarkable agility, recovering the ball on Columbia's fifty-yard line, thus saving it for Yale.

It was fancied then that Merriwell would not immediately give Defarge another chance. The Chickering crowd declared that Defarge's failure would give Merriwell an excuse to put in a substitute as soon as it could be done. But Frank, realizing that this was only a practise game, decided to try some of the new plays he had invented, and test their usefulness. For this reason he had resorted to the trick kick by Defarge.

He now signaled for a kick from Bingham, and the big full-back sent the ball sailing down the field.

Columbia secured the leather on her twenty-yard line, and lined up for her first assault on the Yale defense. The rooters for the blue-and-white opened with a wild burst of cheering to give the men courage and vim.

A moment of hesitation, a sudden snap of the ball, a pass, and then Haverlock was sent crashing against Yale's left guard, which position was thought to be weak.

Browning met the brunt of this furious assault, and

he stood like a firmly rooted tree. Not a foot could the blue-and-white make, and so the ball went down.

Merriwell's new men were being tried one after another, and they were showing up in a manner to please the crowd.

Columbia's next move was to give the ball to Pennington for a try at her opponent's left end. The interference was of a high order. Hodge was pocketed, and Pennington seemed to go right through De-farge for a gain of twelve yards before he was brought violently to the ground by Merriwell.

Then cheers for Pennington and Merriwell floated from opposite sides of the field, and the colors of both teams waved wildly.

Captain Light seemed still to have faith in Haverlock, for twice in swift succession was he sent against Yale's right tackle, and both times he was hustled back without a gain. Dade Morgan played a prominent part in breaking up the Columbia interference, but thus far he had been given no opportunity to particularly distinguish himself.

With two downs against her, Columbia attempted a mass play against the center, believing that such swift and persistent hammering on one point would have its effect. The ball was passed to Simpson, and he went at Yale's left guard in a crashing tackle play.

Again Browning met the brunt of this fierce assault, again Dade Morgan dived into Columbia's formation

as if he were three or four rushers combined in one, and again the ball went down without advancing. Columbia had failed to make the necessary gain and the ball was given to Yale close to Columbia's thirty-yard line.

Again Merriwell gave Starbright a chance to see what he could do, and twice he plunged into Columbia's left tackle, making slight gains.

This, however, was not entirely satisfactory, and the wind was too tempting not to take advantage of it, so Bingham was once more called upon for a kick. With the kick, both Hodge and Morgan went leaping down the field under the ball, but the wind was so strong that it was carried beyond them and over Columbia's line. Haverlock dropped on it, and the ball was Columbia's.

Now the blue-and-white, despite the disadvantage of having a strong wind to go against, attempted a kick. Dowling smashed the leather furiously, and it went twisting and writhing along like a serpent.

Packard got under it, but the twisting motion deceived him, and he fumbled the catch, so that North secured the ball on Yale's forty-yard line.

Although all the fighting had been in Columbia's territory, Yale was not doing the work expected of her, and Merriwell's enemies found the opportunity for criticism and sneering.

Pennington charged like a mad bull at Beckwith, but

Yale's right guard stood firm as Browning had stood and no gain was made. On a second trial, Pennington hit Yale's center fair and hard, making three yards. Simpson quickly added four yards to this, and then the ball went to Dowling, who was literally hurled through a formation play for four more yards.

These gains were enough to set the rooters for the blue-and-white wild, and they cheered madly. Dowling's following attempt, however, was blocked and held, and there the gains came to an end. Columbia's fiercest efforts failed to secure the required distance, and the dark blue took the ball again.

"What's the matter with Merriwell?" was the question. "He has the wind with him; why doesn't he do some kicking?"

"If Columbia can do this kind of work against the wind, what will she do when she has the wind in her favor?"

Still Frank persisted in his policy of giving the new men trials, and the tide of battle ebbed and flowed without anything sensational happening till, on a double pass, Haverlock got round Yale's right end, dodged Beckwith, escaped Merriwell's hand by an inch, and went tearing toward the Yale goal-line with a clear field ahead of him.

Frank might have run Haverlock down, but Hilbrook shouldered him at just the right moment, and the great throng of people went wild as Columbia's

half-back sped on, both teams stringing out behind him.

“It’s a touch-down for Columbia!” shrieked hundreds of voices.

Then a shaggy-headed, fair-haired giant came out of the midst of a knot of men and cut down on Haverlock at an angle, covering ground in flying leaps that seemed perfectly marvelous.

“Starbright!” was the cry. “Starbright! Starbright!”

“He can’t catch him!”

“He’ll do it! Look! he’s gaining!”

Yale’s only hope of preventing a touch-down rested on the Andover giant, and, like a bounding lion, Dick Starbright pounced on Haverlock and crushed him to earth exactly five yards from Yale’s line.

Although thus balked, Columbia had the scent of victory in her nostrils, and she was determined to do or die. Pennington was driven at Yale’s line like a battering-ram.

Right there Yale displayed her old-time staying qualities in such an emergency, and Pennington might as well have charged the granite foundations of Vanderbilt Hall. Twice he went hammering against Yale’s center, and twice he was held without making an inch.

The Yale men were singing, and that song floated over the field to the ears of the young gladiators who

were battling for her glory. Not a man was there among them all but would have died right there at that moment to hold the enemy in check!

Some have wondered that college men displayed such courage in the war with Spain, for many college youths there were who went to the front and covered themselves with glory in battle. A few were with the Rough Riders, some who had put heart and soul into many a football battle, and no desperado from the mountains and plains outdid them in coolness, heroism, and the ability to endure hardships. On the gridiron they had learned their lessons well, such lessons as make men and soldiers of the highest type.

Furious because of her failures, Columbia again shot Dowling out of a revolving formation; but Yale tore the interference to pieces and scattered it like chaff, holding the enemy for the third time.

The ball was lost, and with it went Columbia's hope of scoring then.

Now Frank tried a masked play that fooled Columbia completely. Half the opposing men thought Merriwell had the ball, but he had passed it under cover so skilfully and swiftly that Carson was permitted to break through and make twenty yards while Frank was hurled to the ground. Pennington alone discovered the trick in time to tackle Berlin, and prevent a run that would have been a record-breaker.

Back, back, back Yale hammered the enemy, who

fought stubbornly for every foot of ground, but could not stop the determined onslaught till the ball was again near the center of the field.

Then a fumble by Packard permitted Delome to come through and fall on the leather.

Columbia had it again, but all her great advantage had been lost. Sensations were not at an end, however, for, with the second attempt, Hilbrook came through Beckwith and made a run of nearly twenty yards.

This time interference could not stop Merriwell, who flung himself like a tiger upon Columbia's right tackle, slapping him to the ground in a twinkling.

Apparently Packard leaped at the same time, and he came down fairly on Merriwell's back, his arms seeming to twine by accident about Frank's neck.

Others fell upon them in a writhing heap. There was a pause, and the mound of human beings untangled and arose.

All but one. Stretched motionless on the ground lay Frank Merriwell!

At a certain point in the great throng of spectators men and women were startled and astonished by the uprising of a tall, dark-faced man with terrible eyes, who exclaimed in a voice of malignant satisfaction and triumph:

“The deed is done!”

CHAPTER XV.

MYSTERY OF THE BROTHERS.

“Merriwell’s hurt!”

The cry came from hundreds of lips.

For, notwithstanding the peculiar words which fell from the lips of the strange man with the dark face, no one fancied for a moment that he had any connection with the injury which had befallen Frank Merriwell, which seemed no more than a mere accident of the gridiron.

But was Merriwell severely injured? He was seen to move as others bent over him. Hands lifted him, and he was placed on his feet. Then he pushed his supporters off and stood erect by himself.

It seemed that every Yale man within that enclosure went wild, and the mighty throng took up the roaring cheer for Merriwell.

The tall man muttered something beneath his breath, his aspect being that of rage; but no one paid the slightest heed to him, for all were watching Merriwell now.

“He’s all right!” roared the crowd.

Frank had indicated that he was in condition to continue playing. So the game was resumed, with Merry still in command.

This event seemed to mark the turn of the tide, for now Yale played football in earnest. Frank had tried his timber and knew what it was worth. He had experimented to his satisfaction, and now he went into the game to win.

The whistle blew for the end of the first half, just one second before Dade Morgan went over Columbia's line for a touch-down. Thus Morgan was robbed of the credit of making this touch-down for Yale.

What would happen in the second half?

Hundreds were asking this question. It must be confessed that the Yale crowd was disappointed by the failure of its team to score in the first half with the wind favorable, though the finish of the half had been sensational enough, the "sons of Old Eli" showing their superiority over their opponents.

And Columbia men were claiming that, having held Yale, such play against the wind, the blue-and-white would make things howl when the wind was favorable. Nevertheless, old-timers, men who knew the game, realized that Yale had been experimenting at the outset.

At certain points, there had been great excitement on the coach that had brought Elsie and Inza to the field. Harry Rattleton nearly lost his breath when Haverlock made the sensational run that so nearly resulted in a touch-down run for Columbia, and he yelled himself hoarse for Starbright on witnessing the fresh-

man half-back's flying-tackle that brought Haverlock to the ground.

When Frank lay motionless on the ground after others had risen, Elsie uttered a sobbing cry, pressing her hands together, her face turning white as snow. Inza sat motionless, her lips compressed, her eyes fixed on that prostrate figure.

"Is he killed?" gasped Elsie.

"No!" said Inza. "He was not born to be killed like that!"

When the men came out upon the field for the second half, it was seen that Yale had not substituted a man, while Columbia had two new men in place of her guards, Haskell having taken Delome's place, and Duncan filling Simpson's. Just why these changes had been made no one seemed to know, but it was afterward learned that Simpson had been hurt in his rush against Browning, while Delome was suffering from a peculiar mental trouble known as "scare," which made it difficult for him to remember the signals.

Merriwell kicked off to Dowling, and the latter returned the ball to Packard, who muffed at Yale's forty-yard line, giving North a chance to fall on the ball, which he improved.

Columbia seemed to depend a great deal on Pennington, but his first plunge against Yale's center did

not give him a foot. Drew, however, made four yards by going against Ready in exactly the same manner as Pennington.

But four yards was not the needed gain, and Dowling tried a kick, which Packard captured on Yale's twenty-five-yard line. Bingham was given an opportunity to punt, and he sent the ball out to Pennington at the Columbia forty-five-yard line.

Pennington started with a rush, but was quickly downed by Hodge.

Columbia was eager to take advantage of the wind, so Dowling punted again. Bingham caught the ball at Yale's thirty-yard line, and made an advance of seven yards before he was stopped by Hollis, who was slightly injured, but pluckily kept in the game.

Starbright had done such good work in the first half that he was given another chance, but could not make a gain. Then Frank punted and drove the ball out of bounds at the forty-yard line.

It really seemed that Columbia was going to press Yale hard, and, remembering what had happened the year before, the blue-and-white team played with dash and vim.

Soon, however, the long-expected event happened. Merriwell got the ball on a fumble and seemed to dash across as if to go round Columbia's right end. As he passed Starbright, he cleverly gave the ball to the

big freshman, but kept straight on without the slightest pause or hesitation.

Had this play been attempted from a snap back it might not have succeeded, but two-thirds of the Columbia team were after Merry before they realized that he no longer had possession of the leather. Then, before they could discover where it was, Starbright went through, bowling over Duncan and Drew as if they were children, and away he flew toward the goal.

There was a clean open road to the line, and the big Andover man covered ground in the most marvelous manner. Dowling cut down on him and leaped for a flying-tackle, but miscalculated slightly, so that his fingers barely touched Dick.

On rushed Starbright, while the great multitude rose once more and roared, roared, roared. Nothing could stop Yale's left half-back, who slackened not a fraction till he could fall prone beyond Columbia's line with the ball hugged fast beneath him.

The first touch-down had been made, and the cheering did not subside for some moments. The ball was brought out by Ready, and Frank easily kicked a handsome goal.

Of course, Columbia sympathizers declared the whole play a fluke, but the fact remained that it had been carried out successfully from start to finish, and it was a remarkable piece of quick thinking and quick acting.

As the two teams lined up again, the great crowd of Yale onlookers were singing:

"Oh, poor Columbi-a! Oh, poor Columbi-a!
She picked a gift from off a tree,
It swelled her head, as all may see—
Oh, poor Columbi-a!

CHORUS:

"Oh, hinkey dinkey doodle aye!
Hinkey dinkey day!
We'll have a little practise game
With poor Columbi-a!

"Oh, soft Columbi-a! Oh, soft Columbi-a!
This time, you bet, no gift you'll get,
So what's the use to fume and fret—
Oh, soft Columbi-a!

"Oh, sad Columbi-a! Oh, sad Columbi-a!
It seems a sin to rub it in,
But your rush-line is far too thin—
Oh, sad Columbi-a!"

From this time on the Yale team did not let up for a moment. Merriwell showed his ability as captain by seeming to be everywhere to coach his men, and his style of tearing to pieces the interference of the opponents was most discouraging to Columbia, who began to realize that she was up against "the real thing."

The first half had been exciting enough, but the hopes of the New Yorkers died when, less than five minutes after Starbright's great run and the resulting goal, Yale again advanced the ball to such a position that Hodge was projected out of a formation play and literally shot over Columbia's line.

Again Merriwell kicked a goal.

Columbia was desperate. She fought like mad for a score of some sort, for she realized that her laurels, so proudly cherished, so loudly boasted of last year, were being torn from her at one fell swoop. Was it possible that she could not score? The thought was sickening to her loyal adherents.

That Columbia made a brave fight cannot be denied, but when, near the close of the second half, Dade Morgan found his opportunity and broke through for a twenty-yard dash and a touch-down, she was forced to accept the truth that she was not in her class.

Morgan's touch-down did not result in a goal, as a strong gust of wind carried the ball to one side of the goal posts, but the score was already 17 to 0, and the Yale crowd on the stand was singing:

"Oh, sick Columbi-a! Oh, sick Columbi-a!
Though rather tame, you're not to blame;
You've lots of time to learn the game—
Brace up, Columbia!"

In the last few moments of play Columbia made a rally and forced the ball to within twenty yards of Yale's line. It is probable she might have tried to kick a goal from the field at that distance but for a fumble that lost her the ball and her last opportunity of scoring. So the game ended.

When Merriwell reached his room at the hotel, Yale men came pouring in to shake his hand and congratulate him on the splendid manner in which he had handled the team.

"The only thing I have against you, Merry," declared Rattleton, who was proud as a peacock, "is that you fooled around in the first half the way you did. Why, it was a segular rinch—a regular cinch!"

"My dear boy," smiled Merry, "you must remember that this was merely a practise game. It was my policy to find out just what the different men on the team could do, and I carried it out. In the first half we experimented; in the last half we got down to business."

"Oh, poor Columbi-a!" sang the Yale men laughingly. "But the change will do her good."

Later, Frank found himself alone with Bart Hodge and seized the opportunity to speak of a matter that had troubled him not a little.

"I'm afraid we can't keep Oliver Packard on the team," he said. "This is a private matter, Bart, and I shall depend on you to keep silent concerning it."

"What's the matter with Oliver?" questioned Hodge, his curiosity aroused. "I thought he did well to-day."

"He did. It's not his playing that makes me think we may have to drop him, but it is the influence his disreputable brother has over him."

"Roland Packard is a scoundrel, but I was not aware that he had any influence over Oliver that would interfere with Oll's playing."

"I'm going to tell you something, Bart—something

you must never mention till I give you permission. If it had not been for me, Oliver Packard would not have played with us to-day."

"How was that?"

"Instead," Merry pursued, "Roland, disguised as Oliver, if appearing in Oliver's clothes may be called a disguise, would have been our quarter-back."

Bart was startled.

"How could he work the trick?" he asked. "Surely Oliver would not keep out of sight and let Roland take his place?"

"Not of his own free will; but there is where Roland's power comes in. Yesterday, just as I started for the train, I happened to think of a nose guard which belongs to Oliver, and which I have taken a fancy to. I thought I might want to use it in this game, and, fearing Oliver would not bring it, I ran over to his room. The door was the least bit open, and I entered quickly, without knocking.

"I found Roland Packard hastily getting into a new brown suit of Oliver's. At first I mistook him for Oliver; but he was startled by my sudden entrance and betrayed himself. I knew in a moment that something was wrong, and I saw Oliver's dress-suit case lying open, which told me that Oliver had not left. When I started to look into the next room, however, Roland sprang before me and ordered me to leave. I decided at once to look into that room. Roland would

not step aside, and we grappled. He put up a stiff fight. When I threw him, his head struck against a piece of furniture, and he was stunned. Then I looked into that room, and what do you fancy I found?"

"Oliver?"

"Yes."

"A prisoner?"

"Asleep."

"Asleep?" gasped Bart.

"In a trance. The fellow was hypnotized, just as true as you are living! I tried to awaken him but my first efforts failed. Then I hastily made efforts to bring him out of the trance, commanding him to awaken. That succeeded."

"Great Scott!" panted Hodge.

"At first," Frank went on, "he was bewildered and could not seem to remember anything. He followed me into the other room, where Roland was just sitting up. When Roland saw his brother, he seemed to give in completely, and he was as easy to handle as a whipped cur. I knew there was not time to spare if we would catch the train, and I did not permit Oliver to get out of my sight a moment till I had him well aboard. That's how it happened that he was on the team to-day."

"Roland Packard ought to be shot!" cried Bart.

"What does Oliver say about it?"

"Not a thing," answered Merry. "I told him how

I had found him, and tried to get the whole truth out of him; but he closed up like a clam and would not talk. You know how he tries to shield his miserable brother in everything.”

“Yes, and that brother will ruin him eventually.”

“I fear so. I’ve often wondered that Oliver should take such pains to help Roland out of scrapes and to cover up his deviltry, but now I fancy I understand it all. Roland has him under hypnotic influence, and he is not his own master.”

“There is no doubt but you have discovered the truth at last,” agreed Bart.

But little did either of them know, at that moment, how far Frank was from the truth.

There was a brisk rap at the door.

“Come in,” said Frank, and a messenger boy appeared, carrying a little envelope, dainty and perfumed, which he handed to Merry.

“Answer,” said the boy abruptly.

Frank opened the envelope with thumping heart. It was an invitation to accompany a party of young people on a yachting trip, Frank to be the “guest of honor.”

Merry hastily wrote an answer accepting the invitation and gave it to the boy.

“Yes, I’ll be there,” said Frank.

CHAPTER XVI.

A MERRY PARTY.

A bright sky, a rippling sea, a comfortable boat, a gay and happy party of young people. What element could be added to make pleasure perfect? If anything, it was the fact, important to this party at least, that Yale had just won on the gridiron against Columbia.

As the *Belle of the Bay* plowed through the shining waters, sending up a towering cloud of smoke from her funnel, a quartet composed of Jack Ready, Bruce Browning, Berlin Carson, and Bert Dashleigh, gave expression to the general joy by singing triumphant college songs.

The little steamer, chartered for the purpose, was conveying a party of Merriwell's friends and acquaintances on a half-holiday trip down the harbor.

Merriwell was the center of interest and admiration, as well as the spirit of the company.

Inza Burrage and Elsie Bellwood were of the party, adding to its life and vivacity. Rosalind Thornton, Dick Starbright's sweetheart, was there, too, witty, smiling, and attractive.

Starbright was gaily talking to Rosalind and two other girls, Ethel Throckmorton and Lucile Hayden. Mrs. Virgil Throckmorton, Rosalind's aunt, was also aboard, chaperoning the girls. Mrs. Throckmorton

was a large and comfortable-looking woman with a Grand Duchess air, and Ethel partook somewhat of her mother's stiffness and dignity. As for Lucile Hayden, she was a languid, nonathletic girl, who was always declaring that everything was "just lovely."

Bert Dashleigh had appeared to be somewhat smitten with Lucile's charms, but Jack Ready chanced to be first at her side when the singing ended.

"That singing was just lovely!" she gushed, turning on Ready with a smile.

"Oh, I've got a voice like a martingale at times!" Ready declared, politely lifting his cap. He did not believe she had heard a word of it, for all through the singing he had seen her chattering away like a magpie.

"I'm so fond of athletics, you know!" Lucile gushed, though, as a matter of fact, the most violent exercise she ever took was a swinging in a hammock.

"Yes, it was something of an athletic exhibition!"

"What?"

"The singing."

"Oh, how stupid you men are!" she simpered, giving him a little push. "I was thinking of the football-game. I just adore football, you know."

Ready glanced at Dashleigh, who had gone by in a sulk.

"I like it!" he said.

Ready meant that he liked to monopolize a girl in

this way and cause that girl's admirers to shoot daggers of hate at him.

"Oh, it's just lovely!" she declared, in a feminine flutter of ecstasy. "If I were a man I know I should be on a football-team! They go at each other just like bears."

"And bears are good huggers. I had a bear hug me once, and——"

"Oh, how love—I mean how horrid!"

Lucile actually blushed.

Starbright and Rosalind seemed to have forgotten that there had ever been a shadow between them. Starbright thought her the most perfect little creature in the world. He watched the smiles come and go in her bright eyes, and listened to her musical laughter mingling with the music of the waters. He forgot that she had ever been jealous and changeable in disposition. The big freshman was but seventeen, and he had not seen much of the world or of women. He was very happy that day, for the sky was bright, his sweetheart was by his side, and he had won honor in Yale's first football battle of the season. Even if a freshman, he was already becoming a prominent man at Yale, and though there never was a fellow of his age less conceited, this success and prominence could but please him.

Frank Merriwell and Bart Hodge were sitting on the forward deck with Inza and Elsie, and soon their

friends gravitated round them as naturally as iron filings round a magnet.

Browning ensconced himself in a big chair. Bruce could not enjoy even a pleasure party unless he could perch in a chair that was big and comfortable. He wanted to smoke, and frankly confessed it, but that enjoyment was denied him now that he was in training.

In the party that gathered about Merriwell and his companions were Berlin Carson, Greg Carker, Jim Hooker, with Starbright and Ready and the young lady protégées of Mrs. Virgil Throckmorton.

In shifting the seats to make room, Jack Ready came by apparent chance next to Elsie Bellwood, with whom he at once tried to set up a desperate flirtation, and Bert Dashleigh, who had been hanging about in an angry and disconsolate way, at once saw his opportunity and sat down by Lucile Hayden.

The captain of the steamer climbed along the rail behind one of the company and leaped down to the deck. He had a field-glass with him, whose use he meant to offer to the party.

"A drop like that might hurt you some time!" warned Jim Hooker.

The captain winked as he handed the glass to Merriwell.

"It takes more than a drop to hurt a seafaring man."

"It takes a big glass!" laughed Frank, as he took the field-glass and passed it to Inza.

"I should like to have Dade Morgan look at himself through the big end of this glass!" she declared.

"What for?" Carson mildly inquired.

"So he could see how little he is."

"What's your objection to Mr. Morgan?" Frank asked. "He made a touch-down for Old Eli in his very first game, and he pulled in his school crew last year."

"I don't care if he did!" she blandly asserted, as she fitted the glass to her eyes. "I heard of a New London policeman who once pulled in nearly the whole of Yale University."

Browning exploded.

"Oh, say, that's rich!" cried Dashleigh, who had forgotten his misery of a few moments before.

"Riches are only by comparison," said Carker, who liked to be serious about all things. "And happiness does not come from the possession of great riches. Think of the wealth of Solomon! It didn't bring him happiness."

"I don't think Solomon was half as rich as they say he was!" Ready positively declared.

"Well, why not? He was one of the richest men of his time, wasn't he?"

"I don't believe it. The Bible says of him that 'he slept with his fathers.' Now, if he had been rich he would have had a bed of his own."

Carker sank back with a sigh of despair. Merriwell

nodded to Dashleigh, who slipped away, soon returning with his mandolin.

Then there was an adjournment to the main saloon, where Dashleigh "turned up," and played for the flying feet of merry dancers.

Every one at Yale, however, was not as happy as the merry party on the excursion-steamer.

A lot of malcontents had gathered that afternoon in the perfumed apartments of Rupert Chickering. Among them, in addition to the Chickering set, were Roland Packard, Donald Pike, Dade Morgan, and Bertrand Defarge. All were bitter enemies of Frank Merriwell, and had enlisted under the banner of the Napoleonic freshman, Dade Morgan, in his fight against Yale's popular hero and idol.

"Every time I think of that speech of Jack Diamond and of how Merriwell afterward acted, it makes me sick of the fact that I'm a Yale man!" Don Pike sneered.

"Oh, Merriwell's friends are always blowing about his fairness and all that!" said Gene Skelding, with bitter emphasis. "Yet a more unfair man doesn't live."

"Why, out of the eleven men on the team, six were his close and intimate friends," Pike went on. "There was Hodge, Browning, Carson, Ready, Starbright, and himself."

“And there were, besides,” said Skelding, “Beckwith and Bingham, who are friendly to him.”

“Yes, it’s enough to make any one sick, as you say!” growled Morgan, ignoring the fact that, though he was the bitterest foe Merriwell had at Yale, Frank had given him the position of left end. And this Frank had done, for the good of the team, notwithstanding Morgan’s enmity.

“I think you made a mistake, Morgan, in accepting the place he gave you,” suggested Defarge. “I made the same mistake.”

Bertrand Defarge was an American youth of French extraction, and a fire-eater who disliked Merriwell with the fierce intensity of his whole nature.

“Not a bit of it,” said Morgan.

“But he did it that he might bolster his pretense of fairness.”

“I know that, but the refusal of the offer would have availed nothing, for then he would have heralded the fact everywhere that the place had been offered me, and I refused to take it. See? And I gained a big point by making the fellows admit generally that I was ready to stand up and fight for the glory of Old Eli, even under a man I intensely disliked.”

“I thould like to punch Merriwell’th head for him!” lisped Lew Veazie, puffing at a cigarette and assuming a pugilistic air. “He’s a horwid cweathure!”

This outburst made Tilton Hull choke with rage against the enemy, behind his high collar.

"We fellows will have to try it some day," languidly observed Julian Ives, patting his lovely bang into shape, as he stared at himself in the full-length mirror.

"Don't be bloodthirsty, fellows!" purred Rupert Chickering. "I dislike the creature myself, but I would never think of doing him physical harm."

Donald Pike scornfully sniffed the air and shrugged his broad shoulders.

"Well, I would! I'm only waiting for the opportunity."

There had been good in Donald Pike, but he had permitted his selfishness and narrow hate to drag him downward.

"By going in and helping the football-team to win, you just added to Merriwell's glory and influence," Gene Skelding snarled, speaking direct to Dade Morgan.

"But the team would have won anyway, and I thought it unwise to show narrowness by a refusal."

Morgan knew how to explain and conciliate, as every shrewd general must.

"You saw the game, and you know how it went. We didn't score in the first half, as Merriwell was trying all kinds of hinkey-dinks for practise. Then in the second half, when we saw we would have to work

to keep from being beaten, we went in and put it all over the other eleven. Columbia was simply out-classed. Now, it was not necessary for me to be on the team to bring about a victory. I felt that, in fact, I knew that Yale would win, whether I was on the team or off of it, and I saw that more was to be gained by going on than by staying off. See?"

"Well, I shouldn't let Merriwell use me in that way!" Skelding grumbled. "What sort of show did he give you, anyhow?"

"Don't be stupid, Skelding! He didn't use me; I used him."

"I don't see that we're getting on much in our opposition. He's carrying everything his own way. Our attempt to keep him from being captain of the eleven was a flat failure!"

"One of Merriwell's mottoes, as you know, is that 'a game is never played out until it is ended.' We'll make that motto ours. If we fail, we'll simply strike again, and again! I'm outlining some plans that will trouble him."

"What are they?" angrily.

"See here, Skelding, if you want to be rebellious, you can walk out of this clique!"

Morgan's dark eyes flashed a sudden fire that made Skelding quail. In fact, Morgan had little liking for any of Chickering's set, but he was willing enough to use them all as tools.

“Oh, I didn’t mean anything in particular! I’m just impatient for results, that’s all. You see, I’ve been trying to down Merriwell so long myself that it puts me in a hurry.”

“It ought to teach you patience. One of my plans is what we’ve been talking about. Agitate this matter of Frank Merriwell’s unfairness. Say that he is not fit for the position and has proved it. Say that eight of the eleven men are his friends, six of them his most intimate friends. There were a big lot of fellows wild to get on that team. Every one of them undoubtedly thought himself well qualified. It will be an easy matter to turn those fellows against Merriwell. They are sullen and jealous now, and a jealous man can always be turned against the one whom he thinks has been unfair to him. Tell those fellows that they were shut out through Merriwell’s favoritism. Make each one of them believe that he was the one man needed to make the team all right, and that he would surely have been given a place by any other captain than Merriwell. What more can you want in the way of a weapon?”

“It seems to me that Merriwell threw himself open to just that sort of thrust by choosing so many of his friends,” said Chickering.

“Of course he did; and we must take advantage of it. That’s one thing that made me accept the place offered me. If I had refused and some others had

refused, Merriwell could have claimed that he was forced to put his friends on because some of the best players to whom he had offered places refused to accept them through personal dislike."

"Oh, he'th a swewd wathcal!" lisped Veazie. "Thome of thethe dayth I'll——"

"What?" Don Pike abruptly interrupted.

"I'll walk up in fwont of him with my dog-headed cane, and I'll tell him jutht what I think of him! That'th what I'll do!"

Julian Ives, at a nod from Rupert Chickering, had disappeared for some wine, which he now brought in, arranging it on a table with a number of tiny glasses.

"Would any of you prefer tea?" asked Ollie Lord, trying to look manly by tiptoeing in his high-heeled shoes.

Morgan smiled scornfully to himself, for the fellows sickened him, but the Chickering set had money and a certain standing which money brings, even if they were not top-heavy with brains.

"I think tea ith tho thoothing to the nerveth, don't you know!" explained Veazie, teetering forward, swinging his heavy cane, as if he fancied he might see a vision of Merriwell's face in the wine-glasses and therefore ought to be prepared to hammer it with that wonderful dog's head.

"Bert Dashleigh has gone over to Merriwell," Chickering blandly observed.

"He'th a wetch!" Veazie fiercely declared. "He'th a mitherable wetch!"

"I thought there was some manliness in him," said Ollie Lord, again teetering on his toes and thrusting out his chest to increase his apparent height and size.

"Oh, he'll come back," asserted Morgan. "I neglected to flatter him enough. Merriwell is patting him on the back. But I think he doesn't like Merriwell."

"I don't weally thee how he can, after the thingth we told him!"

"No, of course not, if he believed them."

Veazie looked at Morgan, and wondered if his words held any hidden sarcasm.

"The trouble with Dashleigh is that he is a light-headed, frivolous fellow. I doubt if his friendship will do us much good, after all. He hasn't a dozen ideas in his cranium, beyond having a jolly good time and twanging his mandolin and guitar."

CHAPTER XVII.

"BIG" MEN AND FOOTBALL PRACTISE.

In spite of the machinations of his enemies and the jealousies of would-be rivals, Frank Merriwell was undeniably the most popular man in Yale.

In the football season, the captain of the eleven is the biggest man in Yale; not in the physical sense, but in the popular estimation. Merriwell, without effort on his own part, and opposed by bitter enemies, had been honored with the position of captain of the Yale eleven, simply because he was the man for the place. And it was because the captain of the football-team is the biggest man in Yale, that Dade Morgan had centered his first efforts against Merriwell in an attempt to keep him from being given that position.

It may be said, in the athletic sense, that any member of any team at Yale is a big man. The wearer of a "Y" is in almost every instance a big man, for the honor of wearing this symbol is only conferred upon a man who has played on the 'varsity football or baseball-teams against Harvard or Princeton, has rowed in a 'varsity race against Harvard, or has won at least a point in the athletic meets against the larger universities.

But at Yale, men who are not athletic are not without the sphere of "bigness." The leading literary men

in each class are also "big men"; the editor of the "Lit" coming first, then the editors of the "Record," "News," and "Courant."

Debaters and men of high standing as students, also have their just rewards, and the men who lead their classes in religious work are not slighted.

Besides this, general popularity and that delightful character of the upright, unequivocal hail-fellow-well-met are always recognized, and very often the biggest man in the class has nothing more than this to recommend him to popular favor.

That Frank Merriwell had all the qualities which go to make a popular Yale leader and idol, and that he was now recognized as the biggest of all the big men at Yale was as gall and wormwood to Dade Morgan and many others.

But Morgan was a fellow of infinite patience and resources, and these things did not daunt him or cause him to pause in the least in his efforts to dethrone, degrade, and humiliate Frank. They only spurred him to new exertions and renewed ingenuity. He had come to Yale, as he often told himself, to down Merriwell, and he was resolved to down him.

Merriwell's excursion party returned in time to enable Frank to give his football eleven some hard practise work in the afternoon.

Of course, Dade Morgan and Bertrand Defarge were there, for they were members of the team: and,

of course, Dade Morgan's allies in mischief were also there, including the inane Chickering set, for this practise work gave them splendid opportunities to criticize whatever Merriwell did, which they used to the utmost. The work of the 'varsity and college squads always drew out a crowd of spectators, who cheered wildly every clever play.

There was daily practise in the field of kicking, running, falling on the ball, lining up, interference, and signal work.

Mike Murphy, the famous professional trainer and coach of all teams, was there, talking to Merriwell now and then, and watching the work interestedly. He had seen the work done by Yale in the game against Columbia, and his already high opinion of Merriwell's ability as a captain had been greatly increased. It takes brains to be a good football captain, and Murphy had seen that Merriwell had as clever and quick a brain as any football captain who ever trod the grid-iron.

The rush-line of the Yale team held Jack Ready, center; Beckwith, the big sophomore, right guard; Bruce Browning, left guard; Bertrand Defarge, right tackle; Berlin Carson, left tackle; Bart Hodge, right end; and Dade Morgan, left end. Oliver Packard was quarter-back; Frank Merriwell, right half-back; Dick Starbright, left half-back; and Ralph Bingham, full-back.

One of the prettiest plays of the afternoon came out of the practise of a revolving formation, in which a run was made by Merriwell. Against the regular eleven was opposed a clever eleven of the best material obtainable, strengthened by the addition of two men in the rush-line and extra men behind it.

Ready had snapped the ball back to Packard, who passed it to Merriwell, and, as the Yale interference bored its way into the opposition, fighting fiercely for an advance, Frank squeezed through an opening dexterously made for him by Browning and Ready and shot away with the ball for the goal-line.

The opposing rushers were so involved in breaking the interference that they could not get at Frank quickly, but he found himself, nevertheless, opposed by two men. One of these he hurled from his feet, dodged the other, and, though hotly pursued, carried the ball safely past the goal-posts.

A half-hour of hot work each day was putting the Yale eleven in fair shape to meet Harvard and Princeton in the great games which were already scheduled, and which were absorbing, to a large extent, the thoughts and conversation of Yale men in their rooms and at the fence.

CHAPTER XVIII.

DASHLEIGH'S SERENADERS.

Few things delighted Jack Ready so well as a practical joke. He had flirted with Lucile Hayden merely for the fun of making Bert Dashleigh jealous. Not that he disliked Dashleigh; but Bert was a freshman, and, therefore, the legitimate prey of a sophomore.

But Ready was not vicious in his blows at the freshmen. Though brave enough when there was need, there was nothing of the arrogant bully in his nature.

"Oh, I just want to tame the fellow down a little," Ready had more than once explained to Merriwell. "No; I don't forget that one brief twelve month ago your humble servant was also and likewise a freshman! I'm not likely to forget that, while you keep whispering it in my shell-like ear. But Dashleigh is getting stuck on himself. Perhaps you'll say that Jack Ready, the freshman, was glued to himself in great large areas, and that he hasn't fully succeeded in tearing himself away from that condition up to the present moment."

Ready usually put his hand in his breast pocket, if he wore a buttoned coat, while making a speech like this, and assumed a tragic McCready attitude.

"Whether that is less or more, or more or less, I shall have to go for Mr. Dashleigh, the friend and

roommate of Merriwell's big new protégé. Why, do you know what the fellow is doing? He fancies he is a Paderewski with a mandolin. He is cultivating long hair and a short purse. He inhabits Billie's of evenings and comes home from Chickering's in the early hours of the morning boozing on tea and cake. He is even fancying himself an embryo poet, and is writing warm rhymes after the fashion of our dear English friend, the red-headed poet, Algy Swinburne. Oh, I've got to take him down a few!"

Under the light of a late rising moon, Bert Dashleigh and a group of sympathetic freshmen spirits whom he had organized into a mandolin club, approached the house he supposed to be inhabited by the object of his new affection, Lucile Hayden.

Ready had heard Dashleigh inquiring of a friend the street and number of Miss Hayden's residence, which information Ready volunteered to supply himself, a thing which Dashleigh afterward thought strange, as he believed that Ready was as jealous of him as he had been of the sophomore.

The serenaders lined up in the moonlight under the supposed windows of the fair Lucy. The house was dark; but then the hour was late, and they had no doubt Lucile had retired.

They began to thump their mandolins and to fill the air with the words and music of one of the latest sentimental songs. They told Lucile that she was

fair and true, with a bonny, bonny face and eyes of azure blue. They also harmoniously and musically informed her that if she failed to bestow upon each and all of them her dainty jeweled hand they would go away and treat themselves harshly.

Dashleigh was an honest and clever fellow, and a youth at Yale may do worse than sing sentimental songs to the beauty of a girl who has struck his fancy. Many fellows who are not in Yale serenade the night sky and their charmers at the same time, and are no worse for it.

The house was still dark—ominously dark. Dashleigh began to feel that perhaps all this sweetness was being wasted on unappreciative walls. It really began to seem that the place was not inhabited, or that Lucile and all the other inmates were away from home.

But the serenaders persevered through another verse, this time assuring the upper window that it held the whole of their "conscious thought," not mentioning what held their unconscious thought.

This was so loudly rendered and was sung with such fervency that a stir was heard in the room above, the window was hoisted, and a figure clad in white became dimly visible. They could not doubt that it was Lucile, and Dashleigh's heart grew palpitatingly warm.

A hand was thrust out, and something fluttered to the ground. It looked to be—it was—a bouquet, appreciative of admiration. Dashleigh dashed to pick

it up, resolved that he would put those delicate flowers in water in his room and keep them a very long time.

He staggered back as he lifted the bouquet into the light and to his nostrils. It was large and fragrant of strong musk, and was made of cabbage leaves. Dashleigh stared at it.

"What the dick——"

The window went up again and a big placard fluttered down. On it was this legend:

"Label the cabbage sour kroust and eat it!"

A snicker seemed to come from some shadows on the grass a few yards away—a snicker that was echoed by shadows back of the shade-trees.

Dashleigh and his friends began to feel perspiring and red. Another window went up and another placard fluttered down. It read:

"If you don't want to eat the bouquet, please place it in a vase and water it. The water for the purpose will now be furnished."

The astonished serenaders had no more than mastered this, when, with a whizz and a roar, a hose directed from one of the upper windows treated them to a liberal shower-bath.

Then the shadows in the trees rose up and whooped, and the shadows behind the trees danced eccentric hornpipes. While this was going on, the white-robed figure cast aside its robe and slipped lightly down a rope, which up to that time had hung unnoticed against

the wall; and this figure was followed by others, until the rope itself seemed turned into a line of quickly descending figures.

Before the dripping serenaders could fairly comprehend this turn of affairs, they found themselves surrounded by a body of sophomores, under the leadership of Jack Ready, who marched them away to the nearest restaurant and made them set up an oyster supper for the whole company.

Ready had given the number of a house which he knew was unoccupied and of which he obtained possession for the evening. Thus, with these frolicsome sophomore friends, he gratified his love of practical joking.

CHAPTER XIX.

STARBRIGHT THRASHES MORGAN.

Vying with football as a subject of Yale talk, were the inter-class fall games, which, like all athletic games, included runs, jumps, vaults, and weights, to which had been added a five-mile relay bicycle-race.

Bert Dashleigh and Dick Starbright found Frank Merriwell in their rooms the next morning for the purpose of talking to them about these games.

It had been suggested by Murphy, Camp, and others that Merriwell should take the freshmen contestants, or such of them as he chose, and train them for these events. This was what brought Merriwell to the rooms occupied by the two freshmen.

"I have a big undertaking on my hands if I go into this," he explained to Starbright and Bert, "for Murphy, who is one of the best professional trainers in America, has at last agreed to train the sophomores. These games are to be between the freshmen and sophomores. I believe that I can select a team from the freshmen that will have a big chance to win. I have been authorized to make the selection, for I would undertake the work in no other way. I must have my own men, without dictation from anybody."

He stopped and looked at Starbright, who seemed to know what was coming.

“In the relay bicycle-race I should like to have you and Dashleigh. If you consent, I will tell you who the others are to be later, if I can get them. If you do not consent, I want you to make no mention of the fact that I asked you to go in training for the race.”

Dashleigh's face flushed with pleasure. This was an honor he could not have anticipated. He had not been asked to go on the football-team, though he fancied he could play football. And for that reason, combined with the continual chatter against Merriwell of the Chickering set and their friends, he had reached the conclusion that Merriwell did not like him and was not disposed to favor him, or even give him a fair show. He wondered if Frank had heard anything of the ungracious comments he had made about him, and he sincerely hoped not.

“How did you know I could ride?” he asked.

“Well, I saw you taking a spin on your wheel the other day, and I have taken the trouble to make inquiries as to your record in that line.”

“Why, of course I'll consent, and jump at the chance.”

“You'll implicitly obey orders, and ride for all you're worth when the time for real riding comes?”

“I'd ride my heart out, to win that race, Mr. Merriwell!”

Frank saw that Dashleigh was very much in earnest, and he knew that the freshman could be depended

on to do all in his power to win the race from the sophomores.

"I've got a little grudge against the sophomore class, anyway!" he laughed.

"And against Jack Ready!" Frank quietly suggested.

"Heavens! Is that cabbage-bouquet story all over the college so soon. But perhaps Ready told you?"

"Well, I heard some of the sophomores laughing about it down by the fence a while ago."

Starbright had stretched himself out to his full length, with his heels, as usual, on the window-ledge.

"You haven't given an answer yet, Dick?"

The big freshman's feet came down.

"Of course I'll do all I can, if I'm chosen. I made something of a record at Andover, but I'm a little out of practise. I'm big and heavy, though!"

"You'll do. I suppose you ride a heavy wheel?"

"Rather. A high frame, with a big sprocket."

Frank looked at the freshman's brawny limbs.

"Both of you will do. And I'm glad you've accepted. If the other fellows I have in mind will accept and go right to work, we'll give the sophomores a rub for the honors, even if they are to be trained by Murphy."

That evening Bart Hodge came into Frank's rooms in Vanderbilt fairly seething. Frank had selected for the relay bicycle-race Starbright, Dashleigh, Morgan, and two light-weight riders. Frank knew Hodge's

ways better than any other man, and he continued his reading, only looking up to nod.

"Do you know, Merry, the way you're doing this fall makes me wish I'd never come back to Yale with you!"

"Why, I thought you came back to graduate."

"I came back as much as anything to be with you, and to whoop things up for you in an athletic way, and you know it. As an old friend, I think I'm entitled to something."

Frank put down his book.

"So you are, Hodge. You're entitled to my warmest friendship, and I'm glad to have yours."

"Well, you don't act like it a little bit. You pay no attention to any advice I give you, but go right on, making one big blunder after another."

Hodge's temper was so torrid that cool autumn night that he could not sit down in a chair, but went steaming round the room, with his hands in his pockets, muttering his grievances.

"Be kind enough to tell me what you're talking about."

"It's about this freshmen team!" Hodge snapped.

"Who has been telling you the personnel of the team?"

"Well, Browning has!"

One of Bart's causes of anger was that he fancied

Frank had slighted him by first communicating the information to Browning.

"It's a good team, Hodge!"

Hodge turned and faced him, with angry, blazing eyes.

"Merry, you're the strangest man I ever met!"

"And you've known me a good while!"

"Yes, I have. That is, I fancied I knew you. But you grow more puzzling every day. I don't believe you half-know yourself."

"That's quite likely. The man who thoroughly knows himself must be a rare man."

Merriwell was smiling, in spite of Hodge's furious outburst, and this seemed to make Hodge more furious.

"Now, tell me what I've done."

"Why, you've made a beastly fool of yourself by selecting Dade Morgan for that freshmen bicycle-race!"

"I don't think so!"

"Why, he has done everything in his power to injure you! You weren't more than out of his presence, I'll guarantee, before he was hatching lies about you and planning to down you. He's threatened to your face to 'do' you, and yet you go right on licking the hand that rubs you all over with dirt. It makes me weary!"

Merriwell was sitting straight up in his chair now.

The smile had gone from his face. Nevertheless, he was struggling hard to keep his temper and handle Hodge with patience.

"My dear Bart, why do you suppose I took charge of the training of those freshmen?"

Hodge had walked away, but again faced him.

"Hanged if I know! I wouldn't have done it."

"But if you had done such a thing, what would have been your object? Cool down, now, and answer that question."

"For the good of the freshmen class, I suppose."

"And to win the race for them?"

"Yes! But——"

"Just get off the safety-valve a minute!"

"But you could do all that without favoring Dade Morgan! There was no sort of sense in that. He's a snake. He'll do some dirt, just as sure as you live."

Frank was smiling in a way that should have given Hodge warning.

"Dade Morgan is the fastest bicyclist in the whole freshman class. I know that he has tried to injure me, that he is a low cur in many ways, that he hates me like poison. I know all that, as well as you do. But that doesn't change the fact that he's simply a wizard on a bicycle. If I go on with the training, which I shall, I can't throw away any chance of winning. I have picked what I believe to be winning riders, regardless of who they are. And more than

that, Hodge, I intend to let Dade Morgan ride the final and crucial mile of the race."

Hodge again went into the air.

"The scoundrel!" he panted. "Surely you won't honor him in that way, Merry!"

"I intend to honor him in just that way, if it's an honor! He can ride that last mile to win, if any one can; and winning is what we want."

"But think what he did to your father!"

"Morton Agnew did that."

"But Morgan was back of him. They're hand-in-glove. Starbright overheard them talking together in the train when he was on his way to New Haven at the opening of college."

"I'm sure Morgan knew nothing of what Agnew did."

"Why, it was Morgan who threw that tennis-racket down from the window and tripped you in the chariot-race in the 'Circus Maximus.'"

"We think it was."

"You know that it was!"

"All of which doesn't alter my decision. I have taken these freshmen to win with them. I can't afford to discard Dade Morgan."

"You would honor him if he were a devil!" Hodge fiercely exclaimed.

"That's enough, Hodge! I haven't asked you to do my thinking for me."

“Why, Merry, you’re a—a——”

He hesitated when he saw the look in Frank’s eye.

“We’re friends, Hodge. Don’t make it impossible for me to be your friend. I know better than you do what I want to do and what I’m capable of doing.”

“But think of what will be said!”

“By whom?”

“By all the fellows.”

“I don’t care a turn of my hand for that. I’ve found that the only way to do in this world is to go right along and do what you consider right, and pay no heed to the gossip and slanders of people who dislike you.”

“Well, it makes me want to say that you’re a fool. The whole thing simply makes me sick!”

Whereupon Hodge stalked out of the room and stamped angrily down-stairs.

That night, as Dick Starbright lounged past the “Hyperion,” while the crowd was pouring out at the end of the play, he was surprised and bewildered to see Rosalind Thornton on the arm of Dade Morgan,

At sight of them he caught his breath with a gasp and leaned for support against the wall, feeling strangely weak and faint.

Rosalind did not look in his direction; but Dade Morgan turned his eyes that way, as if with the instinctive feeling that an enemy was near.

A flush came to Morgan's dark, handsome face, and there was a steely triumphant flash in his dark eyes, which was immediately concealed by the drooping of the lids. Then he and Rosalind passed on, leaving Dick Starbright white and shaken.

Dashleigh came sailing by at this moment, and caught Dick's arm in his jaunty, effervescent way.

"Say, old fellow, Dade's got your girl!" he whispered. "Alas! A lass is oftentimes false and fickle."

Starbright shook him off, with a wrathful exclamation.

"Hot, eh? Well, I don't blame you."

He made a dive through the crowd for a member of his mandolin club, whom he chanced to spy.

Starbright turned away and walked down the street. He wanted a chance to think. What did it mean, anyway? Dade was a handsome, dashing fellow! Perhaps—— Yes, it looked so! Rosalind had taken a fancy to Dade, and intended to throw over her old admirer.

"Let her go!" Dick snarled. "There are just as good fish in the sea as were ever caught out of it!"

Yet, even while giving mental expression to this old saw, he could not crowd down the feeling that there were not as good fish in the sea of the world as the dark-eyed girl who had so caught his fancy.

Then a thought came to him, which humiliated while

it staggered him. Dade Morgan had done this to make him jealous, in the belief that jealousy would drive him to drink.

In his talks with Merriwell he had received the idea, though Frank had not put it into plain words, that Morgan was trying to get the advantage of him and degrade him in some such way. He remembered the two attempts of Roland Packard, which he was now sure were inspired by Morgan.

Starbright's mind was in a whirl. He was angry at Morgan. He was also angry, though in a different way, at Rosalind Thornton. Still, he tried to think that she did not really understand what sort of fellow Morgan was or she would not have gone to the play with him.

More than once, Dick was on the point of going to his rooms; but he remained outside, walking back and forth, trying to come to some conclusion.

Suddenly, as he turned in his walk, he found himself face to face with Morgan. He could not avoid a feeling that this meeting was intended.

"So you and I are of the bicyclists who are to be trained by Merriwell?" said Morgan.

The words were civilly spoken, but Dick fancied that he detected underneath them a sneer. He was about to turn away without speaking, but changed his mind and walked straight up to Morgan.

"Of course you did that to-night, hoping that you could make me jealous!"

"Miss Thornton? Bah! You don't suppose I trouble to think about you at all?"

The big freshman trembled. He did not doubt longer that not only was this meeting of Dade's seeking, but that Dade had taken Rosalind to the play for no other purpose than to anger him.

"I've been wanting to tell you for some time, Starbright, that you've got an unendurable swelled head," Morgan went on, in a self-contradictory way. "You seem to think that the earth and the fullness thereof was simply made for you. Don't be so conceited as to imagine that people are thinking about you all the time. When I think about anything, it's about something that's worth while."

He turned as if to pass Starbright. Dick drew himself to his full height and put out his arm as a bar.

"You will eat those words, Morgan, or I'll choke them down your throat!"

Morgan's eyes flashed fire.

"Will I? Then I don't think you know me!"

"If any girl chooses you in preference to me, that's all right. I would never trouble you about that. I should simply pity the girl's taste."

"More case of swelled head!" Morgan sneered. "Starbright, you're an insufferable cad."

Dick's arm went up as if he intended to strike Mor-

gan in the face. The temptation was almost irresistible, but he controlled it.

"I should never have spoken to you about that girl, or any other girl. That's not my style. But when you use such words to me as you have just used, that's a different thing."

"Bah!"

Dick took hold of Morgan's sleeve and jerked him forward. They were standing beneath an electric light, and people were moving up and down the street.

"Morgan, you're a coward and a pusillanimous cur! If you'll step with me to the shadows of those trees, where there is no danger of a policeman interfering with us, I'll take pleasure in giving you the soundest thrashing of your life."

"Bah! I'm not a prize-fighter!"

In an instant Starbright's hard fist shot out, and Dade Morgan rolled in the gutter. The blow had come so suddenly that Morgan was not prepared for it. But he came of fighting stock, and there was not a cowardly drop of blood in his body. He picked himself up coolly, brushed the dirt from his clothing with the utmost nonchalance, looked at Starbright, who stood panting and white, and hissed:

"My dear friend, I'm ready to accommodate you to the limit. We'll adjourn this little meeting to the shadows you suggest."

A minute later a furious fight was in progress. Dick

was taller and stronger, with a greater reach of arm, while Morgan was sinewy and as quick as a deer.

Twice Starbright knocked him to the ground, but each time Dade Morgan sprang up with a snarl, coming at Starbright with an impetuosity that is indescribable. He was a trained and scientific fighter, and Starbright soon had his hands full, in spite of the fact that he had first got in some heavy and telling blows.

For the third time Dick stretched Morgan his full length on the grass. He did not rise at once, and Dick stood before him, white-faced and panting, with a feeling of meanness and humiliation.

He did not like to fight, and he was ashamed now of what he had done. He told himself that he was simply a big brute, and that in considering himself better than Dade Morgan he was really and truly the victim of an enormously swelled head.

He was beginning to be rather frightened over Morgan's condition, when the latter came to his senses and slowly got to his feet. He did not venture another dash, but looked at Dick with eyes that burned with the intensity of deadly hate.

"This thing isn't settled, Starbright!" he hissed. "Remember that, will you. It will be settled later."

Then he turned away, leaving Starbright shivering and anathematizing himself for having been a bulldog and a fool, instead of a gentleman.

The next day he encountered Rosalind Thornton.

She shrugged her shoulders, and seemed about to pass on; but turned and said, with a frown:

“I’m sorry that you think I have such poor taste!”

“That’s all right!” Dick declared, for he knew from her words and manner she had seen Morgan and he had told her something of the conversation of the previous evening.

“You didn’t offer to take me to the play, and Mr. Morgan did!” she went on.

“That’s all right, too!” was Dick’s answer. “If you like the company of a chap like Morgan, you surely can’t like the company of a fellow like me!”

She flushed and turned to pass on, thinking he would call her back.

But she was mistaken. With a pained light in his honest eyes, Dick watched her walk on down the street, then returned to the campus and to his rooms.

CHAPTER XX.

TRAINING AND SENTIMENT.

Frank Merriwell began without delay his work of training the freshmen he had chosen for the athletic contests. He knew that it would be hard work to put them in condition to successfully meet the sophomores, but he went about his task with enthusiasm and a will.

One of his requirements of every man selected was implicit obedience. Dick had promised this readily, but he felt like rebelling the very first day, when Merriwell changed him from the list of bicyclists and told him to go to work to do the best he could at throwing the hammer and putting the shot.

Yet Starbright did not openly rebel, for his experience as captain of the football eleven at Andover had shown him how necessary it is for the captain to have supreme and unquestioned command.

Frank had seen in the first practise races that Starbright was too heavy for swift bicycle work. He was too tall, also, and it was Merriwell's opinion that a lighter man would do better.

Besides, Starbright was the largest of the freshmen, towering above all, and with a superb girth of chest and shoulders that made him a promising candidate for honors in the class to which he was now assigned.

There was an advantage in another sense in this

change, and Dick wondered if Merriwell had it in mind in making it. The change separated him from Dade Morgan. He did not know how Frank had discovered that he and Morgan had come to blows, but he had a feeling that Frank knew it.

Perhaps that was because both he and Morgan had appeared on the campus with suspicious-looking bits of court-plaster on their faces. Dade had a discolored eye that all the applications of raw beef he made could not immediately remove.

Mike Murphy was also industriously training his sophomore team, and the practise work of the two teams and the near approach of the athletic events themselves drew so much attention that soon the students almost forgot to talk about football and the coming prophesied successes on the gridiron for this newer and more immediate topic.

Wherever Yale men met, on the street, in the campus, in their rooms, or in the places which so many of them frequented of evenings, the one subject of discussion was some form of athletics.

This, with the chances of various men for secret society honors, occupied so much of the time and thought of a certain class that Starbright often wondered when and how they found opportunity for study. As for himself, in spite of his strenuous training, and in spite of the thoughts that troubled him, he persistently ground away at his books.

He studied as he trained and as he played, with a sublime enthusiasm for the work. He sent no note to Rosalind and sought to make no further calls on her. Now and then he saw her with Morgan, and he heard from Dashleigh whatever of gossip was worth hearing concerning the matter.

Dashleigh was showering his attentions on the languid Lucile, who thought it "just wonderfully strange" that Starbright and Rosalind were no more to be seen together.

In these days there was one thing worthy of special note. If Dade Morgan expected Dick Starbright to become a frequenter of Traeger's and Billie's and other places, for the purpose of filling himself with intoxicants, he was given a decided disappointment. In the first day or two after that encounter with Morgan, Dick had been forced to fight a great battle against his under nature. But he manfully won the struggle.

Thus studying and thinking and training, as if his life depended on it, Dick Starbright wore the days quickly away.

One evening he received a note from Rosalind. She desired to see him at the residence of her aunt, Mrs. Throckmorton.

Dick debated a while with himself whether or not to go; but ended by going, as he knew he would from the first. When he came back to his rooms, finding

Bert Dashleigh there, Bert noticed that his step was lighter.

Bert did not at once call attention to the fact that he observed any alteration in the demeanor of his friend and roommate. But at last he found opportunity to say:

"I knew she didn't really care anything for Morgan."

Starbright jumped in his chair.

"How did you know what I was thinking of?"

"You haven't been thinking of anything else since you sat down there. Right, am I not?"

"Well, yes, if you mean Miss Thornton. She doesn't think much of Morgan. She told me so herself."

"Oh, I knew it!" said Dashleigh. "You see, I'm a mind-reader."

CHAPTER XXI.

A COWARDLY DEED.

A great crowd gathered at the Yale field on the afternoon set for the athletic contests between the sophomores and freshmen. Not only did the whole college turn out, but New Haven itself sent a heavy contingent.

Yale colors were everywhere, and the class cries of the sophomores and freshmen rose almost continuously.

Frank Merriwell had worked hard, and the men selected by him to uphold the honor of the freshmen had been no sluggards.

"You're all right, and your men will win, if there's no treachery on the part of Dade Morgan. I'm looking for that. But I've my eye on the fellow, and if he makes any break, I'll simply crack his neck for him!"

Bart Hodge was speaking to Merriwell. He believed that Morgan was so treacherous that he could not be relied on in any particular.

Merriwell did not trust Morgan, but he felt that Dade would not wish to hurt his own reputation and lose caste among the students and freshmen by attempting in any way to injure the freshmen's chances of winning. He fancied, too, that Dade desired to make a point by doing his best for the honor of his

class even under the leadership of Merriwell, whose friend he was known not to be. And Frank's reasoning seemed correct.

Bart and Frank were standing near one of the high board fences as they talked, and were surveying the crowd that continued to stream into the grounds. They could see that it was to be an unusually large one. The fact that Frank Merriwell and Mike Murphy were the trainers of the teams that were to compete had done more than anything else to draw out so many people, for it was realized that under such training record-breaking events might be anticipated.

As Hodge turned to walk away, leaving Frank standing alone by the fence, a shot sounded in the fringe of woods at some distance, something was heard to "spat" sharply against the board wall, and Merriwell was seen to reel and put his hands to his face.

Bart, who was a dozen feet away, jumped toward his friend, with a cry on his lips and a great fear in his heart. The shot had thrown the field into the utmost excitement.

"Merriwell's shot! Merriwell's killed!" was heard on every hand; and a number of men ran across toward him, followed by a jamming throng of excited Yale men and citizens.

Frank had not fallen, but was now supported by Bart Hodge.

Several students on bicycles, and others running on

foot, were darting away toward the point in the woods from whence the shot had come. Among these was Bert Dashleigh.

Inza Burrage and Elsie Bellwood had seats together in one of the stands—seats secured for them by Frank at a point where they could have the most favorable view of the games.

Both had leaped to their feet with cries of excitement, Inza with a dark, flushed face, and Elsie with cheeks as white as snow, and now began to push their way through the crowd, Inza in the lead, fighting like a tigress for passageway.

When they gained Frank's side, after what seemed to both of them an interminable time, they found him leaning against the fence, with Oliver Packard applying something to his face and eyes. Bart had his arms round his friend, though Frank seemed well able to support himself.

Ready and others were there, and big Bruce Browning, with shoulders and strength of a giant, was pushing back the curious crowd and savagely declaring that Frank did not need help, but simply plenty of air.

"What's the matter?" Inza asked, while Elsie stood panting and mute by her side, clinging to her arm. "Is he shot?"

Frank heard the words and took away the handkerchief with which he had just covered his eyes.

This revealed a face red as fire and eyes that seemed

half-burned out of his head. Yet his attempted smile as he turned toward the girls showed that he recognized them, and it told them that the sight of his eyes was not injured.

"No, I wasn't shot," said Frank, "but some miscreant fired something from the woods, which struck the fence here and almost put my eyes out."

Oliver Packard nodded significantly to the fence which showed a brownish round spot.

"I think it must have been a bomb fired from a gun," Packard explained. "It contained some kind of intensely irritating substance, I don't know just what; and when it exploded on striking the fence, Frank's face and eyes were filled with this substance."

Packard's applications of some soothing fluid seemed to be giving Merriwell much relief.

Mike Murphy, the trainer of the sophomores, pushed forward to express his sympathy and denounce the author of the outrage. He was also kind enough to say that if Merriwell wished a postponement of the games, he was perfectly willing that this should be done.

"No," said Merriwell, in response to this last. "The crowd is here, and we will not disappoint them. The teams can go on with the work without my supervision, if necessary. But I think my eyes will be much better in a little while."

A shout went up from the direction of the woods, and the men who had run out that way appeared to

be much excited. Soon a dozen pushed themselves out of the seething, shouting mass, and it was seen that they had a man in their midst.

Bart Hodge had caught sight of Dade Morgan near at hand, and finding that his presence was not actually needed, he spoke to Frank and vanished. He wanted to watch him, for he believed that the fellow had been concerned in what had occurred.

"Merry was a fool for trusting that rascal a minute!" he growled, as he hastened away.

As the crowd from the woods came nearer, Dashleigh was seen in its midst, sitting on his bicycle in a weak and flabby state, supported by two students.

In the dash for the woods, Bert's bicycle had collided with another, and he had been hurled heavily to the ground, suffering bruises and contusions, not the least of which was the laming of an ankle.

"Knocked out of the race!" was Ready's thought, when his eyes fell on the injured bicyclist.

There was no joy in his heart, but only regret and sorrow, even though he was on the competing list of sophomore wheelmen.

The crowd surged rapidly forward, those in the front half-running. When they came up, it was found that they had a trampish fellow, whom they had found lying under a tree, either asleep or shamming. He had roused up in an apparently dazed way when stirred

with the toe of a senior boot, and had seemed to be the most surprised man there.

Two hundred yards or more from where he had been discovered was found a shotgun, from which a load seemed to have been recently discharged.

There was no other evidence against the man. He stood awkwardly before Frank, pulling at his shabby hat, which he held in his hands, as these explanations were given by his captors.

"Hold him in a dressing-room until later," was Frank's command.

Though his eyes were still burning and his face was red and inflamed, he took the shotgun and looked it over. Powder marks showed that one barrel had been recently discharged.

"We'll go on with the games!" he declared. "Keep the shotgun, too. We may need it as evidence by and by."

Though men were still making a search through the woods and adjacent fields, preparations for the games went on.

Bruce Browning had been sent out by Frank to look after the interests of the freshmen, and Frank sat alone in a dressing-room, thinking over what had occurred.

Only one thing was plain to him: Some one who desired to injure him had fired the bomb from the gun. Possibly it had been meant merely as a blow

at the trainer of the freshmen by some one who wanted the freshmen to lose, but more likely the deed had been done by some one who had personal malice. Bart came in, raging.

"Morgan may be mixed up in this thing," Frank admitted, "though there is no evidence against him so far."

"Who else hates you as he does?"

"Perhaps no one, though I've plenty of enemies here, as you know. But no matter how he hates me, that of itself doesn't constitute proof."

"It's proof enough for me."

There was a rap on the post of the door. Bart rose cautiously to ascertain who the visitor was, for he was resolved that, so far as he could help it, there should be no more dastardly attempts to injure Merriwell that day. He saw before him Bert Dashleigh.

"I've been trying to find you for some time," said Bert, as he was admitted to Merriwell's presence.

Frank noticed that he limped as he came in.

"I found this out there in the woods," said Bert. Then he produced a torn scrap from a letter.

"It was jammed into the soil by a kick from a boot heel. I saw an edge of it and dug it out, thinking it might be of importance."

Frank was looking with his throbbing eyes at the torn and discolored slip.

"This is all you could find?"

“Yes, and I looked all about. I couldn’t make a very big search, you know, for my ankle pained me, but I asked some of the other fellows to, and they did, but found nothing more.”

Frank passed the torn piece of paper to Bart. This is what he read:

“——Mer——prep——
worth a hundred to you.
“HECTOR KING.”

On the first line, which the tear had zigzagged, were two incomplete words, and on the lower lines the incomplete sentence and the signature.

“There’s part of your name here,” said Bart, “and that other must mean ‘preparation.’ I should say it is part of a letter to that tramp, containing instructions as to how to do you, and an offer of a hundred dollars if he succeeded.”

Merriwell took the paper and examined the marks of the boot heel on it. Several nail-prints were visible.

“We’ll keep this, too, and by and by we’ll see if it tallies with the nails in the boot heel of the tramp—if he is a tramp!”

Then he turned to Bert.

“My eyes are getting better, and I’ll soon be all right, I hope. If not, the games can go on without me. But you? You’ve hurt your ankle!”

Bert explained how it had happened.

"I'm afraid I can't ride in that relay race, Merriwell."

"I shall have to find a substitute. Luckily we've had others in training to take the place of any of the regular men who should happen to get knocked out before the contest."

"What do you think of this business? Wasn't it Morgan?" Bart asked, when Dashleigh had retired, after receiving Frank's praise for what he had done.

"I don't know. I shall make it my business to find out. Now I'm going out to see how matters are progressing."

"But your eyes!"

Frank was applying the preparation which Oliver Packard, the young medical student, had left for him.

"Well, they might be better. And again they might be worse. But I can see all right, even if they do smart. And I've an idea that if I can stay on the grounds it will be better for the freshmen."

"That scoundrel hoped to cause the freshmen to lose the games, knowing that your presence on the field would mean half the battle."

"I guess you're pretty near the mark."

Then Merriwell emerged with Bart from the room, to be greeted with a shout of applause and approval.

Browning was doing all that he could to inspire the freshmen contestants with confidence, and the freshman class was whooping things up by constant repeti-

tions of their class yell, but Merriwell's presence was needed, which was shown by the immediate increase of confidence as soon as he went forward.

"Oh, if I just had two sweethearts to put courage into my tender heart by the flutter of their snow-white kerchiefs!" chirped Jack Ready, as he saw Inza and Elsie waving their handkerchiefs. "A half-dozen would be better, but just two would do. The freshmen have three mascots, and we poor sophomores haven't a single. La! la! Excuse these few tears."

"There? What do you mean?" asked Greg Carker.

"Inza and Elsie, and that black-eyed beauty, Rosalind Thornton. She's waving her handkerchief, too, but I'm hanged if I know whether she's shooin' her wishes over to Dick Starbright or to Dade Morgan. In some respects, she's pretty near the whole thing. Many a man would leave his happy home for her."

Merriwell stopped with Hodge and looked over the field.

The officials—timekeepers, measurers, judges, referee, starter, and others, were moving here and there. A number of the contestants were warming up by racing and sprinting, jumping, hammer-throwing and other things. People were calling to each other, men were shouting, the band was playing, and the crowd was ever swaying and shifting.

As Murphy walked across to Frank for a short talk, Merry glanced into the stand where Inza and Elsie

were, and, seeing the encouraging flutter of their handkerchiefs, bowed his acknowledgment.

Murphy's first inquiries were as to Frank's face and eyes. He could see that Frank's face had a cooked appearance, and that the whites of his eyes were still fiery red.

"Oh, I'm all right, thank you. But one of my bicyclists jammed his ankle in that rush to the woods, and I shall have to put in another man. That is to be regretted, for he was one of my best riders. Next to Dade Morgan, I think he was my very best man."

A short time afterward, with all the preliminaries settled, with the officials ready and in position, and the great, buzzing throng in anxious expectation, two young fellows in athletic suits and wearing colors to distinguish sophomore from freshman, stepped into the cinder path.

A roar of applause greeted their appearance, accentuated by the sharp, barking cries of the freshmen and sophomore rooters, and when the sprinters lined up for the 100-yards dash the applause became deafening.

The starter, in position behind the runners, lifted his pistol. The runners were crouching with tense legs for the start.

Bang!

And away they went like the wind. The sport had begun.

CHAPTER XXII.

DASHLEIGH PROVES A HERO.

The 100-yards dash was quick and exciting. The freshman leaped into the lead at the start and held his lead for a short distance, but was passed by the sophomore as they drew near the tape.

Sophomore and freshmen rooters were howling like fiends as the sprinters crossed the line. The contests were for points, and this was the judges' announcement:

"Curran, sophomore, first, 11 seconds; Trimble, freshman, second, 11 1-2 seconds—making 706 points."

"Wow!" Ready was screeching. "First blood for the sophomores. Oh, we're going to do you, Merriwell! Hang your harp on the weeping willow."

It seemed strange to see Jack Ready, Frank's faithful friend and adherent, howling against the side in which Frank was interested, but class spirit prevailed, as it always does in such cases. Ready was not less loyal to Merriwell, but as a sophomore he was wildly anxious for the sophomores to win.

The one-mile run was the next event, and the two men who came out to contest in this had the appearance of being speedy and long-winded men.

They were to run on a circular, four-lap track,

which was in the best condition. The sophomore runner was Tom Byerly, a long-legged, deep-chested fellow from Massachusetts, and the freshman was Dunham Tarbox, from Asheville, North Carolina.

The freshmen were confident of the abilities of Tarbox to win from his competitor, for Dunham was a great runner, and he had been carefully coached and trained by Merriwell.

At the crack of the starter's pistol, Tarbox and Byerly got away together, with the band playing a lively tune to lift them over the ground.

Byerly had won the pole, and he soon took the lead of his freshman competitor, running lithely and easily, with head and chest thrown back. Tarbox did not look to be so pretty a runner, and the betting men on the ground who had placed money on the strength of the fact that Merriwell had trained him began to think that they had lost.

Byerly increased his lead, as the runners neared the end of the quarter-mile lap, and the sophomores stood up, braying out their snappy class yell.

But Frank Merriwell did not seem to be in the least disturbed.

"The soph is walking away from your man," grunted Browning.

"He'll not walk away from him much longer," was Frank's answer.

At the end of the half-mile the freshman had re-

gained much of his lost distance and was coming up on Byerly in handsome style.

"Byerly has been pushing himself too hard in the start," said Merriwell. "Murphy warned him against that."

But Byerly was not yet beaten. Though passed at the three-quarter lap, he regained the distance; and the runners approached the pole, now running in a mighty struggle for the mastery.

The spectators were yelling, and howling, and waving hats, caps, and handkerchiefs.

"Come in, Tarbox!" Bruce megaphoned through his hands. "Come in!"

Merriwell was smiling and still confident. Apparently he had forgotten his burned face and smarting eyes.

Byerly was winded. He had done his best, and, though he now made another effort to regain his position, he dropped rapidly behind, and Tarbox, coming on with speed like a steam-engine, won out handsomely.

There was a great flourish of paper and pencil through the crowd, as the judges announced the result:

"Tarbox, freshman, first, 5 minutes, 23 seconds; Byerly, sophomore, second, 5 minutes, 43 seconds.

Then how the freshmen howled, for the freshmen were now in the lead!

The 120-yards hurdle followed.

In this hurdle-race Jack Ready, the sophomore, was pitted against Mason Long, who was also thought by the freshmen to be a winner. So confident were the freshmen that they fairly howled themselves hoarse when the two men came into position for the signal.

"Howling barred!" chattered Ready, flinging the words at the screaming freshmen. "I'm going to pluck this cabbage bouquet to ornament my own boudoir. Close your faces and keep your eyes on me. You'll miss something if you don't."

Bang! went the pistol, and the hurdlers were away.

Jack Ready was as good as his word. He cleared the hurdles neatly and cleverly, and beat out his competitor.

It was the turn of the sophomores to howl, and scream, and bark out their class cry.

"Oh, we're way ahead!" yelled a sophomore, who had a stop watch and had been using his pencil while the judges were doing their figuring.

He was right, for the judges announced:

"Jack Ready, sophomore, 18 seconds; Mason Long, freshman, 18 1-2 seconds."

A running high jump followed, with the sophomores represented by Clifton Hull, and the freshmen by George Pendergast. Again the freshmen met defeat, and again the sophomores howled uproariously. This was the announcement:

“Clifton Hull, sophomore, 5 feet, 2 3-4 inches; George Pendergast, freshman, 5 feet, 2 1-4 inches.”

In the running broad jump, which was the next on the schedule of events, Ralph Bingham, the big sophomore, was pitted against Dick Starbright. Both had done good jumping in their practise work, their records being nearly together, and this fact quickened the interests of the classmen. The sophomores hoped and believed that Bingham would put them still farther ahead, and the freshmen were wildly confident that Starbright would redeem the recent defeats.

Bingham was not so long of limb as Starbright, though the difference was not great, but he had surprising activity for a large man.

Bingham jumped first, clearing 21 feet 4 inches. The sophomores proceeded to go mad with excitement.

“Oh, you’re all right, Bingy, old boy!” they howled at him.

The freshmen sent back an answering howl, for they were still pinning their faith to Dick Starbright.

Starbright went farther back for a start. He got under headway slowly, but quickly gathered speed, and when he came to the scratch he was fairly flying. He put every ounce of his great strength into that jump; then sailed through the air.

It was seen that he had beaten Bingham, though just how much could not be ascertained, for the distance did not seem to be great.

The freshmen began to sing:

"Here's a health to Freshman Dick! drink her down, drink her down!

Here's a health to Freshman Dick! drink her down, drink her down!

Here's a health to Freshman Dick, he is lively and he's quick, Oh, he makes the sophies sick! drink her down, down, down!"

The song stopped and the freshmen again screeched their joy, when they heard the judge's announcement:

"Ralph Bingham, sophomore, 21 feet 4 inches; Dick Starbright, freshman, 22 feet 11 inches."

Then there was a beautiful pole-vaulting contest between Tom Conner, representing the sophomores, and Luke Garland, the freshmen, which was won handsomely by Conner, who seemed to have the vaulting abilities of a long-legged monkey.

The spirits of the freshmen went down again, when the result was called out. The highest reached in the three attempts were as follows:

"Conner, sophomore, 11 feet 2 inches; Garland, freshman, 10 feet 1 inch."

The freshmen began to scream for Starbright. There were but two events to follow, putting the shot and throwing the hammer, and Starbright was in both, pitted against Beckwith, the big 200-pound guard of the football-team.

It was a handicap to force Starbright to enter another contest so soon after his big jump, but in making up the schedule for the games this was the best

that Merriwell could do. He believed that he could not spare Dick from the broad jump, and the result had shown the correctness of his judgment, for any other man in the freshmen list would have fallen short of the jump of the big sophomore, Bingham. Likewise, in the shot-putting and hammer-throwing, there was no freshman who seemed able to compete with Beckwith, except Starbright.

"How are you feeling, Dick?" Frank asked, as preparations were being made for the shot-put.

Frank's eyes still troubled him and his face was red and inflamed, but he was pluckily going right on with his work. He realized more than any one, perhaps, that, if the bomb-shooter had perfectly succeeded in his purpose, the games would have been lost to the freshmen, for without his presence to inspire them, they certainly would have failed.

"We're depending on you to pull us out of the hole," he said, speaking to Starbright.

Starbright, who had been wrapped in a heavy blanket, cast it aside. The freshmen rooters became frantic when they saw him do this.

"Starbright! Starbright!" they howled

The great crowd was buzzing and roaring.

"I'll do the best I can!" was Dick's answer. "I'll make the effort of my life."

"I knew I could depend on you for that, Dick! Hear the fellows howling for you! It puts nerve and

heart into a fellow to have his friends shriek at him in that confident way. Of course, there is big work cut out for you. But I know that you can do it."

Again Dick Starbright felt that strange, confident glow which had first come to him as he sat on Merriwell's knee in the interval of the bouts of the big wrestling-battle between freshmen and sophomore on the great rush night.

"I will do it!" he declared.

"That's the talk. That's the stuff! When a man resolves that he will do a thing, he will do it, if the thing is at all possible. That's what I wanted to hear you say!"

He took Dick by the hand, and an electric thrill seemed to pass from his warm hands.

"If I but had your grit and courage, Merriwell! It's a winning courage."

"You have it, all right. Perhaps you don't fully realize it yet, but you have it. You're going to win these games for the freshmen, and I know it. Now, go in and do it."

Mike Murphy, cool and long-headed, stood talking to Beckwith.

Starbright had badly worsted Beckwith in the sophomore wrestling-match, and this made the big sophomore almost fiercely anxious to beat the tall freshman now. He was listening attentively to Murphy and nodding assent to what was being said.

The freshmen and sophomore rooters were filling the air with their cries, and the freshmen now began again to sing:

“Here’s a health to Freshman Dick! drink her down, drink her down!”

It had been agreed that in the two events to follow but a single throw should be allowed to each contestant.

As Beckwith, who came first, stepped into position, the sophomores began to howl an improvised song to the tune of “Marching Through Georgia.”

Beckwith took up the shot with an air of confidence, lifted it on his right hand, and, after a few motions, hurled it with all his might. He made a good throw, and the sophomores ceased singing to howl their gratification.

“It’s a good throw, but you can beat it!” Merriwell said quietly to Starbright, as the latter went forward.

Dick did not waste time in preliminaries. He lifted the shot, poised himself, and, without seeming effort, threw it with all the power of his wonderful muscles. Merriwell knew Dick had won from Beckwith as soon as he saw the heavy sphere leave his hand. The freshmen saw it, too, before the shot was on the ground, and were screeching.

“Beckwith, sophomore, 42 feet; Starbright, freshman, 45 feet 1 inch.”

This was the announcement of the judges. Beckwith had won distinction in hammer-throwing, and the sophomores did not believe that in this Starbright could defeat him.

Merriwell again talked to Dick, as the freshman stood in his blanket, while the spectators were roaring and the classmen were making a babel of noise.

"You can win it, Dick."

He took him by the hand.

"I will win it!" said Starbright, as he returned the warm pressure.

"Now I know that you can!"

Starbright went forward in a perfect storm of encouraging applause; and, as he stepped into the seven-foot circle, the freshmen who were not already on their feet rose as one man and gave him an ear-splitting cheer.

He clasped the hammer handle with an air of confidence, swung the heavy hammer round his head three times, then let it go over his shoulder.

There was another wild cheer from the excited freshmen. They believed their champion had won, for it was clearly to be seen that he had made a fine throw.

Murphy was coolly talking with Beckwith; who now came forward to duplicate or beat, if he could, the freshman's attempt, wildly cheered by his partisans. This was the testing cast, the throw that decided who the winner of the inter-class games were to be. Ex-

pectation was at fever pitch. All over the grounds people were craning their necks and tiptoeing to see the throw.

Beckwith was cool and unshaken. He took up the hammer, set it whirling round his body and sent it out with his greatest strength.

For a moment, as the heavy hammer hung in air, there was breathless and anxious silence. This was followed by a great roar from the freshmen. The announcement was:

“Beckwith, sophomore, 134 feet; Starbright, freshman, 143 feet.”

Starbright, the giant freshman, had come near tying the score. Again the jubliant song broke out:

“Here’s a health to Freshman Dick! drink her down, drink her down!

Here’s a health to Freshman Dick! drink her down, drink her down!

Here’s a health to Freshman Dick, he is lively and he’s quick, Oh, he makes the sophies sick! drink her down, down!”

“We’ll have to haze the fellow who got up that song, and all the fellows who are singing it!” a disgusted sophomore growled.

It was a big contract, for the whole freshmen class were singing it, and nearly every one on the grounds seemed to give a yelling push to the chorus:

“Balm of Gilead, Gilead,
Balm of Gilead, Gilead,
Balm of G-i-l-e-a-d!
Way down on the Bingo farm!”

Then the band swung in, and the freshmen rooters fairly went mad.

Merriwell was getting his bicycle riders together for the last and greatest event of the day, the relay bicycle-race of five miles.

Frank had chosen as the five freshmen for the race Winthrop, Dashleigh, Carver, Brentwood, and Dade Morgan. These he had trained and coached until he was reasonably sure they had more than a fighting chance to win. But Dashleigh, on whom he had greatly depended, was out of the race because of his injured and weakened ankle, and Frank was forced to substitute Cyrus Allison who was a fast rider, but not as good as Dashleigh, whom Frank ranked in ability well up with Dade Morgan, who was a wizard on a wheel.

Murphy's sophomore team, picked and trained by him for winners, consisted of Greg Carker, Phil Purington, James Stonefield, Jack Ready, and Tom Partridge.

The relay race was to be on the circular four-lap track at the field. Each man was to ride a mile against one of the opposing team, when they were to be "picked up" by the next cyclists in order, and so on, until the five-mile race was finished.

Dashleigh sat on the ground near the track, with his wheel at his side, looking disconsolate and troubled. If the freshmen should lose the race, he felt that

he would have to hold himself largely to blame, for in the dash to the woods, after the firing of that shot, he had ridden in his usual heedless, reckless way, and so in a measure had brought about the collision.

Greg Carker, the sophomore, came up against Winthrop, the freshman, for the first mile of the great race.

They got away together, amid tremendous cheering from the hoarse throats of the spectators.

Winthrop had won the pole, but at the end of the first lap Carker passed him and went on the inside, which he held for half of the second lap, when something on the track struck his tire and veered his wheel, almost pitching him forward on his head.

But in the third lap he regained what he had lost, and came toward the end of his mile more than a hundred yards ahead of the freshman, riding like the wind.

Then came the exciting pick-up, for these two riders were now to drop out, to be succeeded by another sophomore and freshman, who were to go right on with the race.

There was tremendous cheering as Carker and Winthrop neared the end of their mile, with Carker ahead, and Purrington and Allison, who were to pick them up, ready for their work.

Purrington, the sophomore, picked up Carker in a little while and left him, while Allison swung in after

Winthrop, also picking him up, and then racing against Purrington.

He was handicapped by Winthrop's loss of a hundred yards or more, but he soon showed that he was a crack rider, for he was pushing Purrington before the end of the first lap.

At the end of the second lap, the two riders were racing side by side, bending low over their handle-bars, with feet spinning like pin-wheels.

"If Dashleigh were only in Allison's place he could beat Purrington so badly that the sophomores would feel sick!" was Merriwell's thought, as he stood, forgetful of his irritated eyes, intently watching the riders, while the spectators roared and cheered.

Allison lost ground in the third lap and was ten yards behind Purrington. Then he began to spurt.

"Oh, he'll win!" the freshmen were shouting.

Starbright was anxiously watching him. The other riders, Stonefield, the sophomore, and Carver, the freshman, were ready for the "pick-up."

Allison spurted desperately, and regained his lost distance; then came down the last stretch in great style, leaving Purrington behind him in a trail of dust.

As the new sophomore and freshman made their "pick-ups," Merriwell saw to it that Brentwood was in readiness to race against Jack Ready in the next and fourth mile.

Frank feared Ready's ability and was longing more and more for Bert Dashleigh.

"If only you could go into this thing, I'm sure we could win," he said, as he passed Dashleigh. "That accident was too bad!"

"But we'll win, anyhow?" anxiously.

"We must. But we could have beat them handsomely, I'm sure, with you. I'm looking now for Dade Morgan."

But Frank could not find Morgan. He continued his search, growing anxious as the riders of the third mile neared the end of the fourth lap.

The people were howling. Stonefield, the sophomore, was in the lead, and rapidly gaining on his opponent. He was almost certain to beat him. Frank saw that, and he saw Jack Ready—the ever ready—prepared to take Stonefield's place and continue the lead at a killing pace.

No wonder Merry was anxious, for Jack could ride a wheel almost as swiftly as Dade Morgan.

But where was Morgan? Frank asked himself that question, as he continued to look for the missing rider. It seemed hopeless to think of winning the relay race without Morgan.

"If the fellow has played me false!"

There was an ominous glitter of the eye and a stern compression of the lips. He encountered Hodge, who also seemed to be looking for Dade.

"Seen anything of Morgan?" Merry asked.

"I'm looking for the scoundrel!" Hodge growled. "I'm afraid he's played you a trick and left you in the soup! I thought I had my eye on him, but I was so interested in the riding that he slipped away when I did not see him."

"Do you think he has slipped away?"

"Looks so, doesn't it? Talk about the class honor and class feeling of a fellow like that! Why, he has as much honor of any kind as a cur!"

Stonefield had won over Carver, and Ready was racing away against Brentwood, whom Merriwell was sure he would beat. It looked as if the freshmen were certain to be defeated.

Frank had from the first expected that Ready would beat Brentwood, but he had prepared to offset and recover whatever lead Ready might gain by having Dade Morgan ride the final mile, which he intended should be the winning mile.

That ominous smile came to his lips as he continued his search for Morgan.

"Who did you say you are looking for?" a freshman asked, as he heard Frank making inquiry.

"Dade Morgan. It is his turn to ride, and I can't find him."

The freshman looked surprised and distressed.

"Say, I saw Morgan walking off in that direction just a while ago. There was a man with him. They

were talking and the man had his hand on Dade's shoulder. Say, I'll find him for you! Gee! if we don't have Dade, we're done up!"

He darted away, and speaking to some other freshmen, had them assist in the hunt.

The fourth mile was being swiftly ridden. Two laps of it were done; Jack Ready was ahead, swinging round the third lap in an airy, triumphant way that promised to leave Brentwood far in the rear.

The sophomores were yelling encouragingly to Ready, while the freshmen, distressed by the poor work of Brentwood, began to call for Dade Morgan. They, too, were pinning their faith to that final mile to be ridden by Dade.

The freshman and his assistants were not able to find Morgan. Neither Bart nor Merriwell could find him. He had strangely disappeared.

Bart Hodge was furious with rage. He wanted the freshmen to win because Merriwell was their trainer, more than for any other reason. He was always ready to back Merriwell in whatever the latter chose to undertake, though he retained the high privilege of kicking at anything and everything that displeased him.

"The villain has thrown the race merely to spite Merriwell! What does he care for his own reputation or for the honor of his class? Nothing! He'd knife his best friend, if he thought he could gain a point by it."

Jack Ready was coming in on the last quarter in handsome style.

“Oh, for a rider who could take Morgan’s place!” was Merry’s thought.

The excitement of the spectators and students was something terrific, and so was the noise. Ready was riding like a wizard, leaving a great gap between him and his freshman opponent.

Merriwell felt a tug at his arm. Turning he looked into the red and excited face of Bert Dashleigh.

“I’m going into the race!” said Dashleigh, with a tremulous voice, shaking with excitement. “I’ve got to. Morgan isn’t here. Everybody is beginning to think he won’t come. I don’t know why he isn’t here; but if you’ll let me, I’ll——”

“Let you! But your ankle?”

Dashleigh was on his wheel, and supported himself now by clinging to Frank’s shoulder.

Down the final stretch Ready was coming, the sunlight of victory and confidence in his face. He had straightened up, for he knew now he could win with a handsome margin, and he seemed to be looking straight at Merriwell.

“If you think you can! I was going to order Penrose into the race. But you can beat Penrose out of sight, if you can ride!”

“Ride!” panted Bert. “I will ride! If you say I may go in, I’ll ride that race and win it or die!”

Merriwell had never seen such a look on Dashleigh's face. There was unconquerable resolution and iron determination in it. Dashleigh was showing that he had something in him besides a love of music and frivolity.

“Go in! I know you can win! Go in!”

CHAPTER XXIII.

A BIT OF MYSTERY.

Bert Dashleigh went into the last mile of the great relay bicycle-race with an iron determination to win. He knew that he could ride. Few were better among amateurs. He forgot the ankle that had been paining him a short time before. He forgot everything, except the fact that on him now lay the responsibility of winning the race for the freshmen.

Partridge, the sophomore, against whom he was to ride, picked up Jack Ready, who had crossed the tape with a whoop, a big winner over Brentwood, and Dashleigh found himself far behind Partridge at the very start.

Partridge was a cyclist, too, of no mean skill. He was tall and slight of build, of light weight, but with tremendous leg-power and endurance.

Dashleigh knew that if he rode a winning race he had hot work cut out for him. Frank had whispered encouragingly to him as the start was made, and that whisper seemed to lift him over the track and send him on as if winged.

The cycling that followed was worth going miles to see. Even the freshmen, bewildered at seeing Dashleigh instead of Dade Morgan racing Partridge, soon

forgot Morgan and their wonder about his absence in watching the splendid work of their rider.

Hodge stood at Merriwell's side, hot and panting, thinking of Morgan, with fingers that ached to take Dade by the throat.

Bruce was also at Frank's side now. Just opposite and a few feet away, Jack Ready was swinging his cap and chirping in his airy manner, begging Partridge to "walk away from the other fellow."

"You're a bird, Partridge!" he shrilled. "You've got wings on your heels! Dashleigh is flying too low to overtake such a flyer as a Partridge. Lie still, my fluttering heart—lie still!"

Others began to howl that Partridge was a "bird," delighted with the splendid work the sophomore was doing.

"I'm afraid your freshmen are going to get it in the neck, Merriwell!" Bruce droned, as if he cared not which side won, though he was intensely eager to have the freshmen win.

"It's all on account of Dade Morgan!" Hodge snapped. "I knew the fellow would play Merry false."

"Don't steam so, Hodge!" Frank laughed.

"How can I help it?"

"You'll choke, if you don't cool off!"

It did seem that Bart was on the point of choking or exploding, so angry was he.

At the end of the first lap, Dashleigh had regained

some of the distance lost to the freshmen by the splendid riding of Jack Ready. Before the close of the second lap, he passed Partridge.

In the third lap, Partridge spurred at tremendous speed, and as the flying wheelmen crossed the line it seemed that Partridge was steadily overhauling his freshman opponent. Dashleigh's lame ankle appeared to be giving out.

After the turn into the fourth lap, Partridge passed Dashleigh, and the sophomores rose in a body and howled.

"Oh, you're a bird!" Ready screeched, in a way to cause Merriwell to smile at the enthusiasm of his old friend. "You're all right! Just keep it up! You're hitting the track in high places. What a lovely time we're having!"

The freshmen were howling at Dashleigh to "break" his back.

Merriwell saw Dashleigh rouse himself for a new effort as he was passed by Partridge. He bent lower over the handle-bars, thrusting out his head as if to open the air with it.

Both were going at high speed, their feet and legs fairly flying. Dashleigh's ankle had given a stab of pain as he neared the end of the fourth lap, which caused him to weaken and fall behind, but he forgot that in his fierce determination to win.

Never had he ridden as he now rode—not even in his greatest efforts. He seemed fairly to fly. Near the middle of the lap he overtook and passed Partridge, who was spurting in a desperate effort to hold the lead.

Now the freshmen rose up to whoop and howl. Down toward the end of the stretch came Dashleigh, racing like a wizard. Yard by yard he drew away from Partridge, who, with all his spurting, could not again get near the flying freshman.

There was a tremendous uproar. The freshman was steadily gaining. Lethargic Browning jumped up and down in his excitement like a young schoolboy, while Bart Hodge swung his cap and screamed.

Yard by yard, with feet spinning like pin-wheels, down the final stretch came Bert Dashleigh, crossing the line a splendid winner, amid the frantic cheers of the freshmen—but as he did so he lurched heavily and pitched headforemost from his wheel into the arms of the bystanders.

Merriwell saw that Dashleigh had fainted. The plucky fellow had ridden and won the last lap on pure nerve, with his ankle stabbing with excruciating torture, his strength seemingly all gone; and at the finish had fainted from the pain and the tremendous strain.

But Bert Dashleigh had ridden a splendid race and had won the inter-class games for the freshmen.

The tramp who had been found in the woods and been held in a dressing-room for examination was gone!

The students detailed to watch him had become so much interested in the athletic contests and bicycle-race that they had been negligent in their duty. To render his escape impossible, as they thought, they had tied him; but the ropes were found cut, and the tramp had escaped.

“Was he a tramp?” asked Bruce.

“That’s what I hoped to discover!” said Frank.

“Dade Morgan did that!” growled Bart. “He is at the bottom of the whole thing. Of course the fellow wasn’t a tramp, but some one hired by Morgan to do up Merry. Morgan released him, and then cut out, to throw the bicycle-race. A blind man could see through a thing as plain as that!”

Bart and Merriwell took an electric car, and not long afterward confronted Dade Morgan, whom they found in his own room.

Morgan was flustered and excited. His face was white and drawn, as if he were suffering pain. Hodge accused him boldly of being in the mischief of the afternoon, of having released the supposed tramp, and of having left the field for the purpose of throwing the relay race to spite Merriwell.

“Talk about honor, Morgan! You haven’t any more honor than a thief!”

Morgan's face grew even whiter. He appeared to cower under Hodge's lashing. Merriwell was watching him closely.

"I admit that I left the field," said Dade, speaking slowly and with apparent effort.

"You know you must admit that!" Hodge panted.

"I admit that; but as for those other things, I am willing to swear that I know nothing about them—not a thing!"

"Why did you leave the field?" Frank asked sternly. "Dashleigh won the race for the freshmen."

Dade seemed to brighten.

"I'm glad he did. I'm a freshman, Merriwell, and I assure you that I never intended to do anything to throw that race."

"Why did you leave, then? You were seen to walk away with a stranger!"

"I had to go with that man, Merriwell! I want you to believe that, for it is true. I had to go with him. I couldn't help it."

"Why?" sternly.

"I can't tell you why."

"You mean that you won't?"

"I mean that I can't."

"Let me get at him!" begged Hodge. "Just give me a minute with the white-livered whelp, and I'll——"

Frank put a hand restrainingly on Hodge's arm. Morgan gave Hodge a defiant look of hate.

"That's all the explanation I can give, Merriwell. I simply had to go with that man."

"And that's your only answer?"

"It's the only answer I can give, no matter what comes of it!"

"Oh, I knew he wouldn't tell anything!" Hodge snarled, as he and Merriwell walked away, after leaving the room.

"He won't tell why he left the field, but I believe that he doesn't know just what to make of the other things—the shot from the woods and the escape of the tramp! I could see from his expression that he was speaking the truth about those things. There's a mystery here, Hodge, and I shall set myself to work to find out what it is."

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE MAN OF MYSTERY.

Dade Morgan sat alone in his room that evening, deep in thought. The mystery that was puzzling Frank Merriwell was puzzling him, too, and he was trying to solve it for his own satisfaction.

Suddenly he made a nervous spring which took him almost out of his chair. A footstep had sounded beside him, a light, almost noiseless footstep, and he had fancied himself alone, with his door locked. The sound of the footstep was followed by an almost noiseless, mirthless laugh.

Turning, Morgan found himself face to face with Hector King.

"You're nervous!" said King, slowly doubling his tall form into a deep chair.

"No one but you could have slipped in on me that way," declared Morgan, with a shiver which the visitor did not fail to observe. "I had that door locked tight. Did you unlock it?"

"No; I came in through the keyhole."

He seemed to be looking into Morgan's very soul with his deep, dark eyes.

"Don't look at me that way, please."

There was a repetition of the mirthless laugh.

"I was thinking how handsome you are."

There was something about the mysterious man before him that strangely drew Dade Morgan. He admired the man, although at times he feared him, and at other times he almost hated him.

"Why don't you smile?" the man asked. "You're a killingly handsome boy, if you would only smile. You must smile! Take a look at that face. It shows that you've had a horrible case of the blues."

Morgan rose from his chair, walked to the mirror, and, standing in front of it, coaxed the accustomed smile back to his attractive features. He was still pallid when he turned to the man, and the smile had something mechanical in it. It was not a warm smile; but the smile was there when he again faced Hector King.

"That's better, though it looks a trifle as if you had plastered it on and it was not a part of you. You must make the smile a part of yourself."

"Why don't you take your own medicine?" Dade blurted. "That mirthless laugh is enough to make one's flesh creep."

"That's good! You really look better sometimes when you say right out what you think."

"What I'm thinking about now is what brought you here?"

"Not pleased to see me, eh?"

"Well, I've been in a very bad temper this afternoon."

The man calling himself Hector King continued to look at Morgan with that peculiar, soul-reading glance.

"I didn't like what you did, for one thing."

"No?"

"You have simply queered me with all the freshmen and all the students!" Morgan broke out in a passionate way. "Every one is bound to think that I tried to throw the relay bicycle-race this afternoon. Why did you do that? Why did you come to me just before it was my time to ride and make me leave the grounds with you?"

"You let yourself be troubled by little things."

"It wasn't a little thing. I was ready to ride the final mile of the race, I had trained for it, I knew that I could ride that mile to win, and I knew that if I did it would lift me away up in the estimation of the freshmen and in the estimation of the athletic men of Yale. You refused to let me ride it. You made me sneak from the field like a cur. Every one will know, if they do not already, that I flunked at the crucial moment, and that if Bert Dashleigh had not come forward, though his hurt ankle was fairly killing him, and ridden that mile, the freshmen would have lost the race."

Hector King did not move a muscle.

"You are anxious that I should down Merriwell," Morgan went on, "yet you gave Dashleigh a chance

to win the laurels that I should have had, and at the same time you weaken me and strengthen the hands of Merriwell and his friends."

"I had my reasons, Dade."

"Well, what were they? You must have been crazy! It's made me crazy, anyway. Merriwell and that scoundrel, Bart Hodge, were here in this room this afternoon, after the race was over, and they accused me to my teeth of having played false. And what could I say? Nothing, except that it was not my fault, and that I could not explain."

"When you get through fuming, we'll talk! I want you to blow off steam a while, if it makes you feel better. A fiery-tempered fellow must have a safety-valve, I suppose."

"And you released the tramp, if the fellow was a tramp, who fired the bomb at Merriwell from the woods. I suppose you had that done, too!"

Hector King laughed now as he had not laughed before that night, yet there was no mirth in it. He simply doubled up in his chair and shook, silently.

"So I fooled you, too, did I?"

Dade opened his eyes.

"What do you mean? No, you didn't fool me. I am sure that you released that tramp."

"I was that tramp!"

"What!"

Dade Morgan fairly leaped in his chair.

"I was that tramp myself."

"It was a mighty big risk."

"Oh, was it? You think so, but I don't."

"Why, if they had dragged you to jail, or if they had stripped off your disguise?"

"My dear boy, the smile is fading from your face again! You are beginning to let worry tell on you. Don't worry! That was something that never could have happened."

"Why couldn't it?"

"Because I would not have permitted it to happen."

Almost a look of fear came into Morgan's dark face. A renewed comprehension of the deep power of the man before him weakened and almost unnerved him.

"You understand!"

"I understand that you're a devil——"

"Hector King, if you please. That is my name, you will remember. King, without the Hector, or Hector, without the King, just as you please; but always one or the other or both, and nothing else."

"I forget it sometimes, when I look at you," Morgan apologized.

"Do you know why I am here?"

Morgan did not answer, and the man, staring at him, seemed to forget the question.

When King spoke again his voice had a hollow, far-

away sound, and in volume was scarcely above a whisper. Yet every word seemed to cut into Morgan's heart as if hurled through a trumpet.

"Listen! I am here to help you to gratify your hate against Frank Merriwell and to work out my own plans of personal revenge. You are jealous of him, and envious of him. You want to humiliate and disgrace him, and bring his pride to the dust."

"And strike at every man who is his friend!" Morgan fiercely hissed.

"Just so! You shall have your heart's desire. I am standing back of you. Our interests are mutual in more ways than one, as you know."

Morgan remembered only too well how this man had called him from the relay race that day, and inwardly fumed. The man seemed to read his thoughts.

"I was thrown into a rage to-day, and as I knew he depended more on you than on any one else to win that bicycle-race for him, I simply took you from the grounds."

"And let Dashleigh do what I wanted to do!"

"I failed to count on the grit and ability of that freshman."

"What are your other plans?" asked Morgan quickly. "I want to get them started. I have sworn to down Merriwell and the fellows that train with him, particularly these fresh freshmen who think they are so much better than I am. You have other plans?"

A great rage burned in his heart—a rage that made him as vicious as a rat in a corner.

“First I want to know how it came about that Roland Packard failed to carry out what he promised to do in the football-game against Columbia? I felt sure we could depend on Packard!”

“Merriwell prevented it!”

“You mean by that, that Merriwell himself was responsible for the failure of Packard to carry out his promise.”

“Just so. You fixed Oliver, Roland’s goody-goody brother, who was on the team as quarter-back, and thought you had sent Roland in his place, and that Roland would find a chance to finish Merriwell in one of the football rushes.”

“I thought he had done it—thought he had broken the rascal’s neck, as he said he would do, when he fell on Merriwell that way in the game.”

Dade Morgan’s smile grew more pronounced.

“I observe, Hector King, that you can’t see through everything. It was not Roland Packard who fell on Merriwell in that way with the intention of snapping his neck, but it was Oliver, who did it through an accident.”

“But he was left here in Yale in his room in a hypnotic sleep, and that game was played in New York!”

“You thought so.”

“I know so.”

“You know that you put him to sleep. But you don’t know that Merriwell chanced to run up to their rooms for the purpose of borrowing a nose guard; that he found Oliver there asleep and Roland getting into Oliver’s football clothing; and that he tied up Roland and left him in the room, and awakened Oliver and sent him on to New York with the team to play in the game.”

A deep curse came from the lips of Hector King.

“And now what?”

“It simply makes me more determined than ever to assist you in bringing Frank Merriwell to the ground.”

Morgan’s smile deepened into satisfaction.

“Forgive me if I was ready to rebel a while ago—Hector King; but I’m with you, body and mind, in whatever you want to undertake. It cut me deep when you made me leave the field, for I like to win races and cover myself with glory and have my class think well of me, just as every other freshman does. But I’m more anxious to do up Merriwell and his friends. Give your orders, and I shall do my best to carry them out.”

CHAPTER XXV.

A PAIR OF PLOTTERS.

“Starbright!”

The mysterious man calling himself Hector King had spoken the name, whispering it in his hollow way.

“You aren’t getting along very well in your plans against Starbright?”

Morgan rose and stood before the mirror, carefully arranging his tie and practising the smile he had assumed.

“I can’t get him!” he confessed, with a smile so sweet that it would have deceived Starbright himself.

“I want to help you in your efforts against him.”

“Yes, go on!”

“I have taken the trouble to look into his history a bit.”

Dade opened his ears eagerly.

“Anything black against him? Anything that’s dead sure, with which I can strike him?”

“No, his personal record is straight. If he hadn’t more than once confessed his liking for liquor I shouldn’t know even that against him. Take a pointer from that, Dade! Never blab about your personal weaknesses and so put a club into the hand of your enemy.”

“He doesn’t seem very weak there. He’s had

enough temptations to down any fellow. For my part, I don't think he is so weak along that line as you say."

"Let me tell you something."

The man in black fixed on Morgan those terrible eyes.

"His father and his grandfather and two uncles died of drink. Old Bob Starbright, the sea captain, Dick's father, went out to China to bring back a ship. The captain and the crew had died of fever, and old Captain Bob, being trusted by the ship's owners, went out to bring the vessel home. He failed to bring it, but brought back a report that the ship had been burned or destroyed by Chinese pirates, or something of that kind; as well as having in his own possession all that the ship and the cargo were worth."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that the story of the ship's destruction was a lie out of whole cloth, manufactured by Captain Bob Starbright, father of your freshman, Dick Starbright. He sold the ship and cargo, or disposed of them in some way, and brought the money received home with him. The cargo was of great value, and the ship was worth a pretty figure, and from that time on Bob Starbright simply rolled in wealth; and on that wealth, or some of it, this freshman is now going through Yale."

Dade Morgan tried vainly to keep the smile on his face, but it was fading away.

"And this means——"

"It means that the time is coming when it will be an easy matter for you to ruin Dick Starbright. I shall go to the bottom of this thing. The heirs of the men who owned the ship and cargo are living. A few facts placed in their hands would mean that this wealth, this stolen wealth, for that is what it is, could be taken from Dick Starbright, and he would be a pauper!"

Hector King looked more than ever like a fiend, as he crouched in the depths of the big chair, telling this story and staring at Dade Morgan with eyes which seemed to hold the fires of the infernal regions. He roused himself with an effort.

"You are too good a hater, Morgan!"

Morgan was staring and breathing heavily through tightly-closed teeth.

"For the present, Dade——"

Morgan roused himself.

"For the present you may strike straight at Dick Starbright himself, if you wish, and straight at Frank Merriwell. You're doing well, and I'll help you. You must get Starbright to drinking."

"But I can't."

"You think so?"

"I know it. I've tried."

"Yale is to play the Carlisle Indians here at New Haven next Wednesday. Starbright is one of Merriwell's particular friends, as well as one of his crack football men."

The smile faded from Morgan's face.

"Why, what's the matter?" King asked.

"You want me to do something desperate? To crack Starbright's neck, or Merriwell's?"

"I was speaking of drink, wasn't I? But the chances to play some desperate game at that time will be great. Those Indians fight like wild men. It would not be strange if Merriwell's neck, or Starbright's, should be broken."

"I don't want to try that!" Morgan begged. "That's too desperate for me!"

"I only suggested getting Starbright to drink."

"And I told you that I have tried and failed."

"But it can be done."

"How?"

Hector King felt in a pocket of his black coat.

"I've other plans to help you for that ball-game with the Indians, but this is one. How I shall work the other plans doesn't matter just now. I've more than once formed a plan and then changed it when my fingers fell on something better. I may do so again."

He drew from his pocket a package containing a powder, and displayed it.

"There is to be a banquet at the Majestic Saturday night?"

"Yes."

"Bribe one of the colored servants to drop this into something Starbright is to drink. He won't touch

wine or spirits, you say, so it will have to be put into something else."

"But it would be dangerous for me to approach one of the servants!"

Hector King laughed disdainfully.

"You show the white feather! Well, I will arrange it, then. I'll send one of the servants a telegram calling him out of town, and I'll have a man ready to supply his place who has the nerve and the willingness to do the work. I know just where to put my finger on such a man. After all, perhaps it will be as well for me to work this little game alone."

He put the powder back into his pocket.

"That drug will make the fellow insane for liquor. After he gets that into him, he will feel that he must have liquor or die, and he'll get it. He'll disgrace himself here at Yale and lose his reputation and influence, and be unable to play against Carlisle. That will stab Merriwell, for Merriwell has been warming to this freshman in a strange way. One way to strike Merriwell is through his friends."

"I wish you'd strike Bart Hodge, then!"

"Poof! He isn't worth the trouble. He's just a bully and a braggart."

"I should like to poison him!" Morgan gasped.

"Perhaps you may, some time, if you're obedient along the lines I suggest."

"If Starbright could be ruined through drink and

some plan could be found to down Bart Hodge, it would be almost as good as drowning Merriwell himself!" Morgan murmured.

"Don't let your hatred master you, Dade."

"I can hate like a fiend from the lower pits!" Dade declared, remembering himself and trying to coax the smile back to his face.

"I like you, Dade! You're a man after my own heart."

"You're a devil!" laughed Morgan.

"Thank you for the compliment!"

"Go on with your plans. No one can hear us in here."

"Oh, I made sure of that before I came in! But I prefer to modulate my musical voice; for it is said, you know, that even walls have ears."

He settled back in the chair—he had been leaning forward in his eagerness—and again his black, deep eyes seemed to search Morgan's very heart.

"I hoped we could use Roland Packard again, and perhaps we can, but that experience in the football-game against Columbia makes me shy of him. We'll see! The first thing, however, is to help you in your plans to strike Starbright. But I didn't come to-night especially to discuss plans, but more to see you, for I knew you'd feel rocky about being taken from the athletic-field. You were displeased with that. You

know, though, that I want to help you in your personal revenges!"

"Let it go," said Morgan. "I will pull back my influence some way. I can claim that I was called away by an imperative telegraphic message, which I showed to Merriwell, and that he gave his consent for me to leave the field; that he then put up a game to injure me by pretending that I had sneaked away without letting him know or giving him time to get a substitute rider. I'll fix that up, somehow. Trust me!"

"I'm trusting you. I've always trusted you. Yet you know that it is not necessary for me to trust you."

Morgan seemed to shrink within himself.

"It's all right, King! You may trust me. Help me to down Dick Starbright, and I shall be happy."

"I'll not forget it."

The mysterious man rose to go, making no more noise than a cat slipping through a garret. He stepped to the door, softly fitted a skeleton key to the lock, and was gone.

Morgan roused himself with an effort and looked toward the door.

"What awful power that man has! It makes me shudder to think of it. And partly for my sake he is directing it against Frank Merriwell. Well, I'd rather ten thousand times have him as my friend than as my foe!"

CHAPTER XXVI.

DICK STARBRIGHT FALLS.

"I can't get enough of the stuff!"

It was late Saturday night, or, rather, early Sunday morning. Dick Starbright sat at one of the little tables in the back apartment of the rooms of Rupert Chickering. His eyes were very bright and his face feverishly red. There was a bottle of liquor on the table before him, and with unsteady hand he was half-filling a glass.

Hector King's drug had done its work. The members of the Chickering set, with some of their especial friends, filled the apartments. Donald Pike was there, and also Roland Packard and Bertrand Defarge.

Roland had piloted Dick to these rooms an hour or more before, bringing him there almost direct from the Majestic. And Roland was now chuckling over the success of the plan, which he fancied was of Dade Morgan's own manufacture. It had been a glorious plan, according to his way of thinking, and it had worked beautifully. The drug, and the liquor which Dick had swallowed soon after taking it, had so confused Starbright's mind that when he suffered himself to be led away by Roland Packard, he supposed that Roland was Oliver, for whom he had the highest regard, and he was not even yet undeceived.

"That's right," said Roland, also turning a quantity of the liquor into a glass. "Here's to your good health and to the downfall of Frank Merriwell!"

Starbright turned on him with a disapproving look.

"Merriwell's my friend!" he bluntly declared. "Understand that! Merriwell's my friend."

Roland saw that he could not venture too far.

"Why, what did I say?"

"Something 'gainst Merriwell!"

"Well, I didn't mean it. I was just joking. Drink your whisky. It's good for you."

Roland showed that he did not doubt this, by pretending to gulp down the whisky he had turned into his own glass, and Starbright followed by swallowing his. Lew Veazie, Ollie Lord, Tilton Hull, and Julian Ives looked at Starbright in amazement and admiration.

"Did you ever thee the like?" Veazie whispered. "Why, the fellow dwinkth down the thtuff jutht ath if it wath water! If I thould dwink ath much wine ath he hath dwunk whithkey I'd be tho dwunk, don't you know, that I wouldn't know mythelf from the man in the moon!"

"His head is as hard as iron!" growled Gene Skelding.

Indeed, though Dick Starbright had been swallowing fiery liquor at a terrible rate since taking the drug, secretly administered by the servant substituted for

the regular hotel servant, it seemed to have small effect, for the amount swallowed. Though Starbright's eyes were very bright, glistening bright, in fact, and his hands and face were as hot as fire, he had not lost his head entirely.

"I'll thuggetht thome wine to him," said Veazie. "Mixed dwinkth, you know, are the kind that doeth the work. I heard a fellow thay that mixed dwinkth would thet a fellow up when nothing elthe would."

He teetered up to Dick Starbright, having in one hand a wine-bottle and in the other a tiny glass.

"Thereth nothing quite tho good, don't you know, ath weal wine to make a fellow feel lovely. If you'll twy a little of thith wine!"

Starbright looked at him savagely with those shining eyes; then with a sweep of his brawny arm, he laid Veazie and the bottle and glass in a crashing mass, smashing the bottle, which poured its ruby contents out on the gorgeous rug which covered the center of the floor.

Veazie gasped and flounced like a fish, and when he rose, with white cheeks and shaking limbs, it was seen that a quantity of the wine had found its way onto his face and over his spotless shirt front.

Tilton Hull and the others in the room were gasping and quaking.

"Gwathiouth!" Veazie sputtered. "Gwathiouth!"

Did you ever thee anybody tho wude? Why, heth a weal wude cweature!"

"Did you speak to me?" asked Starbright, fixing on him those shining eyes, which seemed to dart a fiery red glow into the shivering little man.

"No; that ith, I didn't thay anything dithrethpectful!"

"Take care that you don't, then! Perhaps you think I'm drunk?"

"Of course he isn't drunk," whispered Skelding, with a wink, for Skelding was not averse to having Veazie humbled in this way; "but he will be drunk, if he keeps on swilling down that whisky."

"Of course you aren't drunk," said Rupert Chicker- ing. "That is the best liquor obtainable in New Haven. You might drink a gallon of it, and it wouldn't affect you."

"Sure!" agreed Roland Packard. "Try some more of it!"

"Frank Merriwell's my friend!" Starbright savagely declared, jamming his fist heavily against the table. "Understand?"

He glowered at Roland, for the latter's toast still stuck in his memory.

"Merriwell's my friend, and I can lick any man that's got anything to say 'gainst him!"

He brought his fist down again with such force that the table danced.

The palpitating members of the Chickering set began to feel like the man who captured the bear and wished that he hadn't. They had captured the bear, and it began to seem that they would soon be begging for some one to come and lead his bearship away.

"Of course you say that because he put you on the football-team," suggested Defarge.

"No such thing! He put other fellers on the team. He put you there!"

"Sure!" agreed Packard, in a conciliatory tone.

"And he put Packard there!"

He still thought the man before him was Oliver. Packard nodded assent, for he knew not what else to do.

"And he put Dade Morgan there!" Dick asserted, again jamming his fist down on the table. "Dade Morgan hates him, but he put him there all same. Merrivell's square man!"

"Square as a brick!" agreed the conciliatory Packard.

"Square's a house!" Dick cried, again jamming down his fist.

"Come houses aren't square, you know!" chirped Ollie Lord, tiptoeing in his high-heeled shoes and feeling that he had said something very brilliant.

"Merr'well's all right an' Yale's goin' to get the scalp of the C'lisle Indians, too, you bet!"

With shaky hand, Starbright began to pour out another glass of the fiery stuff, urged on by Packard.

"But you must agree that Merriwell is unfair in his methods," Defarge went on, not learning caution by his previous experience.

"Merriwell's fair man!"

"Fair to you, of course, and to his friends. He kicked a goal from your touch-down and from Bart Hodge's, but he failed to kick a goal from Dade Morgan's touch-down. He could have done that as easily as from the other touch-downs. He simply didn't want to, because he doesn't like Morgan."

"'S lie!" Dick declared, jamming the table again with his fist and facing Defarge with those shining eyes. "'S lie, and I can whip the man says it!"

Defarge whitened to the lips.

"No quarreling!" Rupert Chickering gasped. "No quarreling in these rooms."

Roland Packard winked at Defarge, as much as to say, "Hold yourself in a while, old man; we'll get him by and by!"

Then he urged Starbright to take another drink. But Starbright seemed to be in no hurry this time. He pushed back the bottle which Roland lifted and faced again toward Defarge, half-rising from the table.

"I'm going to whip Dade Morgan soon's I meet him! And I can whip any man that's friend of his! See?"

Dade Morgan had been wise enough to remain away from this gathering in the rooms of Rupert Chicker- ing, though he was at that moment fairly hugging himself because he believed that Dick Starbright had at last fallen.

Roland again winked at Defarge to hold himself in, and the French youth succeeded in doing so, though his cheeks remained as white as ashes and his limbs shook.

Seeing that Defarge intended to make no reply to his virtual challenge, Starbright sank back into his seat, and, under the persuasions of Roland, allowed his glass to be again filled.

CHAPTER XXVII.

A FRIEND IN NEED.

Frank Merriwell and Bart Hodge, seated in Merriwell's rooms in Vanderbilt Hall, were talking; Hodge, as usual, raging against Dade Morgan.

"I haven't seen Starbright all day!" said Frank. "He wasn't at chapel this morning, and I haven't seen him anywhere about the campus."

"Oh, it's Sunday, you know, and probably he's gone away somewhere on a trip! He'll be back in the morning. I saw Dashleigh."

"Yes, and he was wandering round as if he had lost something. To tell the truth, some way, I feel uneasy about Starbright."

But Hodge did not want to talk of Starbright that Sunday evening—he wanted to talk of Dade Morgan.

"The freshmen had a great old supper at the Majestic last night, and I'm told that Dade Morgan was the biggest man there. He airily swelled it over the other freshmen. It's a singular thing, the influence that fellow has. I should think they would throw him over for leaving you in the soup in that way at the relay race."

"Yes, Morgan has wonderful influence over the freshmen," Frank thoughtfully admitted. "He's a wonderful fellow, to tell the truth."

"Do you mean to praise him?"

"Only give him his due. He could become a powerful leader here in Yale, if he wasn't crooked. He wants to be a leader, too; but his crookedness will do him by and by. I've never seen it fail yet."

"You know the talk he's still making about you over that football-game?"

"Oh, yes, I know it!"

"He's harping about your unfairness and your unfitness to be captain of the team. He says that you——"

"All of which matters nothing at all to me, Hodge! There are a lot of fellows here who are determined to think no good of me and believe no good of me. If they want to swallow Morgan's gauzy stuff I shall not trouble to keep them from it. It would be of no use. As fast as I could contradict one lie, he would hatch up another."

There was a tap on the door. Merriwell rose to see who was there and found a man with a letter. He tore the envelope open and read:

"Starbright was drugged at the banquet at the 'Majestic' and is now somewhere on a howling drunk from the effects of it.
DIRK."

"What is it?" Hodge asked.

"Just a note from Dirk," Frank answered, putting it in his pocket without further explanation.

Hodge tried to read his friend's face, but found it as calm and unmoved as ever, though he fancied the note must have contained something of importance, and was inwardly raging because Frank had not chosen to take him into his confidence.

Frank was about to turn to his desk to write an answer, when a quick step was heard in the corridor. Turning to the door where Dirk's messenger was waiting, Frank saw Bert Dashleigh. The latter's face was troubled and perplexed.

"I'd like to see you a minute, Merriwell!"

"Certainly," said Frank, rising from the table and going out into the corridor.

Dashleigh took him by the arm and drew him along until the two were beyond earshot of Hodge and the messenger.

"It's about Dick," Bert anxiously whispered. "He's been missing ever since last night. He got to drinking at the banquet last night and disappeared. I've been quietly looking for him all day, and just by chance I stumbled a while ago on information that leads me to believe that he is in Rupert Chickering's rooms. Of course he's intoxicated and they're keeping him there. They hate him, you know!"

"How did you find out?"

Bert looked more troubled and a bit ashamed.

"Well, you see—that is, I have been a little chummy with the Chickering set, and I thought I would go up

there to-night a little while. I couldn't get in, for the doors were locked, but I heard Dick's voice. I knew he had been drinking, from the sound of it."

"I'll go right over there!" Frank promised quietly, with a look of grim determination. Then, while Bert Dashleigh slipped away, filled with uneasiness for his friend, Starbright, and with admiration and thankfulness toward Merriwell, Frank went back to his rooms.

Hastily scratching a few lines to Selton Dirk, Frank put them in a sealed envelope, which he gave to Hodge instead of to the messenger.

"Take those to Dirk for me, please," he said.

Bart was on his feet in an instant.

"It's a personal matter, Bart. I can explain it to you by and by."

Bart had his hat and was ready to go.

"Any answer?" he questioned.

"No. And say, Bart, I may be out when you return. If I am, don't wait for me."

Bart hesitated.

"And if I should be gone a day or so, don't think anything strange about it," Merry added.

"Anything about Dade Morgan?" Bart demanded, with flashing eyes."

"Yes; just one of his plots. But I'm going to block it. You can help me more by carrying that to Dirk than in any other way just now."

The faithful fellow was in the corridor, and in another moment Frank heard him tramping away.

"No other answer," Frank said to the messenger, who still respectfully waited, and the man disappeared after Bart.

When both were gone, Frank hastened toward the rooms of Rupert Chickering. He found the doors locked, and there was no reply to his knock, though he heard whispered voices, and knew that the rooms were occupied. Again his hard knuckles hammered on the panels of the door.

"Who's there?" came in the voice of Julian Ives.

Merriwell disguised his voice.

"Open the door!"

The command was peremptory. There was a shuffling inside; then the door was cautiously unlocked and drawn partly open.

Frank put his shoulder against it and hurled it wide open. Lew Veazie stood there with his ferocious dog-head cane. Behind Veazie, Frank saw other forms.

"Why, you wude cweature!" Veazie protested, flourishing the cane.

Frank pushed on without noticing this challenge. Veazie, remembering that he had once said that he would like nothing better than to meet Merriwell face to face armed with that cane, and feeling that the eyes of his friends were on him did not dare to show the white feather, and struck viciously at Merriwell.

In an instant the beautiful cane was out of his hand, and he heard it snap in two across Merriwell's knee.

"Why, you thcoundrel!" he lisped. "How dare you?"

Frank brushed him aside as if he were a fly, and strode into the room, looking about him with a glance that set the hearts of the Chickering set to palpitating.

For a moment Gene Skelding appeared about to launch himself at Merriwell's throat, but he thought better of it and retreated with the others.

"What do you want?" Chickering asked.

"I want Dick Starbright!" he demanded.

"Thish way! Right side up!" he heard a thick voice mumble from the adjoining room.

Packard stepped forward as if to oppose Frank, and Defarge fell in behind him.

"See here," said Merriwell, facing them quietly. "You fellows know why I am here."

"We know that you're an insolent scoundrel!" panted Packard, who had drunk just enough liquor to make him pugilistic, though he had pretended to Dick Starbright that he was drinking like a fish.

A blow squarely between the eyes knocked Packard against the wall. He was dazed for a moment; but, thrusting his hand into the side pocket of his coat, he slipped on a set of iron knuckles, and again came at Merriwell, while Defarge also rushed at Frank.

Defarge tumbled backward from a blow that fairly lifted him from the floor, while Merriwell with his left hand gripped Packard's wrist and gave it a wrench that sent the fellow to his knees.

"Let me out of here, fellowth!" Lew Veazie screeched. "The man'th cwazy! Let me out of here!"

Julian Ives, Ollie Lord, and Tilton Hull rushed for the open door at the same time, and, coming together with a butting crash, fell to the floor in a heap.

Rupert Chickering looked as if he wanted to run, too. Gene Skelding alone of all the inane set held his ground.

Then a lionlike voice sounded in Merriwell's ear, and he saw the giant form of the young freshman, Dick Starbright, at his side. Starbright was reeling and scarcely able to stand, but there was an awful glitter of fight in his shining eyes.

"I'll stand by you, Mer'well!" he declared, in his thickened voice. "I'll stand by you, till the seas run dry. You hear me!"

"What do you want?" Chickering again demanded.

Frank flashed a defiant glance at Defarge and Roland Packard, who seemed to want to renew their attack, having already partly recovered from the effects of the heavy blows given them.

"I wanted to see Starbright on a little private business this evening, and I merely called for that purpose!" Frank answered, in a voice as smooth as silk.

"That's all. Dick is going with me! Aren't you, Dick?"

He took Starbright by the arm and steadied him.

"S-sure!" admitted Starbright. "Go wherever Merriwell leads. You hear me! Go wherever Merriwell leads, 'fit's against the bub-biggest football-team on earth. You hear me! Goin' t' lick the stuffin' out of the Indians next week!"

And Merriwell, with a scornful look at the cold-blooded miscreants around him, walked Dick out of the room, without a hand being lifted to detain him.

When Bart Hodge returned to Merriwell's rooms from Selton Dirk's, he found the doors locked and the rooms dark.

But Merriwell was in there, and so was Dick Starbright, the latter sound asleep on a bed.

The rooms were locked and silent all the next day and far into the night, as Bart found by repeated calls. Neither Merriwell nor Starbright appeared in their classes that Monday, nor were they seen anywhere about the college grounds or on the New Haven streets.

Hodge believed and reported that Frank was out of town, and Dashleigh, whom Frank had taken into his confidence, not only reported that Dick Starbright was also out of the city, but cleverly contrived to smuggle some food into Frank's rooms.

Such absences were not unusual, and they excited scarcely a ripple of comment. The Chickering set had vainly tried to get Starbright down from Rupert's apartments that he might make a public exhibition of himself in an intoxicated condition, and now Frank was resolved that no other persons should see him in that state.

But the Chickering crowd spread the report of Starbright's fall, nevertheless, and were aided in it by Dade Morgan, Defarge, Roland Packard, and others, who retailed the story as if it were something delectable.

But Merriwell stood guard over the drugged and drink-crazed freshman, and that Monday night conducted him to his rooms, remaining there with him all night.

On Tuesday morning, Frank and Dick were back in their classes, Frank as serene and unperturbed as ever, and Dick looking determined and resolute, though his face was noticeably white, and there was a trembling of his hands which he could not entirely overcome.

Again Merriwell had saved Dick Starbright, and Dade Morgan, in the silence of his room, fumed and raged, and set his wits to work to invent new plans for Dick's overthrow and to supplement and carry out certain instructions pertaining to the Indian football-game which he had that day received in a letter from Hector King.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

MERRIWELL'S PERIL.

A great tide of humanity was pouring steadily out of the Yale field to witness the game between Yale's triumphant eleven and the fighting football Indians from Carlisle. The electric cars were crowded, and people on foot and in carriages were moving toward the field long before the time for the beginning of the game.

Horses and equipages were decked with blue ribbons. Blue banners fluttered and flaunted in the streets and over awnings and round awning posts. In short, the Yale blue was everywhere, even in the sky which was, that Wednesday afternoon, of a beautiful deep azure.

In the vicinity of the field a man had set in operation a large captive gas balloon, in which people were making short ascensions to the limit of the length of the cable holding the balloon. This balloon was decked out in blue ribbons, and its basket was wrapped in a mesh of blue.

Even the New Haven dogs wore the college colors on their collars and round their necks, and had bows of blue ribbons tied to their wagging tails.

Everywhere the loyal New Haven people were whooping things up for Yale, and the Yale cry boomed

out at intervals from marching undergraduates, whose enthusiasm was keyed to such tension that it had to be given audible vent.

The Indians were there, too. That is, they had arrived in New Haven, though they had not yet shown themselves at the field. Some Indian rooters had come over from the Carlisle school with them, but they were silent so far.

Yet all Yale and New Haven knew that the Indians were no mean antagonists on a football-field—that, in fact, Yale had that day before her as hard fighting on the gridiron as she was likely to be forced to do during the football season, for the Indians from Carlisle had a most reckless way of playing football, breaking through interference like battering-rams and mowing down runners as if the fear of injuries or death itself never entered one of their heads.

Frank went to the field with Inza and Elsie in a carriage, accompanied by Charles Conrad Merriwell.

This was long before the time the game was to be called, for Merry wanted to see the men in practise, and the girls were as anxious to witness this as he. Charles Merriwell had also developed into a football enthusiast, and believed that his son Frank was the greatest football captain that ever trod any gridiron.

Dick Starbright, still looking white and feeling weak, but with an unconquerable resolution, went out to the field in a trolley-car, accompanied by Bert Dash-

leigh. As they rode along, they saw Dade Morgan dash by guiding a handsome pair of high-stepping blacks. Rosalind Thornton was at Dade's side, looking radiantly beautiful.

Dick's face whitened still more when he beheld her, but he made no comment, and Dashleigh, observing this look, was too considerate of his friend's feelings to say a word.

"If Dade Morgan hopes to take away any of my football courage by that," thought Dick, "he is mightily mistaken!"

Dick and Bert reached the field some time after Merriwell and his party. One of the first things that attracted their attention after getting out of the car was the beribboned and blue-decked balloon, soaring lightly above the heads of the swarming people outside of the field.

In the basket of this balloon, as they approached it, they saw Charles Conrad Merriwell and Inza Burrage. Though both were some distance above the heads of the two youths, yet Dick and Bert were able to hear Inza's joyous laughter and something of the talk of Merriwell, though not the subject matter of the talk.

"Charles Merriwell has rented the balloon for the remainder of the afternoon," they heard a student say, "and Inza Burrage is going to sit with him up there and watch the game. That's what I call great! It

beats a grand-stand seat all hollow! Frank Merriwell's a lucky dog to have a father with money to burn and not afraid to burn it."

Then Dick heard Charles Merriwell give some order to the man who stood at the lower end of the cable, which was fastened to a powerful winch.

"The old man's going to come down!" was the next thing that Starbright heard from the lips of some one on the ground.

The balloon began to descend slowly. It came down until it was not more than a dozen feet from the ground.

Then there was a sudden snap of the cable, which strained, while the balloon gave a lurch. Inza uttered a startled cry, and pointed downward, and Charles Merriwell, rising in the basket, seemed about to jump to the ground.

There was another snap, as a strand of the cable parted, and another lurch of the balloon.

Up to this moment neither Dick nor Bert had observed Frank Merriwell. Now they saw him dive through the crowd as if he were a football-runner burrowing through an interference, hurling people right and left.

Bert gave a gasping cry, when he heard another snap of the rope and saw the balloon shoot upward like a rocket. Frank Merriwell was hanging to the cable attached to the balloon, and was also shooting upward!

Frank had been only a few yards away when he saw the balloon give that first lurch. He knew that for some reason the rope was parting, and he forthwith dove at reckless speed through the excited crowd toward the basket in which sat Inza and his father. The thought that perhaps this was some of the unexpected work of the mysterious foe, who had been striking at him from the dark, shot through him like a flash.

He had no time for investigation, however. Pushing people to the right and left, he crossed the intervening distance in a mad rush, and could do no more than lay his hands on the upper part of the severed rope as the basket was jerked violently up.

As the balloon shot skyward, lifting him with it, he for the first time observed that the wind was setting strongly toward the bay and the Sound, and the seemingly wild thought that the whole thing was the work of the miscreant who had caused the bomb to be shot at him from the woods on the afternoon of the athletic games deepened almost into a certainty.

His dash toward the basket had been in the hope that he could do something to stop the impending peril. Further than that he had not been given time to think. Now he realized that his own peril was even greater than that of those in the basket.

A great roar was arising from the throats of the ex-

cited people below—a roar that smote wildly and almost deafeningly on Frank's ears as he was thus borne upward.

He could not drop to the ground now. He knew that, and he knew, too, that he had no desire to drop. The balloon was already setting bayward, and if he could get into the basket, his nerve and experience might enable him to save his father and Inza from the terrible fate of being carried out to sea and drowned.

This last blow of his foe was the most terrible of all. It was so villainous that it did not seem possible a being in human form could have aimed it.

The rope was trailing between Frank's legs, and he gave a quick downward glance at it. Though its end was swishing and swaying in the wind, so that he could not see it plainly, he felt sure it had been severed, or partly so, with a knife.

"If I could only get into the basket!" was his thought. And it was instantly followed by the iron determination:

"I will get into it!"

Charles Merriwell, with face as white as his hair, was staring down at his son.

Inza was at his side, and, though her dark cheeks were now pale, there was something in her glance that helped to sink that iron resolution deeper into Frank's soul.

"You can make it, Frank!" she urged, in a voice

that was as calm and steady as if she were merely talking to him on the ground. "I am sure you can make it!"

Frank had no breath for words, but his look sent back an answering assurance. He did not again glance toward the ground, which seemed dropping away from the balloon with frightful velocity, but began to climb upward toward the car, hand over hand.

Now all the athletic training of years found its recompense. The muscles of steel, the nerves of iron, the immeasurable calmness, the thinking head, and the cool judgment—all the things that had become his by training and perseverance, all the powers that had made him master on the baseball-field, the football and the athletic-field, that had carried him successfully through trials and adventures innumerable, came to his aid in this time of supreme need.

Hand over hand, with Inza's cool assuring voice calling to him, Frank climbed steadily up the swaying rope—mounted as surely and firmly as if he were merely climbing a rope in the Yale gymnasium, as he had climbed them there hundreds of times.

The people below swarmed to and fro and howled and shouted, in a very paroxysm of excitement, and the din of it came to his ears; for, though the balloon was so rapidly swinging upward and away, sound rises to a surprising distance. Not for a moment did his iron nerve relax.

Then he felt Inza's hands on one of his upthrust wrists, looked squarely into her earnest, courageous dark eyes, and heard her say:

"Now you're safe, Frank!"

Another upward swing, and he hooked his fingers over the rim of the basket.

Charles Merriwell had him by the arms and shoulders. Inza was aiding him, too.

Thus assisted, Frank climbed up and into the basket, where he dropped down almost breathless.

He heard a great shout, like a shout of triumph, wafted faintly upward from the receding earth.

"Thank God!" Charles Merriwell gasped.

"I knew you could do it, Frank!" Inza whispered, putting her arms round him to support him. But he did not need this aid. He was somewhat blown, that was all, and now he straightened up, and, bending over the basket, looked downward.

The people in and near the ball-field, clustered in excited groups or running about, had dwindled to the size of very small children. They made him think of nothing so much as an excited nest of ants.

The city of New Haven, the surrounding country, and the bay, stretched out beneath him like a great map. The houses seemed small, and the cars on the electric lines, as well as the vessels in the harbor, looked very diminutive. It was a wonderful panorama which rolled out below.

But Frank at once aroused to action. He saw that the balloon was being carried by the breeze straight out over the bay. Already they were over the water-line.

"The next is to find out how to get down."

He spoke quite calmly.

"If we succeed in descending we shall go right into the water," said his father.

"I'm sure some one cut the rope!" declared Inza.

Merriwell drew the end of the rope into the basket. It had been half-severed by a knife.

"Who did it?"

"I don't know who. I thought I saw a man slash at it with a knife."

Frank thought again of the mysterious man who had caused the bomb to be fired at him from the fringe of woods.

CHAPTER XXIX.

INTO THE WATER.

Inza could not tell who the man was she fancied she had seen slash at the balloon rope, and, after thinking over the matter a moment, Frank reached the conclusion that it had not been the balloonist himself. The knife-stroke, quickly given, had been delivered by some mysterious hand, presumably the hand of some one paid by him to strike at Charles Conrad Merriwell.

There could be no doubt that this blow had been aimed at the elder Merriwell himself—which took no account of the fact that in seeking to doom Charles Merriwell to an awful death in the waters of the bay or Sound, the life of an innocent girl was also to be sacrificed if the plan succeeded.

Mr. Merriwell sprang for a rope that was trailing downward from the top of the balloon, and began to pull at it, thinking it was the valve-rope for the purpose of releasing the gas.

Frank caught his hand.

“No,” he said, as he stayed the hand of his father, “that is not the rope. That rope is sewed into the cloth of the balloon. If you should jerk hard on that you would tear out a section of the balloon envelope, which would send us down like a shot.”

Charles Merriwell gasped.

"Nearly all gas-balloons have such a rope, to be used only in desperate emergencies, when it is better to go down like a shot and take the chances rather than stay up longer," explained Frank.

He took hold of a second dangling cord. But before pulling it he looked about and down into the basket.

"If we go up higher we may strike a current that will help us."

Then he stooped and threw out a heavy bag of sand that rested at his feet. The balloon began to ascend rapidly. Inza uttered a cry of joy.

"The breeze has changed!"

"Yes, we've struck another current!"

Charles Merriwell's eyes took on a look of hope. He was in many respects as courageous as his son, but that sudden flight of the balloon had somewhat unnerved him, and the drift over the bay was truly alarming.

"We're setting toward that point of land!" said Inza.

Frank was studying it and calculating the chances. Glancing toward the wharves, he saw some boats putting out, among them a swift tug, and he knew that their peril had been communicated to the wharves by telephone, and that an effort was being made to aid them, if possible.

Again he studied the point of land toward which the balloon was now drifting. Beyond that point was more water. If the balloon could be shot down quickly it might land on that point, but if the lower seaward-setting current caught it again, it would be borne out beyond the point, and the result would be disastrous.

The tug was plowing along, getting under good headway, with a cloud of black smoke pouring from her funnel.

"You won't be able to win that football-game this afternoon, Frank!" said Inza.

He looked into her eyes, dark and deep as wells. The statement had not been made hysterically.

"If we can land, there is no telling what may happen. The first thing is to make a landing."

"Can't you descend there?" pointing to the spur. "I think you can!"

"We must try it. There is nothing else to do!"

The time had come for action. Frank firmly pulled the valve-cord, and the hiss of escaping gas was at once heard. The balloon began to settle. He pulled the valve wider open, and the balloon dropped downward with frightful velocity. The current of seaward-setting air caught it and bent the collapsing bag seaward; but Frank continued to let the gas escape, and so rapidly that the heavily freighted car shot down, down, through the air current.

Yet there was enough breeze pushing against the col-

lapsing envelope to swing the balloon out to the very tip of the point of land.

"We're going to drop into the water!" said Charles Merriwell.

Frank saw that this was so. He released the cord and threw out the other bags of sand.

But the buoyancy of the bag had been so reduced that the balloon continued to settle in spite of this.

"Get ready to jump!" he said. "We will have to swim for it!"

He put his arm round Inza in a protecting way. The tug was still too far off to render assistance.

With desperate courage, Frank again pulled the valve-cord, hoping the balloon would strike the extreme tip of the land; but, though the car shot frightfully downward, with the collapsing envelope almost dropping upon the car in a smothering way, the point of land was missed.

Frank commanded his father to leap, and Charles Merriwell sprang from the basket.

Before Frank could follow his example, the basket struck the water, the envelope and its meshing cords fell upon him and Inza, and he found himself floundering with her in the water.

He instantly became aware that Inza had in some manner been rendered unconscious and helpless. She rested in his arms like a lump of lead. The mesh of

the collapsed balloon bag and the water was choking him.

He tried to tear the envelope aside with his free hand, and, failing in that, he sank in the water, giving himself a downward push against the basket. He was still clinging to Inza.

That downward dive freed him from the balloon, and he now began to fight to get to the surface before it was too late, with a horrible fear for Inza's safety tugging at his heart.

It seemed an age before he reached the surface of the water, where he could breathe and look around.

His first glance was into Inza's face. It was white and deathly, and a red contusion on the right side of her head in the edge of the hair showed where she had been struck—by the shaft of the light balloon anchor, as he afterward was sure.

He saw his father in the water a few feet away, coming toward him, and he knew that Mr. Merriwell had been swimming round in the hope of being able to render assistance.

“Swim for the land!” he urged.

It was but a few yards away, and Charles Merriwell turned toward it, and Frank, alarmed beyond measure for Inza, began to swim in the same direction, holding her head well out of the water and fighting against the tide with his strong, free arm.

The struggle that followed was a fierce one, for the

tide was powerful, and Merriwell was heavily weighted and hampered by the girl who lay on his arm like a log. But he succeeded in gaining the shore, and staggered up the beach almost exhausted.

His father was at his side to render aid. Frank placed Inza gently on the sand, stripped off his coat for a pillow for her head, and at once began energetic efforts for her restoration. A horseman, who had seen the balloon drop into the water, came galloping down the little peninsula.

“She needs the aid of a doctor,” suggested Charles Merriwell.

Frank saw that this was so, and, without delay, he mounted to the proffered saddle, where Inza was handed up to him, and then rode across the point toward the oncoming tug, beckoning with his hand. He had lost his hat, and the balloon was drifting out to sea.

The tug sounded its whistle in answer to his signal and turned toward the shore. He was out of the saddle, supporting Inza on the sand, a great dread in his heart, when the tug lay to off shore and sent a boat for him.

A little later, both were on the tug, dripping wet, and the tug, urged by Frank's desire for haste, was flying back to the New Haven wharves, with Inza still unconscious.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE COURAGE OF INZA.

Frank Merriwell was again on the football-field, less than two hours after the startling flight of the balloon. Inza had sent him there—from her cot in the hospital, where, with shining eyes and indomitable spirit, she had begged him to return to the field and win the game.

“You can do it, Frank!” she had urged. “I am all right, really. Ask the surgeon. He will tell you that I am all right. I want you to go, and I want you to win that game. You will make a better fight, I know, if you think of me lying here longing for you to win and sure that you can win!”

Frank talked with the surgeon.

“I think she is all right,” the surgeon said.

“Then you are not sure of it?”

“Well, you see, I can’t tell just how serious that blow on the head was. She was delirious at first, you know. But her mind is clear now. Yes, I think she is all right, and that it will be safe for you to go.”

“And if there is——”

“If there is any change, I will let you know immediately, and you can leave the field.”

Elsie, who had been summoned, with a loyal, loving devotion, remained with Inza, for the purpose of

watching at her bedside until she should be able to leave the hospital. Elsie, with a heart as true as her blue eyes!

And Frank hurried to the field, filled with a determination to lead his football-team to victory, in spite of all that had occurred, and sure, as Inza had said, that the thought of the indomitable heroine on the white cot in the New Haven hospital would stir his resolution and put the fiber of certain victory into his muscles and into his heart.

The great crowd was streaming back, for already the fact had been widely heralded that Merriwell had been rescued unharmed and would play the game.

The delay had not been great. The Indians had been generous and had not demanded that the play should go on; but they were ready for the work when they knew that the battle was to be waged.

Frank rallied his eleven to have a talk with them, followed by a little practise, and while the Carlisle men were getting in trim, he went to the telephone that was on the field and talked with the surgeon concerning Inza's condition. Elsie came to the phone and spoke with him.

"Inza is doing nicely," she declared. "We know that you can win! Inza says that you can, and you know that when she says a thing of that kind she means it! Good-by! We will see you and your men

making that fight, in imagination, if no other way, and remember that we are your mascots!"

Charles Merriwell came upon the field at that moment and hurried up to Frank.

"Almost as big a crowd as before the accident," he declared. "I am hoping it will be a great game, after all. And that girl—both of them, in fact—are as brave as they can be!"

"Was it an accident?" Frank asked.

"It would seem not. The rope was cut. It couldn't have been an accident."

"The fellow who manipulated the balloon is gone," Frank explained. "It is said that he has taken a boat and gone out into the bay in the hope of recovering his balloon. Perhaps we'll get at the truth of this matter after a while. Just now we must play football."

The football enthusiasts were roaring. The afternoon had been full of excitement, and the excitement of what was expected to be a great game was yet to come.

The Indians were still practising, their great shocks of hair above their stern faces bobbing round after the ball. The Indian rooters, imitative of the whites, now and then raised a yell.

The Yale rooters, and under that term must be grouped all of the Yale undergraduates and most of the citizens of New Haven on the field, were grouped in platoons. Now and then a man bobbed up in front of one of these platoons, swung his arms in fantastic

fashion, something like a Sousa waving to his band, and then the platoon boomed out in a deafening way that drowned the yells of the Indians. One of the platoons was singing, while the others yelled and barked out the Yale cry.

The tune was, "Hold the Fort."

"Line up, rushers, line up briskly,
Line up with a will;
We can beat the famous Red Men,
And we know we will.

CHORUS:

"Hold the ball, for Merry's coming,
See, he signals still;
Browning goes right through the center,
Win we must and will!"

There was not much poetry in it, but it was roared out in a brave and encouraging way and served to stiffen the nerves and the determination of Yale's eleven.

"You bet we will!" Bart Hodge declared. "We're going to down them in great shape this afternoon. No man but Merry could general a football-game after what he has been through, but the stuff is in Merry. Why, nearly every man on the eleven would kill himself to win now. We've got to win!"

"Sure!" grunted Browning, while his eyes shone and his great chest heaved.

Then, with Inza's words and Elsie's ringing in his ears, and with a picture in his heart of the dark-eyed

girl on that white cot in the hospital, Frank Merriwell gathered his eleven round him and went onto the field.

On the toss Yale won the choice of goal and made her selection, though the wind had died down, so that really there was not much advantage to be gained. Then the teams lined up on the gridiron in this formation, Frank Merriwell and Dick Starbright having changed positions as half-backs:

YALE:

Bingham, f. b.
 Starbright, r. h. b.
 Merriwell, l. h. b.
 Packard, q. b.
 Hodge, r. e.
 Defarge, f. t.
 Beckwith, r. g.
 Ready, c.
 Browning, l. g.
 Carson, l. t.
 Morgan, l. e.

CARLISLE:

Cloudman, l. r.
 Loup, l. t.
 Pierce, l. g.
 Miller, c.
 Archiquette, r. g.
 Redwater, r. t.
 Wheelock, r. e.
 Hudson, capt., q. b.
 Cayou, l. h. b.
 Metoxen, r. h. b.
 Rogers, f. b.

Merriwell had retained Oliver Packard, for he saw that Oliver was all right that day and could be relied upon. Besides, there was no better man for the position. He had likewise retained Dade Morgan and Bertrand Defarge, even though they were his bitter enemies. As an end there were few better men than Morgan, and Defarge had shown that he could do excellent work as tackle. Frank believed that Morgan was the best man for the place he held, notwithstanding his strange, and still unexplained, flunk in the relay bicycle-race. Nevertheless, Frank had plenty of substi-

tutes ready to take these positions should he see that there was need, or should any of the players be injured.

Frank looked at Starbright. Dick's face was still white, but there was in it a determined glance that pleased the Yale captain. It assured him that he could depend on the giant freshman for good work that day.

And as for Hodge, Browning, Ready, and Carson, they were always reliable and ever to be depended on to do their best for Yale and for Merriwell.

The Indians had the kick-off, and the ball was placed in the exact center of the field, the Yale men standing back ten yards in their own territory, holding themselves in tense readiness, like hounds straining in leash, for the opening play.

Pierce made the kick-off for Carlisle—a magnificent punt, which sent the pigskin hurtling over the field far up to Yale's eight-yard line.

The friends of the Indian team gave a yell that sounded like a fierce war-whoop. In a splendid dash, Merriwell caught the ball; then started to run with it.

Both teams were now in Yale's territory. Starbright and Bingham raced at Frank's side and hurled themselves forward in the fierce obstruction of the Indians' rush line. Dade Morgan overthrew Pierce, who broke through the Yale line and was dashing on Frank, when Carson and Browning then opened up a path which let Frank out with the ball.

The Yale rooters sent up an awful roar. Cayou, the half-back, was bowled over by Frank himself, who now ran for the Carlisle goal.

But he had yet to account with Hudson, the captain, and with Cloudman, the giant left end, who came at him with a mighty rush.

Merriwell evaded the outstretched hands of Cloudman, sprawled Hudson at full length, and then, with Cloudman racing wildly at his heels, he tore along for the Carlisle goal.

Cloudman was a mighty runner, and though baffled in his attempt to stop Merriwell, he did not despair of yet being able to tackle from behind.

But he was pursuing an even mightier runner. With that picture of Inza on the white cot, and Elsie by her side, and with their words sounding in his ears, Merriwell flew across the gridiron in a mighty burst of speed that took him away from Cloudman and set him far ahead of the others who were rushing along in a wild tide.

The Yale roar boomed forth, followed by the Yale cry, as platoon after platoon burst out in answer to the motions of the men who seemed to rise up from the earth and urge them to crack the blue dome of the sky with the Yale cheer.

And with the Yale cry seeming to lift him, Merriwell crossed the Carlisle goal-line in safety and made a touch-down.

A score of five had been made by this touch-down, which would become six if a goal could be kicked.

Merriwell ordered Browning to make this try for goal, and Jack Ready, lying flat on his stomach, held the ball in his outstretched hands and turned it to get it in just the position that Browning desired. The Indians were standing behind their goal, straining and tremulous, ready to charge like angry tigers as soon as Ready put the ball on the ground.

The throng in the benches had ceased to howl and were watching in breathless expectation.

Then Ready, having sighted and aimed the ball to suit the pleasure of the giant who was to make the place-kick, put it on the ground as Bruce signaled, and the Indians instantly made a wild rush to try to keep a goal from being made.

Plunk!

The sound of Browning's toe striking the pigskin was heard all over the field. The ball rose in its swift flight, passed over the cross-bar and between the goal-posts, with the Yale men again howling out their delight, and the score was 6 to 0.

The ball was now taken again to the center of the field by the Carlisle men, the Yale men falling back ten yards as at the beginning of the game and holding themselves in tense readiness.

Pierce again made the kick-off for Carlisle, sending

the ball this time to Yale's thirty-two-yard line, where it was caught by Dade Morgan.

With the Indians coming at him like unleashed hounds, or like angry waves dashing against the granite barrier of Yale's interference, Dade ran the ball back five yards toward the Carlisle goal, where he was tackled by Cayou, and lost the ball on a fumble.

Merriwell, who had been closely watching Morgan, saw that the latter was playing honest football.

Indeed, Dade had reached the conclusion that the only way in which he could reinstate himself in the good graces of those who still questioned his loyalty to Yale in abandoning his mile of the relay bicycle-race was to play football for all he was worth. And this he was doing. He was a superb player, who delighted in the game, and Merriwell still believed that he was, in spite of all that might be said, one of the best men on the eleven.

The Indians had secured the ball and now had it on Yale's forty-yard line, and the sympathizers of the Carlisle men were barking out their joy, sounding like a pack of yelping coyotes.

Hudson, for the Indians, now tried to kick a goal from the field, dropping back for room and kicking with lightninglike quickness, while the red men tried with arms and shoulders and bodies to hold back and break the Yale rush.

The spectators were yelling in their excitement.

Browning broke through the Indian interference, laying Archiquette and Rogers sprawling on their backs, and, though Hudson made his kick, Browning was so close upon him that the pigskin was veered and went wide of the mark.

It had seemed for a moment that the red men were to have a goal, and secure a score that would leave them only one point behind Yale; but Browning had broken through and deflected the ball.

The ball was brought out to Yale's twenty-five yard, from which point the play was now to start afresh.

The excitement was something tremendous, and the Yale platoons were "'rah, 'rah, 'rahing," under the direction of the men who rose apparently out of the ground at intervals to swing their arms and urge on the yelling.

Merriwell now decided to buck the Indians' center. The teams lined up for the scrimmage, and Ready snapped back the ball to Oliver Packard, who tossed it to Starbright.

Starbright whistled through the Carlisle line like a harpoon and carried the ball ten yards, when he was held by Hudson and Rogers, and the ball was down.

Again there was a line-up for a scrimmage. This time the ball went to Ralph Bingham, Yale's big full-back, who bucked the Indian line for nearly ten yards

more. It was not easy work, for the Indians fought this advance with a strength that was almost ferocious.

In the next scrimmage the ball went again to Starbright, who broke through the Indian line with an impact like a ton of dynamite, hurling the red men right and left. But he was stopped, after he had made eight yards, by Cloudman, in a clever tackle, and the ball was again down.

Again the ball went to Bingham, who made an advance of five yards into Carlisle territory under the protection of a Yale wedge, when he tried to break through and make a run, but was tackled by Metoxen, and in attempting to pass the ball to Hodge lost it to the Indians on a fumble.

The work had been fast and furious, and characterized by obstinate fighting on the part of Carlisle.

CHAPTER XXXI.

BATTLING FOR THE BLUE.

Plunk!

Hudson punted the pigskin from Carlisle's fifty-yard line. It was caught by Starbright near Yale's fifteen-yard line.

Yale and Carlisle came together in a seemingly inextricable mix-up, and out of the swaying, struggling mass Starbright flashed like a meteor.

A Yale roar rose to the sky.

The Carlisle men in the fray could not get out and away from the men of Yale in quick time, but Cloudman and Wheelock, the Indian ends, closed in on Starbright with a rush.

He evaded both of these and flashed across the gridiron for a run of fifty-five yards, where he was tackled by Hudson, the quarter-back, who brought him to the ground with a thundering crash.

But all Yale was howling mad with joy over the giant freshman's splendid run.

In the scrimmage that followed, the ball was given to Dade Morgan, on a double pass from Merriwell, and Morgan, dashing round the Indian's right end, carried the ball in a magnificent run that called forth howls of applause from the friends of Yale across Carlisle's goal for Yale's second touch-down.

Then Browning kicked the goal, and the score became 12 for Yale, with the Indians still represented by a humiliating 0.

Once more the ball went to the center of the field, and once more the great kicker, Pierce, was chosen to kick off for the Indians.

He sent the pigskin whirling to Yale's twenty-eight-yard line, where Merriwell caught it, and was downed by Rogers.

Merriwell here decided to change his play, and he bucked the Indians' center. He went resistlessly through the center for a gain of nearly ten yards, with the Yale enthusiasts shouting themselves hoarse, and the substitutes in a flutter of delight.

In the next scrimmage the ball went to Starbright, and he also bucked the Indian center, finding a weak spot in Archiquette, the right guard. He went through Archiquette for a gain of ten yards more before he was pulled down.

Then Merriwell received the ball, and bucked the center again, with five of the big men in the Yale blue thrown into their line—back formation before the spectators knew what had happened.

The Indian line was torn to shreds, and Merriwell leaped through like a lion. But again the Carlisle backs got in their work and Merriwell was down, though not until he had made a gain of nearly fifteen yards.

Things were moving quickly.

Another line-up for a scrimmage, and the ball went again to Starbright, who, aided by the splendid offensive work of the big Yale guards, Browning and Beckwith, assisted as they were by the tackles, bored another hole through the Indian line for a gain of still another ten yards.

The Yale enthusiasts were howling themselves hoarse. This was work worth seeing—this splendid series of rushes which steadily advanced the ball in spite of the bulldog blocking of the Carlisle men.

Again the ball went from the quarter-back to Starbright. This time Pierce broke through the Yale line for a tackle, but was overthrown. Redwater and Archiquette also went down, followed by Rogers.

But the Carlisle ends, throwing themselves on Starbright, aided by Hudson, the captain, pulled the freshman down, after another advance of nearly fifteen yards.

The ball now went to Bingham, the big full-back, who, guarded by the Yale rushers, came in behind, as if to break through, but passed the ball to Packard, who flew round the Indians' right end and made another handsome advance of ten yards.

The battle was now right under the shadow of the Carlisle goal-posts. A continuous roar was going up from the benches.

This time Merriwell received the ball, and boldly

bucking the Indian center, tore a hole through it, aided by his interference, and carried the pigskin across the goal-line for the third touch-down.

Then Browning kicked goal, just before the whistle blew and the first half of the game came to an end. Yale had made three touch-downs and three goals, and the Indians nothing, and the score was 18 to 0.

While the spectators were roaring out their delight, Merriwell hurried to the telephone and called up the hospital, asking for the surgeon who had charge of Inza Burrage.

"She is much improved," was the answer. "She has insisted on having constant reports from the field of how the game has been progressing, and the work of your men has seemed to revive and encourage her."

Then Elsie spoke to him.

"We have been hearing of your splendid work, Frank," she said, "and it has seemed to make Inza strong again. The nurse was afraid the reports might excite her and make her head worse, but the doctor thought differently, and I have given her the reports myself. We knew you would win!"

"But the game isn't over," he reminded her.

"But you will win it."

"Yes, I think so myself. We have made a good start, and I'm sure we can hold down the red men, though, in some respects, they are even stronger than they have ever been before. Good-by."

Merriwell left the telephone with a light heart. The fact that Inza was so rapidly improving and that the doctor believed her to be out of danger was more to him than the glory of successfully bucking the Carlisle rush-line or making star runs for touch-downs.

When he again came in touch with his men, as they stood about in blankets waiting for the beginning of the second half, he found the members of the flock gathered round Hodge and Browning, and all wildly enthusiastic—not over the work of any of their own number in the first half of the game, but over the splendid performances of Merriwell and the young freshman, Starbright.

Though Starbright had not recovered from the effects of the drug administered to him and the liquor he had been induced to swallow while under its influence, he had made some gamy plays, bucking the line with all the fearlessness of a fighting gladiator.

There was football stuff of the highest quality in Dick Starbright, and Merriwell did not hesitate to add his word of praise to what was being said, nor did he hesitate later to personally tell Starbright how much he was pleased with his splendid performances.

From the first half of the game Merriwell saw that he could score on the Indians almost at will. He had made three touch-downs, followed by goals—the last touch-down being gained by a series of mass plays directed straight at the Carlisle rush-line—mass plays

that were brilliantly successful, and which fully proved that the pigskin could be carried across the Indian goal-line every time this sort of work was attempted.

But it was hard and very exhausting work, and there seemed to be no real need of it. Hence, when the line-up came for the beginning of the second half of the game, having substituted several men, Frank decided to make his team play entirely on the defensive, giving the Indians the ball as much as possible.

At the opening of the second half Bingham kicked off into the Indians' territory, and Cayou sent the ball back. This was followed by some lively volleying, in which the pigskin flew to and fro from the Yale territory into that of the Indian and back again, and then back.

Then Metoxen got the ball and tried to make a run by going round Yale's left end. He was stopped by Silver, who had been substituted as a quarter-back in place of Packard.

A scrimmage followed which took the ball back toward the Indian goal-line, and again Metoxen got it and tried to run. He was blocked by Merriwell, the ball flying from his grasp.

Oscar Haggard, playing tackle in Carson's position, fell on the ball. But Yale simply kicked the ball into Carlisle territory. It was caught by Metoxen, who now made a fine run.

He had already shown that he was a quick starter,

and now he tried to go round the left end, protected by the Carlisle interference. The Yale and Carlisle lines came together in a shock, and Metoxen, finding a hole, dove through like a weasel, and, running low, sprinted for a touch-down.

Ned Silver leaped at him for a tackle, but went down sprawling; and Dick Starbright, who also tried to get the Indian runner, found his way blocked by interferers. Then Merriwell came across the gridiron in mighty bounds, while Bingham, who had struggled out of the swaying mass, also shot in pursuit.

But it was Merriwell who prevented the touch-down. His diagonal charge after and toward the flying runner was like that of a race-horse. Inch by inch, foot by foot, he steadily overhauled Metoxen, who was running as if for dear life.

Then Merriwell's hands went out; they caught Metoxen round the hips, slipped down his legs, and the runner went to the ground like a falling tree.

Following this, Hudson tried to kick a goal, but Jack Ready broke through the Indian line like a Western cyclone and blocked the attempt.

Yale then kicked the pigskin back into Indian territory, where it was caught by Cayou, who now tried for a touch-down.

The Indian interference was terrific, and by its help Cayou broke through, as Metoxen had, covering the

ground with sprawling figures clad in Yale blue, and raced away for Yale's goal-line.

But he found that he had to contend with Bart Hodge, who pitched himself forward in a crouching posture, and getting hold of Cayou's hips brought him to the ground, with the Yale goal-line but fifteen yards away.

Throughout the game the Indian interference had been almost ferocious. Merriwell now determined to break it up, and in the playing that followed he sent in Hodge and Dade Morgan, the ends, for this purpose, and they ripped the line of interference wide open time and again.

It was remarkable, for Hodge and Morgan hated each other with the most bitter intensity; but they were playing for Yale, and Merriwell's mastery over both was for the time complete.

Frank now permitted the ball to be kept for the most part in Yale's territory. He did not believe that the Indians could score, unless it would be by some unforeseen good fortune on their part, and he put in play every method of Yale defense, practising his men on the Indian eleven, and no longer trying to score, but merely working to keep the enemy from scoring, for this was a department of play that Yale must learn as well as aggressive work.

Bingham did some fine punting toward the close of the game, Yale sending the ball back whenever it

CHAPTER XXXII.

MORGAN AND STARBRIGHT.

In the dressing-room, at the close of the game, Dick Starbright came face to face with Dade Morgan.

Starbright would have been glad to evade the meeting, not because he feared the man, but because he disliked him so intensely that he felt that a meeting might lead to trouble. But Morgan came toward him, with that smile on his lips.

“We trounced the Indians.”

“Yes,” said Dick.

Morgan was still sore over the fact that Starbright had knocked him out in a fight some days before. The telltale marks had disappeared from his face, but the memory of it seemed to burn deeper every day.

“There are some men I’d rather trounce than the Carlisle Indians,” Morgan continued. “You said something like that to me on the field, and I presume you meant it.”

“Yes, I meant it.”

“That you would rather throw me down than an Indian runner?”

“Word it that way, if you want to!”

“Then you didn’t say that?”

“I said that there were men I would rather come

up against than such a rusher as Redwater or Cloudman."

"And you meant me?"

"Have it that way, if it pleases you. You must pardon me, though, if I say that I was not troubling my mind to think of you at all just then. I referred to 'football-players.'"

The smile on Morgan's face became more pronounced. It would have pleased some men, but just at that moment it reminded Dick of pictures he had seen of Mephistopheles.

"You try to evade."

Dick turned squarely toward Morgan.

"See here, Morgan," he said, with a sudden flash of fire, "if you want to have trouble with me you can have it at any time and place."

"You think you will find me dead easy?" sneeringly.

"I'm not troubling to think about you at all. When I trouble to think of anybody I choose some one of more worth!"

Morgan's face grew red, though he still retained the smile.

"Miss Thornton, I presume?" he sweetly purred.

"You're a contemptible puppy, Morgan, and I feel that I lower myself by paying any attention to you. But you must not think that I'm afraid of you. If you have any grudge against me, meet me to-night and we'll settle it!"

"Where?" Morgan panted, his face growing white again.

"Suit yourself!"

"You won't meet me?"

"You fool yourself!"

"I shall be glad to get a chance to even that score."

"If you want to fight me, Dade Morgan, meet me somewhere to-night where we will not be disturbed, and I'll give you the best thrashing you ever received."

Morgan was pale and shaking, but he kept the smile.

"All right. I'll fight you with fists to-night, or in any old way. I want a chance to get at you, that's all."

"You can have that chance to-night, and any night, and as many times as you wish. I feel that I'm dirtying my hands to fool with you, but I'll meet you, just the same."

Morgan had tried to conceal his anger, but it was not possible, and he now exploded in a towering rage, and Dick had all he could do to keep from striking him there.

As soon as he had changed his clothing, Dick left, looking for Bart Hodge, whom he found talking to Merriwell. The crowd was streaming back to the city, pleased with the game that had been played, and wildly excited over the mysterious aerial flight which had preceded it.

"I'm going straight to the hospital," Dick heard

Merriwell say, and heard Hodge declare his intention of accompanying him.

Dick understood the meaning, for he knew of the dark-haired girl on the cot, who, with the light-haired girl at her side, had been regarded as the mascots of the team that afternoon.

"I'd like a few words with you before you leave," he said, speaking to Hodge, and feeling almost guilty because he wanted to keep the matter that was in his mind from Frank's knowledge.

"Me?" said Hodge.

Then he left Frank's side, and followed Starbright, who led him beyond sight and ear-shot of the Yale captain.

"I'm going to fight Dade Morgan to-night."

"What's that?"

"Just what I said. I'm going to fight Dade Morgan to-night."

Bart impulsively grabbed him by the hand.

"Oh, I want you to just knock the tar out of that fellow, when you go up against him! You can do it!"

"And I've come to ask you to be my second."

Hodge's face burned with hot delight.

"Starbright," and the hand pressure grew still firmer, "I'll be glad of the chance!"

"But we mustn't say anything to Merriwell about it!"

"Think not? Oh, say! I can't hold that in! I'll

have to tell Merry! He doesn't like Dade Morgan any better than we do."

"But he will veto it, just the same, and take some means to prevent the fight. You won't say a word to him about it?"

"Oh, I'll promise! I want that fight to come off. And, say, Starbright, if you should—mind, I don't think you will! but if you should find the scoundrel too much for you, I'd like to go up against him when you're through with him, or when he's through with you. Oh, I'd like to hammer that scamp's face off!"

After a few further words, Bart hastened to rejoin Merriwell, regarding this as a secret he must keep, yet feeling that he would give a handsome sum to be able to tell Merriwell and have him go along to see the fight.

Frank noticed that Bart was distressed and given to strange forgetfulnesses as they journeyed back to the city, but the dark-faced youth contrived to conceal from his friend the real cause of this.

Inza was found to be so much improved that the doctor thought she would be able to leave the hospital the next day. She was triumphantly jubilant, also, over Yale's victory.

"You don't know who cut that rope?" she questioned.

"Not likely to learn, I'm afraid," Frank answered. "The fellow who went after the balloon hasn't re-

turned, I believe, and, at any rate, there will be no chance of fastening it upon him. I really think that some one in the crowd stuck that knife into the cable. Perhaps we shall never know, but I shall do what I can to find out and give the villain the punishment he deserves."

Nor did Merriwell find out, though he applied himself for some time to this task, and called into the work Selton Dirk, who was considered one of the finest detectives in the little college city.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

SETTLING OLD SCORES.

That night Bart Hodge came early to Dick Starbright's rooms, and they set out for the appointed rendezvous. Dick had not told his roommate, Bert Dashleigh. In fact, he had communicated the information to no one but Hodge.

On reaching the place appointed for the fight they found no one there.

"This looks as if the scoundrel is afraid to meet you!" Hodge growled. "That fellow is a coward, Starbright!"

"I think he will come. He seemed anxious."

"You can't trust him. It grinds me to have Merry keep him on the football-team. I've told Merry a hundred times that one of these days Dade Morgan will find an opportunity to do him up on the football-field. It will come by and by. It injures my playing to have him there, for I have to watch the scamp all the time, instead of watching the ball."

"I haven't observed that it has hurt your playing!"

Hodge smiled in his grim way.

"We did do those fellows handsomely this afternoon! Of course, they're not the greatest ball-team in the country, but they're awful fighters in their way."

"And you and Dade Morgan smashed through their

famous interference in great style. It was like a Gatling gun mowing down the foe. They went down before you in as pretty style as I ever saw!"

"If it hadn't been Morgan helping me, I could get some satisfaction out of that, but it makes me hotter than a cake of ice to have my name linked with Morgan's. A dozen fellows or more have come to me since the game and complimented me on that work, always mentioning Morgan. Confound Morgan!"

"But you must admit that he can play football!"

"See here! Are you going to praise that fellow? If you go at that, I don't want to be your second in this affair. Of course he can play. A man don't need to have principle and honor, or any of those things, to be a football-player, does he? If he did, Morgan wouldn't be in it!"

He looked at his watch impatiently.

"I tell you the villain isn't coming! He thinks to sell you out by having you come away out here to fight him. He'll keep you waiting out here for hours. But if he does!"

"What?"

"I'll make him fight me as soon as we get back to the college."

But Hodge's impatient complaints were not justified.

Dade Morgan was late, but he had no intention of

refusing to meet Starbright. He was eager to fight the big freshman, for he was smarting under the memory of the drubbing received from him and could not rest until he had made an effort to settle the score. He had been taking pugilistic lessons of the well-known ex-pugilist, Buster Kelley, who delighted to teach the Yale freshman the manly art of knocking out another college man, provided the said freshman had a good long purse with which to fee him for this service.

Morgan had been assiduously studying to improve himself under Buster Kelley's instruction, and he believed that he was more than a match for Dick Starbright, and that the heavy score he had laid up was now about to be squared.

On the other hand, Dick Starbright was not averse to meeting Morgan, though the thought of going deliberately into a fight made him feel unpleasantly small. He believed that Morgan had backed the scheme by which he was drugged at the New Haven House and led into that disgraceful orgie of intoxication.

He grew unpleasantly warm and perspiring whenever he thought of that. He felt sure that the story of his intoxication was what had led Rosalind Thornton to give him the snub she did by going to the ball-ground with Morgan.

"But that's all right!" he always reflected, when his thoughts turned to Rosalind, as they did very frequently. "If Morgan is her style, and he seems to

be, let her go with Morgan; but she can't go with me at the same time."

Morgan hurried onto the field, and with him were Donald Pike, Bertrand Defarge, and Roland Packard. Roland was Morgan's second, and Morgan had asked the others to come out and see him thrash the upstart freshman, who had been taken under the protecting wing of the mighty Frank Merriwell.

Bart's face grew black again when he saw who was with Morgan.

"I thought there was to be only one second for each!" he growled.

"A fight of this kind is quick work," smiled Roland Packard, in his disagreeable way, "it only takes two seconds to do it."

"We're not out here to joke!" Bart snarled, with an almost irresistible impulse to fly at the joker's throat.

"It will be no joke by the time our man gets through with you!"

"Who is Morgan's second?"

"Right here," said Roland, thumping his broad chest.

"The rest of us just came out here to see the fun," said Defarge, with an unpleasant laugh.

"I wasn't speaking to you," Bart snapped. Then he walked aside with Roland.

The preliminaries were easily settled. The battle was to be a go-as-you-please one, with no limit until

one or the other of the combatants was ready to cry enough.

Nothing could have pleased Hodge better. When he returned with Packard, he found Starbright preparing for the fight. He took off his coat with great deliberation, and then stripped to the waist. The moonlight, sifting down through the tree tops, showed his magnificent muscle, and Roland Packard, looking at him, came to the conclusion that Dade Morgan would not have so easy a job as he had boasted.

When Morgan stripped it was seen that he was also a mass of supple muscle, with the litheness and quickness of a panther.

"Too bad for you to hammer up and bruise such a beauty," Defarge sneered to Morgan under his breath. "But remember what I told you. The fellow is as strong as an ox. So don't let him get hold of you. Dance out of his way and wear him out, and then go in and knock him to pieces."

This was also the advice given by Buster Kelley, and it seemed good.

Dick Starbright stretched out his hand to take that of his opponent, though the motion made Bart growl and grate his teeth.

"I didn't come out here to shake hands, but to fight!" said Morgan, refusing to accept the proffered hand.

"Go!" said Pike, who had been accepted as a sort of referee.

And the fight began.

Morgan danced up to Starbright in a tantalizing way, expecting that Dick would try to get hold of him. But Starbright merely put up his arms and stood on the defensive.

"He's afraid of you!" said Defarge.

"If you don't cork up your mouth there will be two fights going on here at the same time!" declared Hodge. "You have no business here, and you'll behave, or I'll try you a round or so."

Hodge was known to be as quick-tempered as dynamite, and a fighter of such skill and courage that Defarge wisely concluded to hold his peace, though he looked at the hot-blooded fellow as if he wished he could run him through with a rapier.

Again Morgan came at Dick, dancing up as if to draw a blow. But Starbright merely stood on the defensive.

Then like a flash Morgan planted the first blow, getting past Dick's guard and landing on his shoulder. It was a heavy blow, but it did not even stagger the big fellow.

Morgan's confidence in his ability to whip Dick Starbright increased, though he was disappointed by his inability to make Dick chase after him and wear

himself out. Looking for another opening, he again sought to land, reaching this time for Dick's face.

Crack!

A blow landed, but it was not Morgan's. Starbright's hard fist had shot out with lightning swiftness, catching Morgan on the cheek.

The blow seemed to lift him into the air, and he fell backward, striking the ground heavily. He lay half-stunned for a moment, while Packard ran toward him. Then he leaped up, snarling.

The smile had gone from his face. In its place was black, fierce anger, which he did not try to conceal.

"Your man is doing up Starbright in double-quick style!" Hodge sneered.

Morgan was about to make another rush, forgetting the injunctions of Defarge and Kelley, but he recollected in time, and began to try to draw Dick after him.

But Starbright remained as immovable as a post, merely turning to meet any advance that Morgan might make. His face was imperturbable. No one could tell what thoughts were passing in his mind. But he was firmly resolved to teach Morgan the lesson that the latter seemed so much to need.

"You're a coward!" Morgan hotly declared. "Why don't you fight?"

Again a blow landed, though this time it fell low and merely bruised Morgan's shoulder.

"There's your answer!" grunted Hodge, in deep sat-

isfaction. "It occurs to a man up a tree that my friend Starbright is doing some fighting."

Morgan gave him a look of hate.

"And if he can't give you enough to satisfy you, I shall be glad to try my hand when he's through. Or on any of your friends that you may want to nominate!"

Morgan tried to remain cool; but Starbright's imperturbability stung him so that he found it impossible. Finding that he would succeed only in tiring himself out, he now made a sinuous lunge, and once more passed Starbright's guard, the blow striking Dick in the region of the heart.

The giant staggered backward seemingly weakened. Morgan fancied he saw his advantage and rushed in, striking right and left.

But if he thought that Dick would now be an easy victim, he was doomed to a bitter disappointment, for Starbright roused himself, and his fists played a tattoo on the face and body of Morgan. This was the sort of fighting Hodge liked to see, and he could hardly restrain a yell of delight.

At the last blow Morgan staggered into the arms of Roland Packard, who rushed forward to keep him from falling.

For a moment Morgan lay in his second's arms, panting and gasping. Those last blows had come with the swiftness of lightning, and they had simply

knocked the breath out of him. One eye was closing and there was a red lump gathering on the side of his head below the hair-line.

But Morgan was plucky. He felt that he could not endure the disgrace of being knocked out by Starbright, after all the coaching and training given him by Kelley. He resolved that he would not be knocked out, and, gathering himself together with fierce determination, he again came at Dick, forcing the fighting.

Starbright stood as before, immovable as a stone wall.

"Oh, he hasn't had enough of it!" Hodge called out. "Just touch him up with a few more."

"You're not one of the fighters!" snapped Packard, who was enraged at the turn of events and by his fear that his principal was going to be beaten.

"I'm ready to be! Don't fancy for a minute that I'm not! I'm ready to be, and when Starbright is through with Morgan I'll be glad to teach you a few things you don't know."

Then he turned to Starbright, who was still acting on the defensive, while Morgan circled round and round with savage dashes like a Bedouin horseman trying to strike with a spear.

"Hammer him!" cried Bart.

Starbright seemed to feel that the time had come for this.

Again his fist reached Morgan's face. Once more

he was playing a tattoo on the body and face of his adversary.

Then with an impact that sounded like the report of a pistol, Dick's fist caught Morgan under the ear, and, lifting him clear of the ground, hurled him down in a senseless heap.

Roland Packard rushed to his unconscious principal.

"You've killed him!" he gasped.

"Merely thumped some sense into his head!" growled Bart.

Now that it was over, the big freshman, who had been so ironlike through the fight, trembled in every limb. He found, too, that he was wet with perspiration. And he felt meanly criminal. He wanted to get away from the place—wanted to go off somewhere and hide himself. He even told himself that he had been a weakling and a fool for meeting Morgan there in that way.

Then he began to fear that he had hit harder than he intended, and that Morgan might have received serious injury, for Morgan seemed to lie unconscious a long time.

But his feelings on this point were relieved by seeing Morgan move. The blow had been a hard one, for in those last seconds Dick had not stopped to measure his strength.

Morgan staggered up, supported by Packard. His dazed brain began to clear, and then came the thought

that he had been knocked out. It hurt him terribly. He had not believed the thing possible. Had not Buster Kelley assured him that he was a match now for two such men as Dick Starbright—Starbright, who looked to be too big and slow for quick work, and whom he believed to be something of a coward at heart, in spite of the many evidences he had received to the contrary.

Then a great rage overwhelmed him.

“This is not the last!” he snarled.

“You can have more now, if you want it!” Dick declared, again firing up. “It’s best to settle this thing now and have it done.”

“Oh, he’s no hog,” sneered Hodge.

Starbright walked away and began to put on his clothing.

He had received scarcely a severe bruise—nothing that would be called serious, though the skin was off his cheek in one place, and there was a growing knot near the left end of his collar-bone.

But Morgan had been given enough. He had hardly sufficient strength left to get into his clothing, and had to be supported as he turned away from the field.

The next day, however, after skilful treatment at the hands of a surgeon who knew how to handle such cases, Morgan was able to appear on the campus, looking very little the worse for the drubbing he had received.

But he had learned to respect the prowess and the strength of Dick Starbright.

* * * * *

A day or two later Starbright received a dainty note from Rosalind Thornton. Once more she wanted him to come up to the residence of Mrs. Virgil Throckmorton, that the breach between them, of her own creation, might be again healed.

Dick did not reply to that note, nor did he go near Mrs. Throckmorton's.

"That affair has come to an end!" he grimly declared to himself. "She has chosen Dade Morgan, and she may keep him."

THE END.

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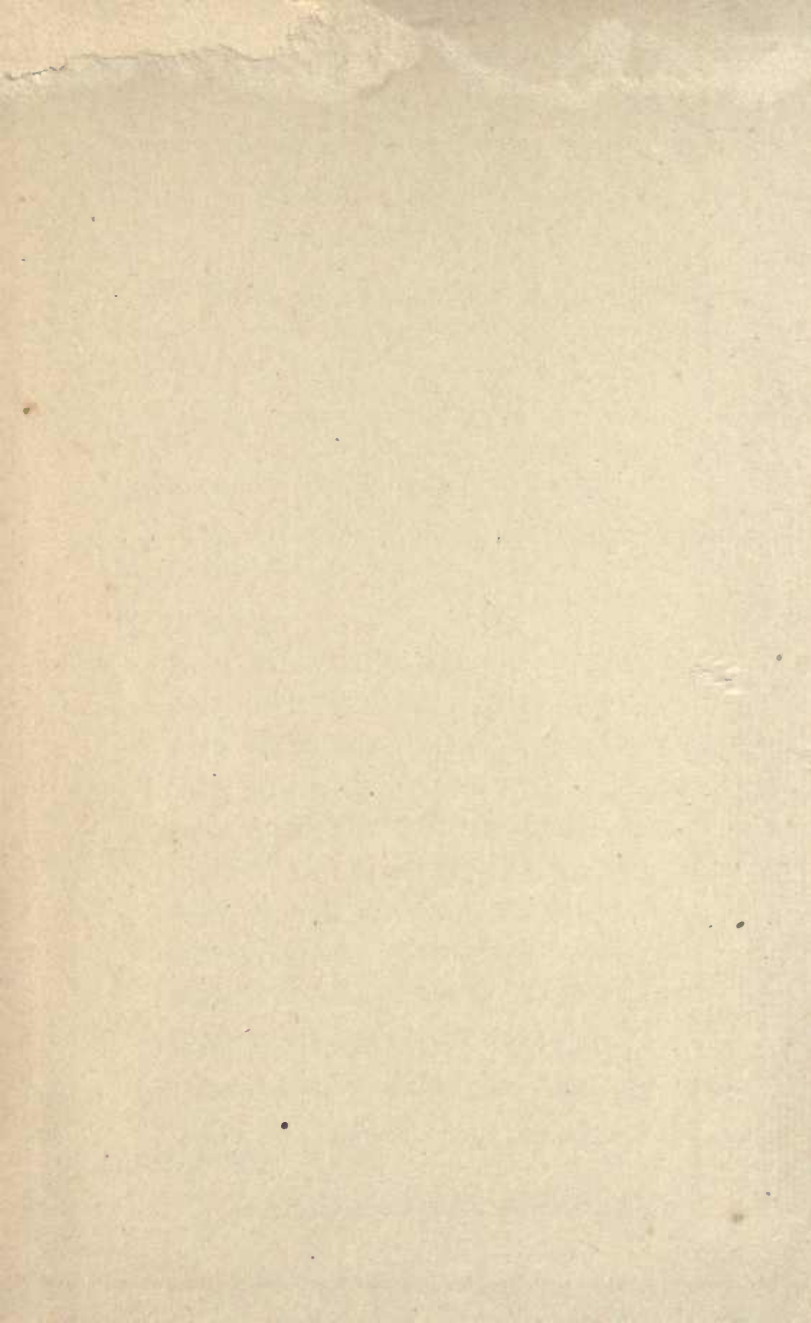
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