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500—Dick Merriwell's Back-stop............ By Burt L. Standish

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501—Sink or Swim.......................... By Horatio Alger, Jr
502—For the Right.......................... By Roy Franklin
503—Dick Merriwell's Western Mission...... By Burt L. Standish
504—Among the Cattlemen.................. By Edward C. Taylor

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505—A Legacy of Peril....................... By William Murray Graydon
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507—The Young Musician..................... By Horatio Alger, Jr.
508—“A Gentleman Born”..................... By Stanley Norris
509—Frank Merriwell’s Encounter........... By Burt L. Standish

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510—Black Mountain Ranch................ By Edward C. Taylor
511—The Boy Conjurer....................... By Victor St. Clair
512—Dick Merriwell's Marked Money........ By Burt L. Standish
513—Work and Win.......................... By Horatio Alger, Jr.

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514—Fighting For Fortune................... By Roy Franklin
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516—With Rifle and Lasso.................. By Edward C. Taylor
517—For His Friend's Honor................. By Stanley Norris

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518—Dick Merriwell on the Gridiron........ By Burt L. Standish
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520—The Young Range Riders................. By St. George Rathborne
521—Dick Merriwell's Disguise............... By Burt L. Standish
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DICK MERRIWELL'S WESTERN MISSION

OR

-AT HIS BROTHER'S CALL

BY

BURT L. STANDISH

AUTHOR OF

The Celebrated "Merriwell Stories"

PUBLISHED EXCLUSIVELY IN THE NEW MEDAL LIBRARY, IN PAPER-COVERED EDITION

STREET & SMITH, PUBLISHERS
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CHAPTER I.

TROUBLE AT HILSBORO.

The captain of the Hilsboro Academy Baseball Team looked blue. There was a very good reason for this, as Lem Cross, the star pitcher of the nine, was ill, and the time was drawing near when Hilsboro must meet Fardale as scheduled for the great spring game.

In the past Hilsboro had not regarded the game with Fardale as the greatest baseball event of the season; but of late things had changed, and it was now a confessed fact that the team would have to be at its best and put up a great game in order to down the cadets.

Fardale's star seemed to have reached its zenith, and it was generally conceded that Dick Merriwell was mainly responsible for the wonderful success of the school in athletic sports.

In the past Eaton had been regarded as the most formidable of all school teams in that region; but with the advent of Dick Merriwell a wonderful change took
place. When Dick became captain he succeeded in developing a team that was the wonder of that section and the terror of all opponents. For Fardale there came the glorious days she had once known when Dick Merriwell’s famous brother, Frank, had been a student at the academy. Eaton had pretended to sneer and scoff, but repeated defeats at the hands of Fardale had taken all of this spirit out of her.

Hilsboro had made special efforts to turn out a first-class baseball team. The rules in regard to eligibility were stretched and several clever players were taken onto the team on a “bluff,” as far as taking a regular course at the school was concerned. Some simply took up one study, and they did not take hold of that in earnest. The result was that Hilsboro turned out a baseball team that spring that was in every way superior to anything ever before representing her.

But now Lem Cross, the pitcher who was regarded as a wonder by the entire school, had been taken seriously ill with typhoid fever, and the doctor said he would not appear on the field for many weeks.

No wonder Mat Hearn, the captain of the team, was worried. To be sure he had another pitcher at his command, Miller by name; but Miller was not in the same class as Cross, and the shadow of defeat by Fardale hung heavily over Hearn as he stood chewing his lip and watching the batting practise. After a time, he shook his head and turned away. Pike Wal-
lace, the catcher, saw the captain's movement, and, tossing his big mitt to another fellow, who took his place, he hastened to join Hearn.

"What do you think about it?" he asked anxiously.

"What do you think?" retorted Hearn. "I sent Miller out there to do his best, and then I put our sure hitters against him to test him. You see what they are doing to him."

"I see; but they all know him."

"And he knows them. He knows the weak point of every man. If he can't fool those fellows, how in the world is he going to fool that Fardale bunch?"

"Ask me something easy!" exclaimed Wallace. "He's all right in his class; but——"

"That's not Fardale."

"I'm afraid—not," confessed the catcher.

"What's the matter with his benders, anyhow?"

"They are too slow; the batter can see them when they begin to curve, and he has plenty of time to judge them. The curve is not sharp enough."

"Well, we'll never beat Merriwell's bunch with that fellow in the box."

"I think you're right."

"I know it."

Then they looked at each other gloomily. They had stepped apart by the seats, on which were gathered a number of the academy boys to watch the play; but
they spoke in low tones, so that those fellows might not hear them.

Another fellow, Van Sickle, came walking quickly over from the bench. He had just stopped batting.

"Aw, that fellow is fruit!" he declared, contemptuously. "Anybody can hit him any time he gets the ball near the plate."

"'Sh!" cautioned Hearn. "Don't speak so loud. Who's that chap listening?"

He nodded his head toward a strange-looking fellow with a very pale face, who sat on the bleachers somewhat apart from the other boys.

"That?" said Wallace. "Oh, he's some fellow who's going to enter the school in the fall. He appeared here yesterday. Don't know how the story started, but they say he's got so much money he don't know what to do with it."

"Then he ought to get a doctor to shave off that hump between his shoulders," said Van Sickle, who was a rough fellow, and did not mind whose feelings he hurt. "He'd be a pretty decent-looking fellow if it wasn't for that."

"He hears every word."

"What do I care! Have we got to let that chap Miller do the tossing against Fardale?"

"I don't see any way out of it."

"Well, if those chaps don't beat us they'll be a lot of duffers! And they say Merriwell is a great pitcher."
Hearn drew a deep breath.

"He's a wizard," he declared. "He's got one or two benders that are not down on the map."

"It makes me sick!" exclaimed Van Sickle. "We've been planning to take the scalps of those chaps, and now we must go into the game knowing we haven't half a show. Isn't there any way out of it? Why can't we get a pitcher for this game? We're going to play at Islington, and it might work all right."

"Oh, it wouldn't do!" exclaimed Hearn.

"Why not? It's been done lots of times by college teams. Oh, I know it has! I know all about it. Some of the colleges work in professionals in critical games, and they play under the names of regular college men. Why can't we do that?"

"Who can we get?" asked Captain Hearn weakly. "I don't know of any young fellow who is capable of going against Dick Merriwell and holding him down—outside of Lem Cross."

"I know a fellow," said Van Sickle; "but he's too far away. We couldn't get him here for the game."

"Little good he does, then!" muttered Wallace.

"There ought to be some chap within reach," persisted Van Sickle. "It would be no worse to spring a man like that on Fardale than it is to play three or four fellows on the team—I myself included."

The captain flushed a little.
“I hope you’re not going about talking like that?” he said sharply. “It doesn’t sound very well.”

“Don’t you worry about me, cap. I’m no chump. But I’ve got a thirst to take some of the starch out of those Fardale chaps—Merriwell in particular. All the boys have lost confidence. Look at that! Miller is breaking his arm trying to fool ’em, and they’re biffing him right along. Even Small can hit him, and Small’s the weakest hitter on the team. See! see!”

Small was batting, and he lined out several pretty ones while they watched.

Mat Hearn groaned.

“It’s awful!” he confessed hoarsely. “There’s Mike Corrigan, the town pitcher. But we could never palm him off as a fellow belonging in this school. He can’t read his own name, and he’s tough as they make ’em. No, no, I wouldn’t think of trying Corrigan!”

“Think again!”

“No use!”

“If we had somebody clever that we could run in under the name of Miller.”

“Miller might raise a howl.”

“We could fix him all right.”

“No use talking about it; we haven’t got the fellow to run in. We’ve got to go against Fardale and take our medicine. If they bat Miller hard, we’ll just grin and bear it.”

“Cheerful prospect!” growled Wallace.
Trouble at Hilsboro.

"If you could find a good man——" began Van Sickle.

"Oh, if I could find a good man, one who was a corker, I'd risk everything and run him into the game," said the captain of the team.

"Then I'm the very man you're looking for!" declared an unfamiliar voice.

The trio started and turned in surprise, finding the strange hunchback had come down quietly from his place on the seats and was standing close behind them.

"You?" exclaimed Captain Hearn in astonishment.
"You?" echoed Van Sickle in derision, surveying the hunchback from head to feet.

"Yes, I!" returned the fellow sharply. "What is the matter with you chaps?"

"Are you a baseball pitcher?" asked Hearn doubtfully.

"You bet your life!"
Van Sickle laughed.

"Come out of it!" he exclaimed. "You're dreaming! What brand of dope have you been taking?"

The hunchback surveyed Van Sickle from head to feet in a manner that was a sneer in return.

"You have an idea that you're a great baseball player," he said; "but you're mostly a bluff."

The third-baseman of the Hilsboro team flushed angrily.
Trouble at Hilsboro.

"Don’t get so free with your mouth!” he snapped. “I may forget that you’re a cripple!”

“Don’t let that hold you a minute,” was the retort. “If you’re looking for bother, I’ll accommodate you.”

“Why, I’d break you——”

“Try it!” urged the stranger invitingly, looking at Van Sickle in a fearless manner. “You may get a lesson that will take some of the blow out of you.”

The perfect confidence of the hunchback was rather disconcerting, but Van Sickle continued to sneer.

“I’ll not disgrace myself,” he said. “But you want to take a walk. Your ears may get you into trouble some day.”

“I’m sure your mouth will get you into trouble. But I’m talking to Captain Hearn. Have the Fardale fellows ever seen your pitcher, Cross?”

Hearn shrugged his shoulders, seeming in doubt about replying, but finally decided to do so.

“Cross is a new man,” he said.

“Do they know he’s sick?”

“There is no reason why they should know?”

“Then they’d not be aware if you faked. It can be done all right.”

“We’re not in the habit of doing such things here, sir.”

“Of course not,” said the hunchback in a well-modulated voice, smiling agreeably. “But this seems to be
case of necessity. It's often done. But I can give you a good excuse for doing it."

"You can?"

"Sure thing."

"Explain."

"I'm planning to enter this school. That's how I happen to be here just now. In case the trick was found out after it was all over, you could laugh and say I turned up quite by accident and you ran me in out of sheer necessity."

Van Sickle laughed derisively.

"Come on, cap," he said. "Don't waste your breath with the fellow. The idea that he can pitch well enough to go against Fardale is simply silly."

The expression that came to the face of the hunchback was decidedly disagreeable.

"See here," he sharply said, "you have an idea that you are something of a batter, eh?"

"Well, I can hit 'em out a little."

"If you can get a safe hit off me I'll shut up. That's business. If you can't, you shut up. That's all I have to say. I've watched your batting practice, and you're a stiff. You couldn't hit a house if somebody threw it over the plate! That's what I think of you, and you are welcome to my opinion."

This made Van Sickle furious.

"I'd just like to have the chance!" he cried. "Why, you—you——"
Trouble at Hilsboro.

"It's easy enough to give him the chance, Captain Hearn," said the confident stranger insinuatingly. "I am quite ready. What do you say?"

"You want to go out there and pitch some to him?"

"Yes; and to the rest of your team. If I don't prove that I can pitch, you don't have to talk with me any more. I'm sure that's fair. What do you say?"

"Do it!" urged Van Sickle, laughing. "It will be a holy picnic. The fellows will have some fun."

"All right," nodded the captain. "Go ahead."

So the hunchback promptly peeled off his coat and vest and removed his collar and necktie. From the necktie he took a handsome diamond pin, which he carelessly thrust into the scarf when it was removed. He also took from his pocket a beautiful watch, on the case of which was a monogram made from the letters "C. A." These things he passed to the captain of the team, asking him in a careless way to please look out for them.

Laughing in his unpleasant way, Van Sickle hurried to tell the boys what was to happen.

"I'll put him out of business," he boastingly declared. "Just watch what I do to him. Why, I wouldn't let that hunchy strike me out for a thousand dollars!"

The hunchback was watched with great interest. He seemed perfectly cool and self-possessed. But for his small hunch he would have seemed like any ordinary
boy who was extremely pale. He had good legs and arms.

Miller was glad enough to stop pitching, and he retired to the bench, from which point he watched the hunchback with a smile of derision.

The stranger warmed up a little with the first baseman, then turned and nodded that he was ready. He had made no display of style or speed, and more than ever Van Sickle was confident of his ability to "pound" the fellow.

Van Sickle trotted out to the plate, grinned at the pitcher, and said:

"Put it over, hunch, and see me knock the cover off."

The unknown promptly delivered the ball, having very little preliminary motion.

Van Sickle struck at it, but it curved in close to his fingers, and he did not even foul it.

"What? what?" cried one of the spectators. "Be careful there, Van! You know what you're going to do."

"Don't lose any sleep about me," said the batter. "Don't worry a bit. I'll keep my promise."

The pitcher did not smile or show any emotion whatever. He received the ball from the catcher, looked hard at Van Sickle, and delivered it again.

This time it came with the speed of a bullet, and the batter was barely able to get out of the way, for
Trouble at Hilsboro.

It was thrown straight at him. He dropped his bat and fell to the ground ungracefully.

"Say!" he snarled; "what do you think you're trying to do? If you can't control the ball, get out there. Put it over the plate—put it over!"

There was no retort, but Van Sickle had learned that the hunchback had speed at his command, and it made him more alert.

The next one seemed to be straight over, and again Van swung at it. Again he missed, the ball shooting in and seeming to pass right under his chin.

"Yah!" he cried. "Haven't you anything but an in-shoot? Why don't you throw something else?"

"Because you're a bum batter, and you can't hit an in-shoot," was the provoking answer. "I have your alley. You're a big case of bluff, just as I said."

Nothing could have been more provoking to the lad with the bat.

"I'll show you!" he muttered. "I'll show you!"

The boys were watching with great eagerness now, and some of them warned Van Sickle to look out, as the stranger had two strikes on him.

As if in utter contempt of the batter, the hunchback now threw another in-shoot, but Van let it pass for a ball, getting back out of the way.

The hunchback remained as expressionless as stone.

The next one seemed far outside the plate. The batter was keenly on the watch, but, being satisfied it
must pass beyond his reach, he did not swing at it. The ball, however, curved in and came over the plate.

"Ha! You're out!" cried the boy who had taken a position to umpire. "That was a corker!"

But Van Sickle swore it did not come over, and demanded another trial.

This time the ball seemed like a straight one that must cut the outside corner. Van Sickle had been looking for another in-shoot, and so he was in position to hit one; but he quickly swung at this seemingly straight one, only to have it curve out and pass so far beyond the plate that he missed it cleanly.

The watching boys shouted, and never was a chap more surprised and disgusted than was the batter at that moment.

The hunchback had kept his word and struck him out.

"It was an accident!" Van Sickle declared, as soon as the shouting had stopped. "He couldn't do it again in a thousand years! Let him try it; let him!"

The hunchback simply nodded. He did not show triumph, but looked as if he thought he had done a very simple thing.

So Van Sickle had another opportunity to see what he could do; but his very best was two foul tips, and again he was struck out.

By that time he was fierce, and he kept at it. As if in derision and contempt, the hunchback began to
throw up slow ones, and Van Sickle went after them with too much fierceness. The result of this was several fouls and little flies or easy grounders, not one being a safe hit. After a while, the stranger said:

"This is getting tiresome. Send out somebody who can hit." And he declined to pitch any more to Van Sickle, who retired to the bench, being almost as white as the hunchback, and fairly shaking with shame and anger.

All the fellows were eager to try batting against the stranger, and he gave them plenty of chances, continuing to pitch for more than half an hour.

By the end of that time he had produced a genuine sensation, and was regarded with great wonder by the boys, for very few safe hits had been secured off him. The men of the team bunched in little knots and talked about the stranger, declaring that he was a wizard if he could do anything like it in a game.

"That's where the real test will come," nodded Captain Hearn.

But now, having seen what the fellow did with the other players of the team, Van Sickle's tune had changed completely.

"If it wasn't for his age," he said, "I'd swear the fellow must be a professional. He's too young for that, or, at least, he looks too young. Still, one can never tell how old a hunchback is, though they usually look older than they really are. Anyhow, I'm satisfied
that this chap can do a nifty turn in the box and he's the bird to put on the slab against Fardale. Find out, captain, if we can get him."

"Why, you know what he said."

"Well, nail him. Don't let him get away."

So Hearn lost no time in having a talk with the stranger, who wiped the sweat and stains from his hands and face with a fine linen handkerchief and coolly proceeded to dress.

"You seem to be all right," said Hearn.

"Thank you," was the answer, made in a manner that was somewhat mocking. "But I didn't try much to-day, as I'm a trifle soft, and I didn't care to hurt my arm."

"Good gracious! What would you do if you tried?"

"Well, I'd been watching your players bat, and I was able to size up every man and locate his weak place. I always do that. Any pitcher who knows his business will. A strange batter may be able to hit me once or, possibly, twice; but after that——" He ended by shrugging his shoulders expressively.

"What's your name?" asked Hearn.

"Claude Alector."

"Alector? The name's as remarkable as your pitching. You say you're coming to Hilsboro to school?"

"Next term. I just came around to look the place over."
When Alector had finished dressing Hearn took him by the arm and led him aside.

"See here," he said, "do you want to pitch this game for us against Fardale?"

"I believe I proposed doing something of the sort."

"You'll have to pitch as Cross or Miller. It wouldn't do to run you in under your own name."

"That's all right."

"You don't object?"

"Not a bit."

"I think it will have to be as Miller, for Cross will stay here in his room, being too sick to leave, and some of the faculty might ask questions if they should chance to see his name in any report of the game."

"It's immaterial to me; use any name you like, only let me pitch the game and show you fellows how easy it is to make monkeys of those Fardale chaps."

"You know something about Fardale?"

"Only what I've heard; but I have a great desire to get up against them."

"Now, about paying you——"

The hunchback snapped his fingers.

"Don't talk to me about that," he said. "I have more money than I can use."

"You're lucky!"

"I couldn't think of taking pay."

Hearn drew a long breath of relief.

"Well, I'm glad of that," he said, "for that makes
seem more decent on our part. If we hired a man to go against Fardale I’d have a nasty feeling that it was pretty cheap. As long as you are coming to school here and you will not take pay to pitch the game, I shall not feel as bad.”

“Don’t let it worry you at all.”

“I’ll depend on you to say nothing about it.”

“You may; there is no danger.”

“Then we’ll call it settled. You’ll be around every day to practice with the boys?”

“I’ll be on hand all right after to-morrow. I can’t be here to-morrow. I’m stopping at the Highland Hotel. Shall be pleased to have any of the fellows come down to see me there, and I’ll entertain them.”

“I’ll introduce you around to the boys,” said Hearn, “and say that you’re going to coach the team and Miller a little before the game. That will make an excuse for your daily appearance on the field.”

This was done, and Claude Alector remained in Hilsboro to take part in the game against Fardale.
CHAPTER II.

THE JOLLY JOKERS.

There was nothing like gloom at Fardale Military Academy. The cadets had the best baseball team ever put onto the field by the academy, and they knew it. A few denied it, but the great majority acknowledged the fact and were happy because of it.

Some of the boys had worried not a little because of the injury to the shoulder of Brad Buckhart, the catcher, but Dave Flint had stepped in and filled the breach in such a capable manner that even Buckhart himself declared Flint was the better man of the two.

For nearly a week Chester Arlington, a bitter foe of Dick Merriwell, had not been seen at the academy. Those who took enough interest in him to inquire were informed that he had gone home on account of illness. Arlington, whose fierce jealousy of Merriwell had at one time threatened to disrupt the nine, had lost his last remnant of power. Of all his friends Hector Marsh was the only one who seemed to have any confidence in Chester left.

Arlington returned as suddenly and quietly as he departed, and was seen during practise on the baseball field closely watching the work of every man. He seemed to take a great interest in the team, which was
rather surprising, considering the fact that it had been his ambition to play on it, and there was no hope in the world that he would be able to do so.

When practise was over Chester disappeared quietly and hurriedly.

After practise the boys hurried to the gym to take a shower and rub-down. As they were dressing some one casually remarked that he had observed Arlington.

"Did you notice how happy he looked?" asked little Ted Smart, with a wink. "And did you see the big crowd of friends around him? It made me mad. I wanted to go fight him."

"You fuf-fuf-fight!" cried Chip Jolliby derisively. "Did you ever fight?"

"Once," answered Ted. "But the coward, he ran."

"He ran?" exclaimed the thin boy doubtingly.

"He did," nodded Smart soberly. "But he couldn't catch me."

The manner in which the little fellow said this set all the boys into roars of laughter.

"I'd been just ab-bub-bub—about in your class when I was lighter," said Chip.

"You don't mean to say you ever were lighter than you are now?" gasped Ted.

"Dud-dud-dud-don't I?" retorted Chip. "Why, once I was so light that when I wuw-went to get wuw-weighed I fuf-found I owed the scales tut-ten pounds!"
At this original conceit the boys gasped, and then they nearly strangled with laughter.

Chip remained as sober as a judge, seeming much surprised that they should laugh, and his aspect made it still more ludicrous.

"Oh, fudge!" exclaimed Ted Smart, looking at the lank boy reprovingly.

When all the others had stopped laughing Obediah Tubbs, the fat boy of the academy, gave a squeal, laughed again in his high-pitched key, and completely convulsed them.

"Well, dern my picter!" squeaked the fat boy. "I never heerd northin' like that before! I declare it's——"

"Hold on!" said Jolliby. "Be careful! Your vuv-vuv-voice is leaking!"

Obediah's voice was so peculiar that this from Jolliby again threw the crowd into a roar.

"Tubbsy," said Smart, when the merriment had ceased again, "you remind me of Napoleon Bonaparte."

"Waal, by gum! I want you to understand there's no bony part about me!" flung back the fat boy, and the merriment was on again, for once started to laughing the boys found it really difficult to stop.

Smart pretended to wipe away a tear.

"Obed," he sighed, when he could be heard, "you're a healthy-looking chap. I've often thought you must have a liver like a horse."
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"Liver like a hoss?" squeaked Tubbs. "How's that?"

"Strong and stable," answered Ted, and immediately clapped his hands to his heart and staggered.

"I like you, Obed!" declared Jolliby, as he sidled up to the fat boy, with one hand clenched and held low at his side. "I like you! When I'm away from you I can't keep my mind off you, and when I'm with you I can't keep my hands off you." Upon which he soaked the fat boy several good punches in the ribs.

"Oh, fudge!" said Smart. "Why do you do that? He doesn't even know he made a bad joke."

"Yah!" squealed Obed hotly.

"Behave! behave!" said Ted. "Don't display your ignorance! Don't you know ignorance is bliss?"

"Waal, by Jim! I oughter know it arter seein' how happy you are all the time!"

This was one on Ted, but the little fellow took it with good grace, for all the chaffing of the others.

"Oh, fudge!" was all he said.

Dick Merriwell was enjoying the joking of the boys. Their good nature and high spirits pleased him, while he saw there was no indication of petty spites and jealousies on the team. It had been Captain Merriwell's effort from the first to keep everything harmonious, for he was a great believer in good nature, as well as in determination.
"Who is this great pitcher, Cross, that Hilsboro has?" asked Hal Darrell.

"He's a new man," asserted Smart. "I'm sure of it. I have a great memory for names, but I forget faces."

"He! he!" snickered Obediah. "I see somebody forgot yours."

"There!" exploded Ted. "Now we're more than even, and perhaps you'll quit."

It was seldom that Smart cried quit, and Obediah was well satisfied; his triumph was complete.

"One thing, fellows," said Dick. "Don't get the impression that we're going to have a snap with Hilsboro. I have it straight that those fellows have a great team this year, and Cross is a wizard. It would be a bad thing for us to drop a game through overconfidence."

"Oh, that would be fine!" said Smart in his own peculiar manner. "I know we'd all like that!"

"Well, such a thing might happen, you know. I see we're beginning to get the impression that we can whip anything going, and that is bad."

"'Ow is that?" demanded Billy Bradley, an English student. "You halways tell us to go hinto a game with lots of confidence hand determination."

"Billy, the swelled head is as dangerous as lack of courage and confidence. When a team gets troubled with swelled head it is in good condition to be beaten
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by some little dinky club that it holds in contempt. Beware of the swelled head, boys."

"That was what ailed Chet Arlington at the start," put in Earl Gardner. "He came here with a bad case of swelled head."

Dick nodded.

"That was one thing," agreed Dick. "But the worst thing was his disposition. Arlington was spoiled by his mother in the beginning."

"He's not worth discussing," said Hal Darrell. "I think he is going to leave Fardale."

"Going to leave?" cried several.

"Yes; I don't believe he's back to stay. One of his former chums told me he would go away to-morrow."

Dick shook his head.

"Somehow I don't believe he will leave the school for good," he said. "I have come to the conclusion that, no matter what his other faults may be, he is not a quitter. I've had to fight him in fifty different ways, and he has managed to keep his spirit of hatred and defiance through it all. I think he'll stick by the school. You may have heard that he still believes I'll have to leave Fardale in a short time."

It had leaked out that Chester entertained this firm conviction, thinking it a sure thing that Frank Merriwell would be defeated in a struggle which he was having with the Consolidated Mining Association of America, of which Arlington's father was the master.
spirit. This would leave both Frank and Dick without means, under which circumstances Dick would be compelled to leave school.

"He must be ready to give that up by this time," said one of the boys.

"Oh, the fight is still on," said the captain of the nine. "I received a letter from Frank to-day. He's just starting for Mexico, where one of our mines is located. The mining trust has been badly worsted in Arizona; but down in Mexico conditions are different, and Frank is certain the fight will be hotter down there than it was over the Queen Mystery Mine."

"I should think you'd want to join him in the fight," said Darrell.

"I'm going out there when the summer vacation comes," said Dick. "Of course, it may be all over by that time."

"By Jim!" cried Tubbs. "I'd jest like to go along with you!"

"So would we all!" declared the boys generally.

"Thank you," smiled Dick. "With this crowd I reckon I'd be able to give Frank a lift in his fight against the mining trust."

"Whoop!" roared Brad Buckhart, who hailed from Texas. "You bet your boots! Just turn the unbranded maverick loose on 'em and see 'em get up and hustle! It would be great sport for me! I could bust that old trust in short order."
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“Hooray for the new trust buster!” exclaimed Ted. “Brad, you should apply to the president. He needs you!”

“Don’t get gay with me, you little runt!” warned the Texan. “If you do, I’ll sure chaw you up a whole lot! I’m bad when I get on the war-path. You hear me chirp!”

By this time the boys were dressed and came trooping out in a bunch, still laughing and joking.

Outside the gym they encountered Chester Arling-ton, who looked them over with a smile that seemed to have a deep meaning hidden behind it. When his eyes met Dick’s the smile turned to a sneer; but Merriwell gave him not the slightest attention.

“Go on!” muttered Chester. “Hold your head high! I’ll take some of the conceit out of you within a week, see if I don’t!”
CHAPTER III.

TWO KINDS OF BRAVERY.

When Hector Marsh entered Arlington’s room half an hour later he found Chester packing a suit-case.

“Hello, old man!” cried Hector. “Off as soon as this?”

Chester nodded and continued packing.

“Only came to get a few things I needed,” he said. “I wanted to see Merriwell’s great baseball team practise, too.”

“It sticks me how you can get off this way,” said Marsh, sitting on the arm of a chair and taking a cigarette from an open case on the table. “No other fellow could do it.”

Arlington smiled knowingly.

“Why, I had a written request from my mother,” he said.

“But you told me your mother was away out West somewhere.”

“So she is.”

“Then how could you get such a request?”

“That’s easy; I wrote it.”

“Whew!” whistled Hector, showing his teeth immediately in a broad grin. “You forged it?”

“Don’t say ‘forged!’ I don’t like that word. I
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wrote it, and it passed muster all right with old Gunn. He knows my mother's writing, too."

"But how——"

"Oh, I'm pretty slick with the pen, and I can imitate the old lady's hand to perfection."

"What if she finds it out?"

"Oh, I don't mind about that. She'd say it was all right."

"Wish I had a mother like that," sighed Marsh. "My mother would raise the dickens if I ever played such a game."

"Which shows you don't know how to train a mother properly," said Chet. "It's all in the training."

"Where are you going?"

"Marsh, you're too inquisitive by half. I'm going on business. And when I come back, perhaps, I'll be able to give Mr. Richard Merriwell the ha-ha."

"Then you mean that your going away has something to do with him?"

"Surest thing you know."

"But I can't see how——"

"Of course you can't. Wait; you will see. Everybody'll see. I'm going to make Merriwell look like thirty cents. I know I've said so before, but just you wait and see if I do not make good this time."

"I should think you might put a fellow on."

"You've got another think coming to you. Wait a
little. I'll be back in a week. Are you going to take in the Hilsboro game?"

"Oh, I don't know! I'm tired of seeing Merriwell come out on top all the time."

"I want to give you a tip. He'll get the surprise of his life in that game, or I've been misinformed. Hilsboro has a great team, and they've got a pitcher or two over there that will make Mr. Richard Merriwell open his optics. Better go over and see the game. It will be worth your while. I mean to be there, if possible."

"Why, I thought you were going too far away to take that game in."

"You shouldn't think so many things. Run over to Hilsboro."

Arlington had finished packing, and now he also lighted a cigarette. Marsh looked at him queerly.

"Why, old man!" he exclaimed, "how did you ever happen to have your hair clipped down like that?"

For Chester's fine hair, of which he was very proud, had been clipped very close to his head.

"Didn't I tell you that you were too inquisitive!" exclaimed Arlington, frowning. "I took a fancy to have it cut like this, that's all."

"Oh, all right; I don't care. Have it cut any way you like; but it makes you look like a convict. And you always took such pains with your hair."

Chester glanced at his handsome watch.
"By jingoes!" he exclaimed, starting up and flinging the cigarette aside. "I must get a move on."

"But the train doesn't leave for more than an hour. Besides, aren't you going to ride over to the station?"

"No; I'm going to walk. Now, don't ask why! I have a reason. My luggage will be called for. Better remember my advice and see the Hilsboro game. It will do you good, I think. So-long."

He did not offer to shake hands with Marsh, but clapped a hat on his head and sauntered out, after placing his suit-case near the door, where it could be found readily by the one who was to call for it. Marsh followed him from the room, but, without another word, Arlington hurried away and down the stairs, leaving the building.

He did not glance back as he walked swiftly along the road leading to the village, and so he did not know that it chanced that Dick Merriwell left the grounds not far behind him and chose the same course.

After proceeding some distance, Chester began to look away toward the spot where a dim path came over a high ridge and led down to the road. Almost immediately he espied two figures coming over the ridge, and his eyes told him they were girls. He frowned and shook his head, as if not quite satisfied.

"Why didn't she come alone?" he muttered. "I believe it's that high-headed little minx, Miss Templeton, with her. I'd like to take some of the pride out of
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Doris Templeton! It galls me to have her treat me as she does! She's the first girl I ever tried to make an impression on and fizzled. As for Zona Desmond—why, she's all broken up over me, just as she should be."

He paused beneath some trees near where the path reached the road, waiting for the girls to approach. Taking a fancy to do so, he sat down where they could not see him.

He had not been seated many moments when he heard several screams of terror, which brought him to his feet in great haste.

The girls were running toward the fence, while in pursuit of them came an enraged bull, attracted by a bright red hat worn by the taller of the two.

Immediately Arlington vaulted over the fence, calling to the girls, and ran with all the speed he could muster straight toward them.

They heard him and ran in his direction. But the bull was gaining with terrible swiftness, and it seemed that he must reach them in a few seconds.

"Your hat!" shouted Chester. "Throw away that hat!"

But they did not seem to hear, or, if they heard, they did not understand.

"Heavens!" he gasped. "The beast will kill them! Zona—your hat, Zona!" he cried. "Throw it away!"

At last, when the bull was terribly close and Chester
had almost reached them, the tall girl understood and made an effort to get the hat off. At first she did not succeed, but, as she passed Chester, she managed to get the hat off and give it a fling.

Quick as thought, Arlington caught the hat before it fell to the ground, and, with it in his possession, he dashed directly in front of the infuriated bull, daringly waving the red thing at the creature.

His ruse was successful, for at once the bull turned from the pursuit of the girls and charged him. Arlington wheeled, with the animal thundering at his heels. He clung to the hat. In a twinkling he heard the bull close upon him, and he seemed to feel the hot breath blown from the creature's nostrils. As he leaped to one side he was brushed by one of the lowered horns of the bull, but he had escaped for the moment.

With amazing agility the animal checked his speed and turned to dash after Chester again.

In the meantime the girls continued on to the fence, gasping, shaking and terribly frightened. When they had managed to fling themselves over the fence they turned and beheld Chester fleeing for his life with the bull right upon him.

Zoha Desmond covered her face with her hands, sobbing with terror:

“Oh, he'll be killed!”

“Why does he keep the hat?” came from the lips of
Doris, who was pale as death, but continued to watch the thrilling race. "Why doesn't he throw it away?"

Again Chester dodged and was missed by a hair. This time he managed to look toward the road and saw the girls were safely over the fence, upon which he immediately cast the hat aside.

But the infuriated bull seemed to have lost sight of the hat, and it whirled on Arlington once more.

Chester did not seem to anticipate this, but he made for the fence at his greatest speed.

So absorbed in the thrilling race had the girls been that they utterly failed to note the approach of another lad, who came up on a run. They saw him only when he went flying over the fence with a mighty leap that seemed like a soaring bird. He landed on his feet and dashed straight toward Arlington and the bull.

Just as Chester saw this boy his ankle turned and he went down. It seemed certain that he must be trampled and gored by the infuriated bull.

The girls screamed, Zona having uncovered her eyes to take a look, although she instantly covered them again.

At this moment the second lad sprang fairly in front of the bull, dashing a handful of dust into the eyes of the creature, blinding and confusing it for the moment.

The beast halted, snorting and shaking its lowered head. Like a flash, the daring fellow, who had rushed to the rescue, tore off his coat and flung it over the
horns of the animal in such a manner that it caught
there and hung dangling confusingly before the bull's
eyes.

This done, he wheeled, seized Arlington by the col-
lar and jerked him upright, Chester having risen to his
knees.

"Can you run?" he panted.

Arlington did not wait to answer. He had been
stunned for a moment by the shock of the fall, but
now he took to his heels and went tumbling over the
fence in a most lively manner.

The rescuer was not far behind.

Too late to pursue them and do any damage, the bull
succeeded in shaking off the coat. He bellowed fiercely
and pawed the ground, continuing to shake his head,
still bothered by the dust in his eyes.

Chester Arlington looked at the boy who had un-
hesitatingly rushed to his rescue, and a sort of green-
ish pallor spread over his face.

"You?" he muttered in dismay, breathing heavily.

"Yes," said Dick Merriwell, who in this manner had
again saved the life of his enemy. "And I want to
congratulate you on your bravery in going to the res-
cue of Miss Templeton and Miss Desmond."

Congratulations from such a source were anything
but agreeable to Chester Arlington.

"It was nothing," he muttered—"nothing but what
any chap would have done."
"I can't think so," differed Dick, with manly gener-
osity. "Lots of fellows would have hesitated, and
hesitation must have meant the destruction of one of
the girls, at least. It was well done, Arlington!"

Even Chester could not doubt Dick's sincerity.

The two boys now turned their attention to the girls.
Zona was quite overcome, and Doris, who usually
seemed timid, was doing her best to reassure her
friend.

"It's all right, Miss Desmond," assured Chester,
with his usual politeness. "No one is harmed."

"Oh, the dreadful beast!" sobbed Zona, shaking all
over. "I never had such a fright in my life! And
you—you saved us!"

"And Dick saved him!" breathed Doris, giving Mer-
riwell a look that spoke volumes.

Dick was astonished by the nerve of Doris, and in
his eyes she had never looked prettier than at this
moment. With boyish impulsiveness, he congratu-
lated her on her nerve, grasping her hand with both
of his and looking deep into her eyes. Her cheeks had
been very pale, but they reddened at this look from
Dick, and her long eyelashes drooped.

For all that Zona Desmond was there, Arlington
noted Doris' blush and confusion and ground his teeth.
The thought that he had never been able to make such
an impression on her was most galling to his proud
and conceited soul.
"Oh, my hat!" Zona exclaimed suddenly. "It's new!"

Dick saw immediately that the bull had abandoned the hat, which had fallen in a little hollow, and was now unseen by the animal. The creature was wandering about, pawing the ground, lowering its head now and then and snorting. From its manner it was plain that the dust remained a source of irritation.

Before any one realized that he contemplated such a thing, Dick vaulted the fence and dashed out toward the hat. He reached it before he was seen by the bull. The animal started for him then, but, by a sharp sprint, Merriwell reached the fence first and went flying over in safety.

Arlington was greener than ever when Dick returned the hat to Zona, assuring her that it was uninjured.

"Why couldn't I have done that?" thought Chester; and, for all that he had lately been saved from the bull by Dick, his heart was filled with bitterness.

By this time the girls had quite recovered, and Zona explained in a low tone to Chester that she had been compelled to bring Doris along as a companion, it being necessary to have some one with her. From her words it was plain that the meeting had been arranged in advance.

Soon the four started to walk to the village, Dick
and Doris in advance. Zona talked to Chester, but found him strangely absorbed and silent.

"What's the matter?" she asked. "You really look blue—and that after saving us from the bull in such a splendid way. I'll never forget it, Mr. Arlington."

"But Merriwell is the one who did the thing that galls me," he confessed, the frown on his face growing deeper.

"But it was fortunate for you that he appeared just as he did."

"Not at all!"

"Why, how can you say that! The bull might have killed you!"

"Better to be killed than to owe anything to Merriwell!" said Chester, his voice shaking.

"Oh, you hate him so! Will you never get over it? Will you never become his friend?"

"Not if I preserve my senses!" said Chester hotly. "What you saw him do a few minutes ago looked like a generous act to you; but it was nothing of the sort. He saw his chance to humiliate me, and he took it, that's all. He knew he could make himself a hero in your eyes and those of Miss Templeton, and he grasped the opportunity. Oh, I can read him like a book! He doesn't fool me! The wonder is that he didn't offer to shake hands with me! He has done me every injury any fellow could, and now he puts me in a false position! But I'll get even—mark it, Zona, I'll get even!"
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I’ll turn the tables on him by making him look cheap, and that within a week.”

“But I thought you were going away!”

“So I am.”

“Then you’ll not be here to get even with him.”

“That’s all right. I can’t explain now, but you’ll find out all about it. Zona, can’t you and Doris Templeton run over to Hilsboro Saturday to see the game of ball there?”

‘Why—why, I don’t know. Why should we take so much pains to see that particular game?’

“If I’ll tell you a secret will you promise not to say a word about it?”

“Why, of course!”

“Now, I depend on you, for if you say anything it may ruin the whole business.”

“Oh, do tell me the secret! I just love secrets!”

“I have a friend who is going to pitch for Hilsboro against Fardale.”

“Is that all?” asked Zona, disappointed.

“He’s a wizard. He will make Merriwell look like a back number. I know it. He is a great pitcher, and the Hilsboro team is better than the Fardale team. Merriwell thinks he’ll have a snap over there, and it will hurt him awfully to lose that game. I want you to see it. Take Doris Templeton along with you—if she’ll go. I want her to witness the downfall of her
idol. I can’t tell you more; but I’ll just say that I know it’s a sure thing Hilsboro will win.”

“And you’ll be there, Chester—Mr. Arlington?”

“Yes.”

“Perhaps we’ll be able to come. I can’t promise sure; but I’ll do my best to go and take Doris with me.”

“You won’t regret it—be sure of that. I shall look for you.”

Zona was flattered by the thought that Chester Arlington, the son of one of the richest men in America, should take such an interest in her. Although she was regarded as the belle of the village, she was, in truth, an unsophisticated country girl, and it is, therefore, scarcely remarkable that Chester’s attentions should have appeared pleasing.

How could she know that there were at least a dozen other girls whom Arlington found far more attractive, and that he cared not a whit for any of them!
CHAPTER IV.

ON THE TRAIN.

Saturday morning it was drizzly. It looked as if the game at Hilsboro must be postponed. About ten o'clock Dick telephoned to Mat Hearn, while the boys anxiously awaited the result of the interview.

"We'll go, boys," was the announcement. "Hearn says it has not rained there this morning. You know it's inland away from the coast. He guarantees all expenses in case rain stops the game. Islington, where we are to play, is seven miles from Hilsboro; but that is inland, too."

So the word went around in a hurry, and the boys got ready to go. When they started for the station they were astonished to find the usual large crowd of "rooters" with them. They had fancied the weather would prevent the boys from going along to support the team; but such did not seem to be the case.

At the station Dick was still more surprised to find at least six girls who were armed with horns and colors and dressed for the occasion, making it evident at a glance that they meant to take in the game.

Zona Desmond and Doris Templeton were among them. Doris smiled roguishly as Dick came up and lifted his cap.
"Why, this is a great surprise!" he exclaimed. "It's a delightful one! I didn’t suppose you would think of going to Hilsboro on such a day."

"Oh, Zona was bound to go," said Doris. "She got up the party. Never saw her so enthusiastic over anything in all my life."

"That's rather odd," commented Dick. "Didn’t suppose she took such a wonderful interest in the team. Now that Arlington is away, I thought she wouldn’t care a snap about it."

"Oh, she says something wonderful and surprising is going to happen to-day. What is it, Dick?"

"Give it up. I haven’t an idea."

"Why, she even declared she'd go alone if she couldn’t get any of the rest of the girls to keep her company."

"That’s remarkable," said Dick. "but I can’t solve the mystery. Here comes the train!"

The train whistled for the station and came rushing and roaring in. The girls were helped aboard, and the crowd of “rooters” clambered onto the cars in high spirits, in spite of the weather. From the platform a band of envious chaps, who couldn’t get away for various reasons, cheered the others off.

"Make 'em be good, Jolliby," advised a fellow, thinking of Chip’s failing in hitting at the bad ones.

"Don’t steal too many bases, Gardner," urged an-
On the Train.

other, and the boy from Maine smiled and waved his hand.

"Get in one of your homers, Singleton."

"If I can connect," promised big Bob.

"Hit it hard, Flint!"

"Smash it, Flint!"

"You can do it, Flint!"

Flint, whose face was marked by a disfiguring scar, flushed with pleasure. He thought of a time when he had been an outcast at the school, shunned and despised, and the change that had come about seemed most amazing. He realized with gratitude that he owed it all to Dick Merriwell.

Then the boys on the platform cheered and cheered for Captain Merriwell.

Dick escorted Doris to a seat, and the other girls found seats near. Dick sat down with her, saying he would remain there a while. They were seen through the car window, and the crowd on the platform packed solidly beneath that window. Some fellow shouted:

"Captain Merriwell has found a mascot! 'Rah for the mascot!"

Then, in true boyish style, they cheered until Doris was blushing furiously. Dick laughed heartily.

"It seems that they are inclined to make you the mascot of the nine," he said. "That's first-class. Frank told me once that at Yale Elsie Bellwood was the mascot of the nine. She is something like you, Doris, only
On the Train.

different in many ways. You are—ahem!—more interesting, and—er—ah—prettier.”

“Dick!” exclaimed Doris reprovingly. “I am surprised! Have you turned flatterer?”

“I never flatter,” he protested. “Sometimes I am compelled to speak the truth. I couldn’t help it just now.”

“Oh, all fellows say things like that! I expected something different of you.”

“Oh, I’m just an ordinary chap. If you are not convinced of that now, you will be later.”

The train pulled out, and suddenly, in a seat ahead, Ted Smart popped up and turned around.

“We’re going to have trouble!” he declared. “I feel it in my bones. There’s going to be something doing at Fardale, captain.”

“Without doubt,” nodded Dick, laughing.

“I know it,” averred Ted. “This morning I heard something that opened my eyes.”

“What was that?”

“My alarm clock,” answered the little fellow, and then settled gracefully back into his seat.

“The little villain!” laughed Merriwell. “We don’t have any alarm clocks in the academy. We get up at the sound of reveille. I’ll have to get even with him for that.”

After a little, Dick called:

“I’m glad you’re with us, Ted.”
On the Train.

“Oh, yes! oh, yes!” grinned back the joker of the party.

“I was afraid at one time that you wouldn’t be; but I see you escaped?”

“Hey? Escaped what?”

“The dog-catchers,” was Dick’s answer; and then the laugh was on Ted.

“Oh, fudge!” said Ted. “Hold your tongue.”

“I can’t,” smiled Dick. “It’s too slippery.”

Ted was irrepressible, however, and he kept everyone in his vicinity laughing. It happened that there was not water in the drinking-tank on the car, whereupon he bemoaned his fate.

“I’ve had an awful thirst all morning,” he declared. “When I awoke there was no drinking-water in my room, so I just stepped out into the hall and took down one of the glass fire-extinguishers and drank every drop there was in it.”

“How did you feel after that?” asked one of the boys.

“I felt put out,” was the grave answer. “Oh, fudge!”

It was still overcast when the train arrived in Islington, but no rain was falling there.

The boys took a light dinner, and then got into their baseball clothes at the hotel.

The game had been arranged to be played at Islington, where there was a fine fenced ground and great
interest in baseball. It was believed that more money could be made at Islington than at either Hilsboro or Fardale. Fardale was due to play in Hilsboro, but accepted Islington, as it seemed more agreeable to the manager of the Hilsboro team.

Dick had been meditating on the remarkable fact that the manager of the opposing team had telephoned that he was willing to stand all expenses in case Fardale appeared on the field and rain prevented the game. Having time to think about this, it seemed very strange to Merriwell. Plainly Hilsboro was extremely anxious to play the game on that date, and there must be something behind all that anxiety. If the game had been postponed a fair day for it might have resulted, in which case it was certain more money would be taken than on a lowery day. But the Hilsboro manager was willing to sacrifice his chance of making more money in order that the game might be pulled off on the date originally agreed upon.

"There's a colored gentleman in the woodpile," decided Dick. "There is something behind all this, and I must keep my eyes open."

The boys proceeded to the field in high spirits. Smart was funnier than ever. He kept them chuckling with his odd ways and jokes.

The Islington boys gathered and followed the Fardale team along the street, all seeming eager to look Dick over. He interested them very much.
On the Train.

“Tell ye wot,” said one chap; “his broder was der corker. I seen him oncet.”

“And I used to read all about him in the papers,” said another boy. “I remember once I read where he said something about cigarettes, and I never touched one of the things afterward. Before that I couldn’t run ten steps without losing my wind; now I can run ten miles. Oh, he’s right about them things! They ain’t no good for any feller.”

Dick heard the most of this and smiled with satisfaction.

“That’s some of the good my brother has done in the world, Dave,” he observed, speaking to Flint. “You see, he managed to reform one boy, at least. Now look at the little fellow. He’s healthy as a bear, or his clear eyes and good color are deceptive.”

“Don’t think he’s the only boy in the world that Frank Merriwell has reformed from the cigarette habit,” said Flint seriously. “I’ll stake my life there are thousands. All the boys who have ever read of him are anxious to be like him, and they know they cannot be if they smoke cigarettes. I fancy cigarette manufacturers generally would take great pleasure in punishing him for the injury he has done their business; but, as he has told nothing but the truth, they cannot touch him.”

Captain Hearn met them as they came onto the baseball ground. He shook hands with Dick.
On the Train.

"Glad to see you," he said. "Hope you're prepared to take a good trouncing."

"We're not thieves," retorted Dick; "so we'll not take what belongs to you."

"That's kind!" laughed Hearn. "But you may find yourselves compelled to take it."

"Who are you going to pitch against us—the mighty Cross?" asked Merriwell.

"No; we have a better man by the name of Miller. There he is now," and Hearn pointed out the strange pale-faced hunchback, who was walking toward the grand stand. "He'll make your hitters look like monkeys."

"Perhaps," smiled Dick undisturbed.
CHAPTER V.

A DOUBLE WHITEWASH.

Merriwell had altered his batting-list slightly, and had also placed Gardner in a new position in left field, having discovered that the boy from Maine was an out-fielder of extraordinary ability.

Following was the line-up given to the scorers:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FARDALE</th>
<th>HILSBORO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gardner, lf.</td>
<td>Small, ss.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bradley, 3d b.</td>
<td>Hearn, 2d b.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singleton, 1st b.</td>
<td>Van Sickle, 3d b.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flint, c.</td>
<td>Stalling, 1st b.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sprague, rf.</td>
<td>Hampton, cf.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tubbs, 2d b.</td>
<td>Boom, c.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smart, ss.</td>
<td>Koster, lf.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Alector, the mysterious hunchback, was down on the list under the name of Miller, while Miller sat on the bench, glad enough to escape the ordeal of facing such a team as Fardale had sent onto the field.

In practise the cadets were snappy and swift, and the spectators realized that it was to be a struggle between two prettily matched teams. It was generally said that the best pitcher would win.

The grass was still wet, and Dick knew he was due to have trouble with a slippery ball.
In the grand stand the six girls from Fardale gathered in a bunch, ready to cheer loyally for their friends, with the possible exception of Zona.

“What’s the matter, Zona?” asked Doris. “You seem nervous. What is it?”

“Oh, nothing, nothing!” was the answer; but she continued to fidget about and gaze anxiously at the spectators, seeming to take very little interest in the players.

“Hilsboro takes the field!” exclaimed one of the girls.

The Hilsboro team trotted out and was given a cheer.

Alector walked into the box. If possible, he seemed paler than ever; but he showed no signs of nervousness. He was cool and self-possessed.

“Now, Miller, old boy,” cried Hearn, “just show these chaps what you can do.”

‘Rah! ’rah! ’rah! for Miller!” cried a bunch of Hilsboro fans.

Brad Buckhart, who was on the bench, gave Dick Merriwell a nudge with his elbow.

“Well, pard,” he grinned, “do you think you can do anything with Mr. Miller?”

“Of course I think so,” smiled Dick. “But I’m anxious to see his style.”

“Ought to pound him out of the box,” declared the
A Double Whitewash.

Texan. "Did you ever see a hunchy who could pitch?"

"Don't know that I ever did; but still it's possible that this one can. There goes Gardner."

Earl, straight and handsome, with a clean-cut, boyish face, walked to the plate. He had his own pet bat, and it was his desire to start the ball rolling with a clean hit. At the same time, he did not forget Merrimell's instructions to walk if possible. Dick believed in working a pitcher to the limit. He had seen more than one good pitcher "go up" by being forced to put the ball over good and fair by the first few batters to face him.

Alector started with a wide one that did not come anywhere near the plate.

"One ball!" declared the umpire, as Gardner refused to even wiggle his bat at it.

Then the hunchback used an in-shoot that drove Earl back a step.

"Two balls!"

"Get 'em over! Get 'em over!" shouted the Fardale rooters from the bleachers.

Alector's face remained as cold and immovable as marble. He pressed the ball into his hand, glanced about, then suddenly snapped it over with great speed.

Gardner was looking for another in-shoot from the manner of delivery and the way in which the ball started, but it came straight over.
A Double Whitewash.

"One strike!" called the umpire, although Earl had not swung.

"Yee!" yelled the Hilsboro crowd. "That had whiskers on it!"

In truth it had been very speedy.

"Nice pitching, Miller!" said Captain Hearn. "He couldn't see it."

"That's all right, Gard, old dandy!" shouted a Far-dale chap. "You will show the gentleman something in a minute."

Alector used another high in-shoot. Gardner was not fooled by it, and "ball three" was called.

"Play the limit!" was the cry to Gardner. "You've got him guessing."

"Put it right over the middle of the pan, Miller," urged Hearn. "Let him hit it. He won't hurt that speed."

"Oh, he doesn't want to hit it!" said Ted Smart, who could not keep still. "He wouldn't hit it anyhow!"

Alector took his time, and he made the ball whistle when he sent it over the inside corner.

Gardner let it pass.

"Two strikes!"

"Next one tells the story!" exclaimed Hearn. "You've got him, Miller! He'll never graze it! Your speed is too much for the poor boy."

Gardner's jaws were squared, and in his eyes there was a look of determination.
Alector turned the ball over and over in his hand. He looked at Boom, who gave a signal. The pitcher shook his head, and Boom signaled again. Again Alector shook his head. Boom seemed to hesitate, as if surprised, but finally gave a signal that caused the pitcher to nod.

What was coming?

There was a hush, and everybody watched closely. Alector placed his toe carefully on the slab, then covered the ball for a second with both hands, but pitched it almost immediately. It seemed wide of the plate, and Gardner lowered his bat, expecting to hear it called a ball, which would give him "a walk."

The ball, however, was one of Alector's handsomest in-shoots, and it came in so sharply that it passed over the outside corner of the plate.

"Strike three! You're out!" cried the umpire.

Then the Hilsboro crowd whooped.

"Well, what do you think of that!" they cried. "Miller is a bird! Go 'way back, pretty boy, and be seated."

Gardner looked disgusted as he walked to the bench. "That wasn't over!" he said. "I know it wasn't!"

"I'm inclined to think it was," said Dick. "Look out for Miller's in-shoot, Bradley. He's got a dandy."

"Hi eat 'em," said Billy. "Let 'im give me one of 'em."
Alector scarcely glanced at Billy. He started with one that was close to the cockney boy's knees.

"Come hon!" said Billy. "Pitch ball! Hi'm no target, Hi'd 'ave you hunderstand!"

"Ow, deah! ow, deah!" cried several from the bleachers, in derision.

Alector's face never changed a whit. It had a peculiar vapid expression that made him seem almost foolish. He wore an old hat, that was pulled low down over his eyes, which gleamed steadily from beneath the lopping brim.

Once on a time Bradley had been very weak in batting in-shoots; but the English boy finally found it out, or was told of it, and he set about rectifying his fault by practising hitting the king of a curve, with the result that he finally came to prefer a ball that curved toward him. He would then lean back and "swat it on the trademark" in a handsome manner when it came over the inside corner of the plate.

This being the case, Billy prayed for a high swift in, and expected to get it. His expectations were not realized, for, after that first one close to his knees, the pitcher tried the outside corner, then handed up a puzzling drop, ending with a "lob ball" that caught Bradley handsomely, and Billy was dazed to find he had struck out.

"'Ow did 'e do hit?" muttered Bradley, as he walked dejectedly to the bench.
“He seemed to know just what to give you,” observed Dick. “It’s strange he didn’t toss you up a high in.”

‘’Owling strange!” growled Bradley.

Singleton said not a word, but picked out his favorite heavy “slugger” and stalked out to the plate.

“Look out for the big one, Miller,” laughed Hearn. “He has a rep as a heavy tunker.”

Alector did not even seem to notice this. He held his head down so that the lopping brim of the old hat quite hid his eyes. When Singleton was in position, the pitcher suddenly delivered the ball.

It looked like a pretty straight one, and Bob fancied it was just where he wanted it. So the big chap of the Fardale team went after the ball with a swing that must have dented it had he accomplished his design.

The ball took a sharp curve and Singleton did not touch it. Bob looked mildly surprised, but made no comment.

The Hilsboro crowd grew more and more enthusiastic.

“Make it three straight, Miller,” urged Hearn. “They’ll tremble after this inning! They know they’re up against the real thing now.”

Singleton did not lose his head. He let the next two pass, and had the satisfaction of hearing both pronounced balls. Then he swung for one and fouled it.
A Double Whitewash.

Alector gave him another in the same place, and again Singleton made a foul.

As they were not playing under the foul-strike rule, these did not count against him.

"Oh, strike out!" called Smart. "We like to start that way! We enjoy it! It's fine!"

"You'll get plenty of it," declared Hearn. "I doubt if you fellows get a hit to-day."

"Oh, do let us have one—just one!" begged Smart.

Singleton's caution availed him nothing, for Alector seemed to know his weak spot, as well as that of Bradley, and the heavy hitter of the cadets finally fanned out.

Naturally enough the Hilsboro crowd was jubilant. Hearn ran up and walked in to the bench with his hand on the shoulder of the surprising hunchback pitcher, telling him how good he was. But Alector kept his eyes on the ground and was not heard to answer.

On receiving the last pitched ball, Boom had thrown it far into the field, where Hampton ran after it, but permitted it to fall and roll in the damp grass. Having picked it up, Hampton threw it toward Prindle, who also failed to catch it, and again the ball rolled in the grass.

Dick Merriwell noted this, and it gave him a feeling of anger, for he saw it was plainly the intention of the-
nemy to get the ball dripping wet so that it would be hard to pitch.

Immediately Dick called the umpire's attention to what was being done.

"Oh, no!" laughed the umpire. "They wouldn't resort to a trick like that."

"Wouldn't they? Well, I'm inclined to believe they would resort to almost any sort of a trick to best Fardale to-day."

When the ball was thrown in from the field Dick wiped it on his trousers and dried it as well as he could. However, it was still wet when he faced Small, the first batter, and he knew it would be difficult to get a sharp curve with it in that condition.

Flint was under the bat. He looked at Dick, while pretending to give the signal. This was all a pretense, however, for it was understood that Merriwell should do all the signaling.

Sitting on the bench, Alector watched Dick with the keen eyes that peered from beneath the hat brim. The moment Merriwell assumed a certain position Alector placed his left hand on his chest. This was a signal to Small, who stood in such a position that he could see the hunchback, and the batter knew the first ball was to be an out-drop.

This being the case, Small was ready, and, although the ball curved out beyond the plate, he leaned forward and tunked it for an easy single.
“Well! well! well!” laughed Hearn, as he arose from the bench, bat in hand. “Wasn’t that easy? Is this the wonderful Merriwell? It can’t be possible?”

His words and laughter were calculated to irritate Dick, but they missed fire entirely.

Again Dick signaled, and this time Alector made no move, which meant that the batter was to let the ball pass.

Small seemed to get a good lead off first, and it was evident that he meant to try to steal if given a good opportunity. When he saw the ball seemingly fly wild and start to pass behind the batter he scooted urged by the coacher.

In truth, Dick had given Flint to understand that he would throw the ball behind Hearn, and Dave was quite prepared for just such a thing, which enabled him to jump out and stop it easily.

Immediately Hearn fell back from the plate, doing it in a careless manner, but really for the purpose of bothering Flint about throwing to second.

Dave, however, was too quick to be bothered in such a manner, and he shot the ball past Hearn’s ear so close that the captain of the Hilsboro team felt the wind when it passed and ducked down.

“Slide!” yelled the coacher.

Small flung himself forward in a long slide, but the ball came handsomely into the hands of Tubbs, who
chuckled, "Dern my picter!" and slapped it onto the sliding player.

"Out!" cried the umpire.

Upon which the Fardale crowd rose up and shouted for Flint, and Dick Merriwell laughed.

Alector lowered his head, shaking it a bit regretfully.

"Splendid, Dave!" said Dick. "They'll be careful after they get acquainted with you."

With the exception of Zona Desmond, the Fardale girls in the grand stand clapped their hands with delight. Zona seemed quite unaware of what was taking place on the field. She continued to look over the gathering of spectators, and her face wore a look of deep disappointment.

Merriwell signaled, and again Alector informed the batter what to expect, which enabled Hearn to hit the ball hard and fair, driving it out on a line.

It seemed like a clean hit, but Obediah Tubbs managed to make a surprising jump and pull the liner down with one hand.

"Dern my picter!" he gasped, as if greatly surprised by his success. "Who'd 'a' thunk it!"

"Well, of all accidents!" muttered Hearn, as he stopped in disgust on his way to first and stared at the fat boy, his hands on his hips. "How did you do it?"

"I'll never tell you!" squealed Obediah, grinning. "It's a little way I hev."
“Let me have a try at this!” exclaimed Van Sickle, who was the third batter.

Alector watched Dick closely and signaled that the ball was to be high and straight. That was all Van Sickle needed, and he, like the two players ahead of him, met the ball fairly. It was a fly into left field, and looked like a two-bagger.

Gardner seemed to start with the crack of the bat and ball, and he covered ground with such speed that he succeeded in getting under the ball. Nevertheless, it appeared certain to pass over his head at such a height that there was no possibility of reaching it. Earl did not fail to try for it. High into the air he sprang, thrusting up his left hand, and when he came down he had the ball, although he fell and rolled upon his back. He held fast to the ball and exhibited it in his grasp as he lay on the wet grass.

The Fardale crowd roared. True it was that every Hilsboro batter had hit the ball, but Merriwell’s superb support had kept any one of them from getting beyond first base.

The first inning ended with both sides whitewashed.
CHAPTER VI.

WHAT DID DICK DISCOVER?

"Well, what do you think of it, Brad?" asked Dick, as he came in to the bench.

"Great tarantulas!" exclaimed the Texan. "It was out of sight! But, say, pard, ain't you well?"

"Never felt better in all my life."

"That hunchy struck three of us out, and all three of them chaps hit the ball. I don't understand it. However did it happen."

"The ball was wet and slippery."

"But they seemed to know just what was coming. They weren't fooled a little bit."

"That's right," confessed Dick. "There's something mighty queer about this game."

"I'd give my boots to be in it, pard!" declared Brad earnestly. "I would, I know! Blame this derned old shoulder! It was Arlington put me on the bum, though I couldn't prove it. But I sure reckon he'll never bother any of us any more at baseball. I kind of opine he's quit Fardale for good, though you may not think so."

"I don't know, but I'd be glad to think it," confessed Dick.
“Well, you’d be a howling chump if you wasn’t glad!” snorted the Texan.

Dave Flint was the first batter in the second inning. Dick whispered something to him as he was getting his bat, and Flint nodded.

Now, Dave had already become the wonder of the Fardale team, for he seemed to have no weakness in his hitting. Speed, drops, curves, shoots and benders of all kinds were alike to him.

The Fardale rooters gave him a cheer as he walked out to the plate. He was not a graceful fellow, and he did not strike a fancy pose, but there was something in his manner that seemed to show that he meant business and was dangerous.

Alector was wary of Flint. He acted as if he knew full well what kind of a chap he was facing, and he declined to put the ball over, with the result that Dave was not given an opportunity to hit the ball, but walked to first.

“Now, that’s too bad!” chirped Smart. “It’s a shame to get a base that easy! I hate to see anybody do it! Don’t take it, Flint—don’t take it! Let ’em put you out—do!”

With the appearance of Jolliby at the plate Alector seemed to regain his confidence. He had Chip’s measure, all right, and the best the lank boy could do was to roll an easy one down the line toward first. He
was thrown out, but Fint advanced to second, and it seemed like a good sacrifice.

“We don’t want to make a score now!” declared Smart. “It wouldn’t be right!”

“Don’t worry,” laughed Hearn. “You won’t.”

Sprague was nervous. He seemed to realize that the hunchback was an unusually clever pitcher, and his demeanor indicated that he lacked confidence. After fanning twice, he put up a high foul, which Boom smothered.

Two men were out, and Flint had not been able to get beyond second.

“Here comes the midget!” cried Smart, as Tubbs waddled out. “He is a dear little thing! Don’t throw ‘em hard to him. Just toss him an easy one—please do!”

Alector paid not the least attention to Smart’s chatter. His first one to Tubbs was speedy, and it came straight at the fat boy, who seemed unable to get out of the way. It struck Obediah in the side, causing him to utter a squeal and drop his bat.

“Oh, scissors!” squeaked Obed, in his queer voice. “That was too easy!”

“Take first,” said the umpire.

“Oh, fudge!” said Ted, as he ran in and picked out a bat. “I’ve got to put the ball over the fence! I just hate to do it! I’d rather not! I don’t like to
What Did Dick Discover?

go all the way around the bases! It's such a long distance!"

Alector paused, wheeled suddenly, snapped the ball to second, and forced Flint back. He repeated this twice, and then pitched one to Ted.

Smart simply held up his bat and let the ball hit it, dropping it down a few feet in front of the rubber and scooting for first at the same time.

This was in accordance to a signal from Dick, and both Flint and Tubbs had been prepared, so that they were running when the bat hit the ball.

Both Alector and Boom tried to field the ball, with the result that they interfered, and the trick proved successful, so that the bases were filled.

“Well, I guess we score here!” cried Earl Gardner, as Dick Merriwell picked up his favorite bat.

“You’ve got another guess due you,” asserted Hearn.

Alector was up against a proposition to try his nerve. He seemed on the verge of delivering the ball, but suddenly snapped it over to first, and Ted was caught napping, being tagged a foot off the bag.

“You’re out!” cried the umpire.

A groan went up from the loyal Fardale crowd, while those in sympathy with Hilsboro rose up and howled with astonished delight.

Alector had saved himself, and the time of peril had passed.
What Did Dick Discover?

Smart was dazed for a minute, and then he exclaimed:

"Didn't I do that nice! I'm so glad! I told you I just hated to go all the way around the bases!"

In truth, Ted was very much ashamed of himself. As Dick tossed aside his bat and walked out to the pitcher's box Smart passed him, saying:

"I know you're just as proud of me as you can be! If you had two or three more chaps like me on the team you'd have a great aggregation!"

Dick did not complain, for he understood the little chap well enough to realize the full extent of Ted's humility.

"Never mind," he said. "You'll have another chance before the game is over."

"To do something like that? How lovely! If I do, the boys ought to make me a present of a nice warm coat—of tar and feathers!"

Again Hearn walked in with his hand on Alector's shoulder.

"Old man," he laughed, "you're a dandy! That was right where we might have lost the game. Merriwell is a fine hitter."

"He's the biggest shine on the whole team," said the hunchback, with a contemptuous curl of his lips. "I'll prove it to you before the game is finished."

"If you prove anything like that," said the captain
of the Hilsboro team, "you'll do more than any fellow ever has before you."

The clouds were beginning to break away, and it seemed that the sun would soon come out. Dick was glad of this, for he did not fancy pitching with a wet ball, it being quite impossible to throw his combination curve, or even to use the jump ball successfully.

Stalling was one of the best hitters on the Hilsboro team, and Dick did his best to work the fellow. However, the third ball pitched slipped from Merriwell's fingers and hit the batter on the arm, whereupon he walked to first.

Prindle succeeded in hitting the ball into right field. Sprague should have captured it easily, but fell down in the wet grass, which was very slippery. The ball was lost in the grass, and Stalling romped on to third, while the spectators arose to their feet in excitement.

Watching Sprague, who was wildly clawing around in the grass, the coacher near third sent Stalling home.

Sprague got the ball and lined it to the plate, but he was too late to stop the run.

Flint threw at once to Bradley, but Prindle slid under and was safe.

Hilsboro had made her first run, and the crowd howled with delight.

Prindle was safe on third, and no one was out.

The situation was anything but pleasant for Fardale.
“Well, well, what do you think?” shouted Mat Hearn, in delight. “It’s a regular snap!”

Out in right field Sprague was walking about with his head down, his appearance one of shame and disgust.

“Splendid!” chirped Ted Smart cheerfully. “We like it! This is the way we always do when we mean to take the game easy!”

Obediah Tubbs was muttering:

“Dern my picter! Dern my picter!”

Dick Merriwell, however, did not seem downcast. He was too much of a sport to lose his nerve over anything like that.

The ball was still dripping wet when it came to Dick’s hands. He spent some time drying it. Finally he was ordered to pitch by the umpire.

Hampton was in position, grinning derisively.

Dick worked carefully with the batter, finally forcing him to hit a little one onto the ground, and this came straight to Merriwell.

Prindle had been playing off, and Dick snapped the ball over to third. Prindle scooted for the home plate, and Bradley drove the ball into Flint’s hands. Immediately Prindle stopped and started back, while Flint ran toward him and Dick covered the plate.

The crowd was on its feet, shouting wildly.

Hampton continued around the bases unmolested
What Did Dick Discover?

while the Fardale fellows did their best to catch Prindle and tag him out.

Prindle was lively on his feet, and he fooled around long enough to let Hampton pass second and get well along toward third base. Then he managed to thrust out a shoulder and deflect a ball thrown by Bradley, after which he raced laughingly to the plate, and Hampton landed on third.

No wonder the Hilsboro crowd roared with delight! They had every reason to do so.

Five girls in the grand stand looked sad and regretful.

"I think it's perfectly horrid!" half-sobbed Doris.

"It's just what Chester—or—Mr. Arlington said would happen," declared Zona. "But he told me he'd be here to watch the game. I can't understand why he isn't."

"I think he's a very cheap fellow!" exclaimed Doris warmly.

"Cheap!" said Zona. "Why, his father is worth millions!"

"I don't care if he is, Chester Arlington has proved himself a cheap fellow."

"Now, Doris, dear, don't talk like that. Folks will think you're jealous!"

"Jealous!" flashed Doris. "Of what?"

"Oh, I didn't say so; but you make it seem that way."
What Did Dick Discover?

At this Doris simply smiled derisively. She did not tell her companion that Chester Arlington had pursued her until she found it necessary to give him a setback that he could not forget. With more consideration for the feelings of her friend, she refrained.

Boom was in position to strike, but Dick called Flint down. As they met, the Hilsboro crowd shouted with laughter, advising them to swap gum.

"Give the signals, Dave," said Dick, in a low tone. "Be careful to give them so no one can see you. I'm being piped off, and I'll have to leave it to you."

Flint nodded and went back behind the bat.

Dick had tumbled to the fact that his signals were being read and given to the batters as they waited at the plate. When he returned to the box he took the signal from Flint, but assumed a position that seemed to indicate he meant to throw an entirely different ball.

Alector signaled from the bench to Boom, giving Dick's sign.

The result of this was that Boom expected something entirely different from what he received, and he was fooled into fanning wildly at the ball. This was repeated twice more, and Mr. Boom walked to the bench.

"What's the matter?" he growled to Alector. "When you told me it was to be a straight ball it was an in-shoot, and he never threw a curve that you indicated."
“That’s right,” acknowledged the hunchback. “It’s plain he has changed his signals. The fellow is quick to catch on, and I think he suspected what was doing.”

After that Alector gave no signs to the batters, and immediately there came a change. For all of the wet ball, Dick was able to fool Koster, who also struck out.

Then it was Alector’s turn to face Dick.

At the very start Merriwell tossed an easy one to Alector, who hit it into the air. Without stirring from his tracks, the captain of the Fardale team captured the ball when it dropped, and Hilsboro was retired at last.

“I smelled the rat, all right, Dave,” smiled Dick, as he searched for his bat.

“Well, I knew there was something the matter,” declared Flint. “There was no reason why things should go on that way.”

“It’s all over,” averred Merriwell; “but I want Buckhart to get out and hustle for some powdered rosin, so that I can handle that ball. I’d like to pass up a few jumps and combinations.”

So Buckhart was told, and he lost no time in hastening away after the stuff desired by the captain.

Dick faced Alector.

“Here’s the mighty Merriwell, Miller,” called Hearn. “See what you can do with him.”

Alector pulled his old hat lower over his eyes. Then
he proceeded with almost too evident deliberation to give Dick his base on balls.

Gardner followed, and this time he hit the ball hard. It was a fly, however, and the left-fielder captured it, driving Dick back to first.

Bradley struck out, and Singleton sent a grounder to Small, who handled it in time to retire the side.

"My goodness! it's too easy!" laughed Hearn, as he again walked in with Alector. "Why don't you give them a chance?"

"I'm not built that way," was the low answer, and Alector's voice seemed full of suppressed triumph. "I have waited for this opportunity, and it has come at last."

"Eh?" exclaimed Hearn, surprised. "What do you mean by that? Why, I thought it was an accident."

"I've long wanted to pitch against Merriwell," said Alector. "I was all too glad of the opportunity."

"Well, you can bet we're glad we were the ones to give you the opportunity. Do you think you can shut 'em out all through the game?"

"I shall do my level best, and I believe I may succeed."

"Say, that will be the greatest thing for us that could happen! Think of shutting out Fardale with the mighty Merriwell on the team!"

"The mighty Merriwell!" sneered Alector, in a low tone.
What Did Dick Discover?

The head of Hilsboro's batting-list came up again and Small managed to rap out a scratch hit.

"Off again!" shouted Hearn, in delight, trotting out to the plate.

This time Small did not try to steal second, but waited to be sacrificed along. Twice Hearn tried to bunt, hitting the ball the second time and sending it foul. With two strikes on him, he changed his tactics and swung on the ball. It was a strike out.

Van Sickle fell an easy victim, although before the coming of Alector to Hilsboro he had been rated as one of the best batters on the team.

Favored by the umpire, Stalling got a pass to first, but Prindle was not equal to the emergency, and fanned, so the score remained two to nothing at the end of the third inning.

By that time Buckhart was back, and he had the powdered rosin with him. Dick filled his hip pocket with the stuff.

In vain Fardale tried for a run in the fourth and fifth innings. Alector managed to hold the cadets down.

After getting the powdered rosin Dick was able to handle the ball, and he served up a choice lot of shoots and benders that made the Hilsboro batters gasp. If they had fancied he was easy to hit, they quickly abandoned that idea. His jump ball astonished them, and his combination ball seemed like magic.
In the sixth inning, urged by Dick, the cadets got after Alector in earnest. Two hits and a stolen base landed a man on third and another on second, with only one out.

Once more Alector's remarkable skill in throwing to bases came into play, and he caught the runner on third, making the second man out and seeming to relieve the strain largely.

The next batter, however, was Flint. Again the Hilsboro pitcher attempted to walk Dave, but he happened to get one over, and the cadet with the scarred cheek laced it for two bases, bringing in Fardale's first run.

Jolliby also hit the ball, but he lifted it into the hands of a fielder.

"We're started, fellows," said Dick. "It's going to be Fardale's game, for it's Fardale's way."

Some of the boys from the military academy heard him, and immediately they began singing "Fardale's Way." The song filled the cadet players with ginger, and the play after that was of the snappiest sort.

As Dick sat on the bench, in the seventh inning he seemed to be watching the Hilsboro pitcher with great attention. For some moments he sat in dead silence, his eyes fastened on Alector. At last he touched Dave Flint on the elbow.

"Flint," he said, in a low tone, with a motion to-
ward the hunchback, "watch that fellow close and
you'll make an amazing discovery."

"What sort of a discovery?" asked Dave wonder-
ingly.

"That's for you to find out. Watch his movements,
his style of pitching, his poses, his gestures, and see if
he does not remind you of some one."

"Why, I've noticed something familiar about him!" said Dave. "I wondered what it was. But I'm sure
I do not know a hunchback like him."

"See if you know any one like him who is not a
hunchback. Take your time, but tell me later."

In the seventh inning Alector was hit hard, and
Fardale filled the bases; but brilliant fielding by the
men behind the hunchback prevented the cadets from
scoring.

By this time, with the sun shining brightly and a
fairly dry ball, Dick was pitching with such skill
that Hilsboro could do nothing at all with him. Cap-
tain Hearn knew that it was a good thing for his team
that it had been able to get two runs early in the game.

But Hearn was not so confident now, for he saw
that Alector had weakened, and he feared the fellow
might give out entirely at any moment.

Flint had been watching Alector. Finally he began
to show excitement. In the eighth inning, with the
hunchback again in the box, Dave found an oppor-
tunity to say to Captain Dick:
"I've been watching the fellow, and I have made a discovery."

"I thought you would," Merriwell nodded.

"He looks just like——"

"'Sh!" hissed Dick. "Don't speak the name now."

So Dave whispered it in Dick's ear, and Merriwell nodded.

"That's right," he said.

"But it can't be!"

"Can't it? Wait and see what you shall see."

"Why, I don't see how——"

"Maybe you will when the game is over. It's going to be a staggerer."
CHAPTER VII.

A FARDALE FINISH.

The cadets went after Alector's curves with such fierceness and determination in the eighth that Mai Hearn shook with apprehension. Well he might, too, for Fardale was out for the game, and succeeded in pushing a man around the bases and tying the score, amid wildest cheering from the rooters who had accompanied the team.

Alector was "up in the air," but luck favored him to such an extent that the cadets were prevented from making any further runs.

Hearn urged his players to get in and add some tallies to their record. All his urging was useless. Dick Merriwell simply made spectacles of them.

Then Fardale came to the bat for the last time.

"Boys," said Dick, "we're going to give Mr. Miller his, right here. Flint starts it. We can't afford to play any extra innings. Get your eye on the ball and line it out."

Dave walked to the plate and pasted the first one Miller put over, sending it down between the shortstop and third-baseman with such speed that it was not touched.
However, Koster fielded the ball in so quickly that Flint did not get past first base.

Jolliby had not made a clean hit for the day, but now he dropped the ball just over the third-baseman’s head.

Then came Sprague and hit over second, filling the bases, for Flint had the misfortune to slip down before reaching third, so that it was not possible for him to go home on that short hit.

And not a man was out!

"Dern my picter!" squeaked Obediah Tubbs. "It’s up to me to do somethin’ besides talk."

"Oh, don’t hit the ball!" cried Smart. "Don’t get reckless and swat it a hard swat! It’s a shame to spoil a good pitcher’s reputation in such a manner."

"He! he! he!" laughed Obediah. "I won’t hit it. I’ll jest——"

He did not tell what he would do, for the ball came over, and he singled to right field, sending in two runs.

The Fardale crowd howled like a lot of maniacs. It was a genuine Fardale finish.

But the “trouble” was not yet over. Smart waltzed up to the plate.

"I’ll strike right out!" he said. "We’ve made all the runs we want. It’s a shame to make any more!"

Alector now showed he had quite lost his nerve, for
he could not get a ball near the plate, and Ted was sent to first on four balls.

Again the bases were filled.

And Dick Merriwell was the hitter.

Alector seemed to glare at Dick with one terrible look of hatred. Then he threw the ball straight at Merriwell's head, but Dick easily dodged it.

The hunchback seemed to have lost control of himself. Having failed to hit Dick with the ball, he sent one straight over the plate.

Merriwell pasted it.

It was an awful hit, striking against the left-field fence and bounding back. Three runs came in, and Dick landed on third.

Gardner was eager to join in the hitting. Possibly he was a trifle too eager. Anyway, he had the misfortune to bat the ball into Hearn's hands. The captain of the Hilsboro team saw he could not stop Dick, so he threw Gardner out at first.

Bradley followed with a handsome hit, but Singleton lifted a high fly, and was out.

Then Flint came up for the second time in that inning, the team having batted all the way around.

By this time Alector was shaking—like a reed. His aspect was pitiful.

No longer did Captain Hearn laugh and joke. He looked blue as a whetstone. But he knew it was useless at that stage of the game to take Alector out and
substitute another pitcher, so he let the hunchback remain and "take his medicine."

Flint tried hard to duplicate Merriwell's hit to the fence. He drove the ball far into left field. It happened that Koster was playing back for just such a hit, and he captured it, which put an end to the agony.

Fardale had made six runs in the ninth inning, and the score stood eight to two in her favor.

No wonder the loyal ones on the bleachers were singing.

"It was just like taking candy from the baby!" chuckled Smart, as Fardale took the field.

Alector walked to the Hilsboro bench and sat down, his head lowered and his eyes fastened on the ground. No one spoke to him, and he sat there the picture of disappointed ambition. There was something truly pathetic in his pose.

Dick shot a few crooked ones over, and the enemy fell before him in one, two, three order.

As the last one struck out, Captain Merriwell started for the Hilsboro bench. He saw the crowd pouring down from the seats and knew his friends meant to lift him on their shoulders, so he made a rush to reach Alector.

The hunchback had not stirred. He did not seem to know the game was ended. Dick clutched him by the shoulder.

"You played the trick well," he said sharply, as
the surprised crowd pressed about; "but it didn’t work. Go wash away your artificial pallor, take off your false wig, remove that fake hump from between your shoulders! Let us see what you look like."

Alector raised his eyes.

"Merriwell," he said bitterly, "you have too much luck for me. I give it up. It’s my last card. You’ve won."

Then he flung away his old hat and his wig, at the same time straightening up.

"You’ve penetrated my disguise," he said; "so there’s no more use to keep up the bluff."

But no one besides Dick and Flint had been prepared for the change in Alector’s appearance. Of a sudden a dozen fellows recognized him, and a shout went up:

"It’s Chet Arlington!"

The mob swayed and surged and pushed, trying to get a better view of the unmasked boy.

A roar came from the lips of Brad Buckhart.

"Whoop! Why, dern his onery hide! He pitched agin’ us! He ought to be lynched!"

"Sneak!"

"Traitor!"

"Dog!"

"Stone him!"

"Kick him!"

"Choke him!"

"Thump him!"
The angry passions of the Fardale lads flared into a great conflagration. They swayed about Chester Arlington, reaching for him with their hands.

"Other side, Dave!" cried Dick, grasping one of Chester's arms.

One moment Dave Flint hesitated, and then he placed himself at the opposite side of the boy who had been his worst enemy at Fardale.

Dick called to other players on the team, who gathered about the threatened lad.

"Forward!" commanded Merriwell.

The mob parted slowly and reluctantly. The cadets continued to try to get their hands on Arlington. They followed and called him hard names. They warned him to leave Fardale, telling him they would "fix" him if he ever showed his face there again.

Six girls in the grand stand had seen all this. They saw Chester fling off his disguise and face Dick. They heard some of the angry talk.

"There's Chester Arlington!" cried Doris to Zona.

"You see he was here, and he pitched against his own school team!"

Zona was pale.

"What are they going to do?" she whispered. "They mustn't hurt him! His father—"

"Little they care about his father!" said Doris. "See—Dick will protect him! That's what he's doing!"
And he has done everything in his power to injure Dick! You can see now which is the real man!"

"I'm sorry I came!" Zona said, shrugging her shoulders. "He told me I'd see something entirely different from this."

"Without doubt he expected something entirely different!" said Doris. "Come, let's go."

So they left the grand stand and the field. Some distance ahead of them was the jeering crowd that surrounded Chester Arlington, who was being protected and saved from harm by the two boys he had injured most in the world.

But Chester's day at Fardale was done, and when he left there remained few of his former friends who were faithful to him.

And these weaklings continued in their petty way to wage the war against Dick Merriwell in which their leader had been defeated.
CHAPTER VIII.

A SERIOUS SITUATION.

Shortly after the game with Hilsboro, Dick Merriwell was seized with a severe attack of tonsilitis, and by the doctor's orders was confined to his room. And it so happened that Dick was taken ill just before the game with Springvale.

Being the captain of the nine, Dick begged the doctor to let him accompany the team to Springvale, but the physician was rigid and unyielding, averring that such an act on the part of the boy would be madness and might even result fatally.

Now Dick had scarcely ever been ill a day in all his life, and this made his misfortune harder to bear, as he was quite unused to anything of the sort. Besides, being the captain of the team, he felt the necessity to be on hand, even though he did not play. So he begged to go to Springvale and sit on the bench, wrapped in a great coat, with a sweater beneath it; but all his entreaties were wasted on the doctor.

And so it happened that the cadets were forced to play at Springvale without the assistance of Dick, who gave the command of the team to Hal Darrell, who was to pitch the game. One of Dick's reasons for doing this was that the team had been captained from the
box until it had become quite accustomed to it. But there were other reasons. Although Hal and Dick admired each other very much, there had never been anything like close friendship between them, and to young Merriwell’s ears had come a whispered bit of gossip that he was the one to blame for this condition, as his jealousy of Darrell had prevented him from accepting Hal in the right spirit.

To confess the truth, this cut Dick rather hard, for there had been a time when he had felt himself compelled to fight against a jealous feeling for Darrell. He had tried to do just what was right, and the battle had not been easily won, but in the end he was triumphant, and no longer was there anything like a symptom of jealousy in his soul.

Dick fancied he saw the opportunity of proving this, and so he sent for Hal to come to his room, and then asked him to captain the team in the game with Springvale.

For one fleeting second Darrell showed a trace of surprise; but that passed instantly, and he said:

“All right, Merriwell; if you think I am the man for it, I’ll do my best. But you know there is no one who can get as good work out of the team as you do.”

“No, I don’t know it.”

“Well, it’s true,” said Hal, with a burst of good feeling. “And I want to say now that I consider you the best captain I ever saw. You have made the team
A Serious Situation.

a wonder. I used to think I could do just as well; but now I confess that I doubt it. But I'll do everything in my power to win this game against Springvale, you may depend on that."

Dick smiled.

"If I had not depended on it, do you think I'd have asked you to captain the team?"

"I am rather surprised to think you did anyhow."

"Why?"

"Oh, there are several other fellows you might have chosen, Singleton, or Flint——"

"I might have chosen one of them, but I didn't see fit to do so. You are my choice."

Then, for a little time, Dick talked to Hal about handling the team on the field, to all of which Darrell listened with close intentness.

* * * * * * *

Up to the time that Fardale appeared, Springvale was very anxious about the result of the game; but when the home team found Merriwell was not with the visitors it took heart.

"Fellows," said Hime Bartlett, the Springvale captain, as his team gathered about him just before the game was to begin, "this is our opportunity to rub it into Fardale. Merriwell is not with the team, and he's the backbone of that gang. We can beat them today. Are you ready to do it?"
"You bet!" was the general declaration.

"Then get right into the game from the very start. Play as if your lives depended on it. Go after everything in sight. Don't be afraid of making errors. Make all the errors you have to, but play to win this game. Hit the ball, sacrifice, play the game for all there is in it, do anything to get runs. Runs count. If we can win this game, we'll have something to crow over. And we'll win it."

"We will!" they exclaimed.

So Springvale went into the game with any amount of confidence. Fardale was given the first turn at bat and started off splendidly. Gardner singled, Bradley sacrificed him to second, and Singleton drove one into the right garden, scoring Gardner.

This was enough to start the few Fardale fans to cheering in earnest. It looked like an easy thing, and the cadets were in high spirits.

Flint came next and lifted a long fly into left field; but this was gathered by the fielder, and two men were out, with one still on the bags.

Jolliby sent a scorcher past Pawn, the pitcher, but the second-baseman made a wonderful running one-hand pickup, and snapped the ball to first in time.

"That's all right!" laughed Smart. "We didn't want any more runs! Jolliby tried to get out. We don't want to discourage you chaps."
“Don’t worry about that,” said Captain Bartlett. “I don’t think you’ll discourage us to-day.”

“Waal, dern my picter!” spluttered Obediah Tubbs. “Whut that feller needs is some medisun to reduce his swelled head.”

“We’ll gug-gug-gug-give him what he needs before the dud-dud-dud-day is over,” said Chip Jolliby, as he started to trot out into the field.

Springvale started off hot with a clean single and a hit over the infield that landed a man on third. Then Darrell struck the next batter, and the man following him lifted a high foul that Flint smothered.

“Oh, don’t do that!” wailed Ted Smart. “Let ’em have one little teenty run, just to make the game interesting—please do!”

“Shut hup!” blurted Billy Bradley. “What hare you talking habout? We don’t want to give them hany runs!”

“Oh, don’t you!” mocked the Springvale crowd. “Wouldn’t that be a shame?”

And then, just when it seemed that Darrell had things well in hand, Smart let a hot one get through him, and the home team scored.

That error proved very costly, for two more runs came in before Hal finally struck the third man out, which gave Springvale a lead of two runs.

The spectators were wild with delight, save the little
bunch of loyal ones from Fardale, who looked depressed, in spite of their efforts to be cheerful.

The crowd guyed Bradley, who got very red in the face and found it difficult to hold his temper. Smart seemed really delighted.

"Why, this is just what we like!" he declared. "I was so afraid the game wouldn't be interesting."

Hime Bartlett was in high spirits.

"He have 'em going, fellows," he declared. "I told you they didn't have any backbone without Merriwell on the team. We'll win this game in a walk."

In spite of himself, Darrell was worried. He was very anxious to win the game. Merriwell had placed confidence in him, and it was his desire to demonstrate that it was not a mistake. To be sure, it was not his fault that the enemy had scored in the first inning. But for Smart's error, Springvale would have been whitewashed.

Now, to tell the truth, Ted was anxious also, and he was inwardly disgusted with himself, although outwardly pretending great delight over the course events were taking.

Two innings followed without a run for either side, and then the home team had another turn. Smart went after a little fly. It really belonged to Jolliby, who came running for it as fast as his long legs could carry him; but the little short-stop feared that Chip would not reach it, and so he made a desperate attempt
to gather it in. The result was a collision, and Jol-
liby, who had barely reached the spot, dropped the ball.

Springvale added two more tallies on this play, and, with the game not quite half-over, the home team had a pretty lead of four runs.

Truly Fardale was "up against a serious proposition."
CHAPTER IX.

TED'S WONDERFUL HOME RUN.

"I'm the wonder of the team!" said Ted Smart, when he came in to the bench, after preventing Jolliby from catching the fly.

"That's what you are!" sneered Wilton, the Springvale catcher, as he buckled on his body-protector. "You can play ball just about as well as you can run."

"Dear me!" said Ted. "If I couldn't run faster than you I'd go drown myself! Why, dear boy, you're a snail on your feet!"

"But I notice there was a time when I got away from you not quite a year ago," reminded Wilton, with a leering grin.

"Why, my dear lobster!" laughed Ted derisively. "I let you do that. I wasn't feeling very well that day, and I didn't want to strain myself. Why, you mark, I can walk around you while you're running!"

This was provoking to Wilton, who regarded himself as a great sprinter. A year before, in the interscholastic games, he had defeated Smart in the hundred-yard dash, and it had given him the impression that he was the "real thing."

"I'll give you a chance after the game, you bragging little runt!" he exclaimed.
"I should hate to show you up!" grinned Ted, in his most taunting manner. "I have some respect for your feelings."

"Bah!" retorted Wilton; but he was provoked, and he did not work well under the bat that inning.

After that Smart lost no opportunity to chafe Wilton, and he soon had the fellow well "corded up." When Ted came to bat he talked to the Springvale catcher in a low tone, which added none to the fellow's steadiness. The result of this guying was a bad throw by Wilton in the seventh, letting in another run for Fardale.

But in the eighth Fardale earned a run, and Springvale awoke and fell on Darrel for two handsome hits and a sacrifice, also getting in a tally.

At the close of the eighth inning the score was 6 to 3 in the home team's favor.

Hal Darrell was pale, and there was a wild light in his eyes.

"I've done my best," he muttered. "But I suppose I'll be blamed. All right! I'll shoulder it. If Merrigwell had been in my place it would have been different, so of course I am the one who is responsible."

No one felt guiltier than Smart, but he pretended to be delighted over it.

"You fellows want to watch me win the game in this inning," he said.
Wilton, who was again adjusting the body-protector, laughed scornfully.

“You’ll win it just as you won the hundred-yard sprint last year,” he declared.

“This is what I get,” said Ted, “for taking pity on you and letting you win that. You’re all puffed up, and you can’t understand that when it comes to running you are just about as fast as cold molasses.”

“I’ll run you any time and under any circumstances!” hotly retorted the Springvale catcher.

“I wouldn’t like to show you up,” snickered Smart, in a manner that made Wilton’s blood boil. “It would be a shame!”

“Don’t let that worry you.”

“Why, I can hop on one foot faster than you can run, you back number.”

“The only way you can do anything is with your mouth. You can’t play baseball well enough to be on a scrub team.”

“Who told you so much?”

“Everybody knows it.”

“Well, I didn’t fancy it could be any special knowledge acquired by you.”

“Stop that talk!” commanded Bartlett. “Stop it, Wilton! This is the last inning, and we’ve got these chaps skinned.”

“You bet we have!” growled Wilton. “They
Ted's Wonderful Home Run.

couldn't win this game in a thousand years. We've got it in our bag."

Singleton was the first batter. Darrell spoke to him in a low tone, urging him to get first somehow.

"We've got to make four runs this inning!" said Hal, a look of despair in his eyes. "We must have them somehow!"

Big Bob said not a word, but strode out to the plate and—struck out!

Darrell smothered a groan with difficulty. Fardale's case seemed hopeless.

The Springvale crowd was roaring wild with joy. To defeat the cadets would be a glorious thing, and the game seemed safely won by the home team.

Dave Flint had his square jaws set when he picked out his heavy stick and took his position.

Pawn had learned to fear Dave's batting ability, and he did his best to "work" the boy with the scar; but Flint found a good speedy one on the inside corner and rapped out a single.

Darrell jumped up.

"We're off, fellows!" he cried. "Right here is where we do it. Keep it up!"

"Won't that be nice!" mocked a Springvale spectator.

Jolliby did his best to imitate Flint's example, but the short-stop took his hot liner with one hand.

Two men were out.
Pawn was laughing when Sprague came up.

"It's too easy!" he declared.

Then he threw an in-shoot, and Sprague, after making a bluff of dodging, managed to get hit on the arm.

"He didn't try to get out of the way!" shouted Captain Bartlett.

But the umpire motioned for Sprague to take first, and the Fardale man trotted down, Flint moving to second.

Tubbs was the next batter.

"Dern my picter!" he spluttered, as he waddled out. "I'll hit it a mile, by Jim!"

"Don't!" begged Smart. "Don't put it over the fence! Just hit it easy. I want to knock the cover off the ball and clean the bases. I'm going to clean the bases when I come up."

"Oh, yes! you'll clean the bases!" sneered Wilton. "You're a wonder!"

"Don't talk to me like that, Swiftfoot!" cried Ted. "We all know you're a wonderful runner, but goodness knows why they ever let you get behind the bat!"

Pawn tried to strike Tubbs out, feeling confident that he could do so. The crowd was guying the fat boy, who struck so hard at the first ball that he threw himself flat on his back when he missed.

"Pick up the little fellow!" was the cry. "Poor little chap! Did it hurt him much?"

"Dern my picter!" came faintly from Obed's lips.
“Jest give me one more chanct! I’m goin’ to hit that ball!”

Some of the Fardale players began to gather up the bats.

“Obed’s pie for Pawn,” observed one of them.

“Pie!” squealed the fat boy, in his queer, high-pitched voice. “Who sed pie? If I’d jest hed a piece of pie before I gut up here to knock I’d show you chaps somethin’.”

Then he hit the ball. He swung once more with all the strength he could command, but the ball hit on the under side of the bat, struck the ground about two feet in front of the plate and rolled slowly off toward third. Obed ran with the most amazing speed, while Flint and Sprague each moved up a bag.

Pawn ran for the ball, the third-baseman came in for it, and the catcher also tried to get hold of it. Between them they managed to confuse each other so that there was just delay enough to permit Tubbs to get down to first and the others to advance a bag each.

The bases were filled. Two men were out, and Smart was the batter.

Pawn chuckled when he saw Ted walk out to the plate. He had discovered the little chap’s weak point, and he knew Smart could not get a safe one off him.

Every one else seemed to know it, too. Hal Darrell started to take a man from the bench and run him in
to bat in place of Smart; but Earl Gardner urged him not to do so.

"This may be Ted's opportunity," he said. "He has not done anything to-day; he may do something now. Give him a show."

Hal hesitated, and while he was hesitating Pawn delivered a ball and Ted struck at it.

The crowd roared again, for Ted missed the ball by at least a foot.

"Oh, why don't you hit it?" scoffed Wilton, who was close under the bat. "Why don't you win the game by a home run?"

"If this was a running match between you and me the game would soon be settled. Why, I can walk to first quicker than you can run there!"

But while Ted was making this talk the pitcher sent in a swift one that was right over the center of the plate, and the little fellow did not wiggle his bat.

"Two strikes!" decided the umpire.

"It's all up!" said Hal Darrell huskily. "What will Merriwell say?"

Wilton laughed at Ted.

"You can't hit it anyhow," he said. "Let him strike you out. Don't try to hit the ball."

"Oh, close up, Snaily!" retorted the little chap.

"Snaily! Snaily!" grated Wilton. "And I beat you at the hundred yards!"

"Accident. Never could happen again."
Ted’s Wonderful Home Run.

“T’ll show you! I’ll show you!” retorted the catcher, irritated beyond measure at Ted’s manner. “Tell you what, you miss the third strike, swing at the ball and miss it; I’ll drop it, then I’ll pick it up and catch you before you get to first base.”

This was said in such a low tone that Smart was the only one who heard the words.

“Done!” said Ted.

And then he made a furious slash at the next ball pitched, missing clearly.

Whether Wilton really meant to keep his word or not, he dropped the ball. Even then all that was necessary for him to retire the side was to pick up the ball and step onto the rubber with it, as the bags were full and every man forced. But Wilton caught up the ball like a flash, leaped past the home plate and shot away after Smart.

Ted was off like a deer, and the other fellows on the bags were running. Everybody seemed astonished that Wilton should start after Ted. The man on first yelled for him to throw the ball there, which he might have done easily and thus ended the game.

But the catcher was confident of his ability to run Ted down and tag him, and this he was determined to do. He was close on Smart’s heels, with his arm outstretched to put the ball onto the little chap.

Right over first raced Ted, swinging to the left
toward second. Wilton followed, his eyes bulging and his teeth set.

The astonished spectators looked on, unaware that they were about to witness something that never before happened in any baseball game on record.

Ted ran as if his life depended on it. He heard the beat of Wilton's feet close behind him, and he made his short legs twinkle.

Flint came in and crossed the rubber, being followed as closely as possible by Sprague.

Obediah Tubbs, the fat boy, was running, but he kept looking back over his shoulder at Wilton and Smart, his mouth wide open and his eyes hanging out. It was plain that Obed could not understand what was transpiring.

Chip Jolliby, who was on the coaching line back of third, danced like a jumping-jack, waving his long arms and chattering furiously at Obediah.

Near the bench the Fardale players were standing and staring in amazement. The Fardale rooters on the seats were beginning to yell madly.

"Run, Ted, run!"

"Go it, Smarty—go it!"

"Just look at the lunatics!"

"What is this, a foot race or a baseball game?"

Brad Buckhart, whose lame shoulder still kept him out of the game, commenced howling like a wild man.
Ted's Wonderful Home Run.

"Ye-ee-ee!" he shrilly yelled. "Whoop! Hooray! Don't let him put his brand on ye, Ted! Go it, you sawed-off little runt! Well, this yere beats the record, you hear me! It does, I know! Great tarantulas! There comes Fatty! Another score and she's tied! Wow! wow! wow! Yow! yow! yow! Ye-ee-ee! Ye-ee-ee!"

Tubbs ran with amazing speed after crossing third base, for Jolliby had shrieked in his ear for him to "dig."

Still Wilton seemed just beyond arm's length of Smart. Every second he seemed about to clap the ball onto the little fellow, but he could not quite reach.

When Tubbs crossed the rubber, tying the score, Captain Bartlett flung his cap on the ground and tried to tread it into the dirt, his face blue with rage. The things he permitted himself to say would not look well in print.

Smart scudded over third base, turning barely in time to avoid being touched. He might have stopped there and remained on the bag in safety, but he kept on toward home still pursued by the exasperated catcher.

The Fardale crowd went wild as Ted came scooting down from third with Wilton vainly reaching for him. The little fellow crossed the rubber ahead of his pursuer, and four runs had come in putting Fardale one in the lead.
Darrell caught Smart in his arms and hugged him, laughing till the tears streamed from his eyes.

"You little fraud!" he cried. "This is the record—you've made a home run on a strike out, cleaning the bases and bringing in four scores! Oh, murder!"

In the meantime, Wilton was getting quite a different reception from Hime Bartlett and others of the home team.
CHAPTER X.

REJOICING VICTORS.

Hime Bartlett was furious. He ran in, seized Wilton and shook him fiercely.

"You idiot!" he cried. "What sort of a game are you playing? This is not tag."

"I—I thought I could catch him," muttered the wretched fellow, flushed and shamefaced.

"Thought, thought, you idiot!" burst from the captain of the home team. "Why, you could have thrown him out! You could have stopped the first run! You made a jack of yourself!"

Smart was rolling on the ground, apparently in great distress.

"Oh, I'm so sorry!" he moaned. "It's such a shame! Dear, dear me!"

They picked him up and lifted him to their shoulders. The Fardale crowd was cheering madly.

"'Rah for Smart! 'Rah! 'rah! 'rah!"

"If you have lost this game for us," panted Bartlett to Wilton, "you'll never do any more catching on this team!"

"Great horn spoon!" roared Brad Buckhart, his face red as a boiled lobster. "Wasn't that a corker! Wow! wow!"
It was some time before the excitement and uproar subsided and the umpire was able to make the players continue the game.

Pawn was disgusted, and he had every reason to be. But he had the speed of the wind when Darrell faced him, and Hal was unable to drive out a safe one. So Fardale took the field for the last half of the ninth with one run to the good.

Hal was white and grim.

"I must keep them from scoring," he thought. "I'll do it!"

He struck out the first batter, but the next man got a safe hit and took a good lead to steal second.

Springvale was working hard to get in another run and tie the score.

Flint made a beautiful throw to Tubbs, but the fat boy fell over himself and the runner slid to second in safety.

The third batter sent one like a bullet at Smart. Ted never winced. Indeed, the ball came so swiftly that the little chap did not seem to have time to dodge. He put his "hooks" on it and held it.

Darrell drew a long breath of relief.

But now came the most dangerous batter on the home team, a fellow Darrell had been unable to strike out. The rooters cheered for him, and his face wore a look that told of the grim determination in his heart.

Hal tried his best to fool this chap, but he cracked
Rejoicing Victors.

a skipper along the ground between Bradley and Smart. The cockney youth jumped for it and touched it with the ends of his fingers enough to deflect it. It seemed that the ball must pass clear of Smart, but just then Ted's stubbed arm stretched wonderfully, and he stopped the ball by a lightning move that astounded all who saw it. With the movement of a cat pouncing on a mouse the little short-stop picked the ball up and whistled it across the diamond.

"Out at first!" cried the umpire.

"All over!" bellowed Brad Buckhart, following with a cowboy yell that was a perfect hair-lifter.

The Fardale players rushed on Smart. Some of them hugged him, some shook hands with him, and some thumped him on the back.

"Hold on!" gasped the little chap. "This is no football game. What's the matter with you lunatics?"

Darrell got hold of Ted's hand.

"You saved the game, Smart!" he said. "You won it for us!"

"Nonsense!" Ted retorted. "It was Wilton who won it for us. Wasn't it a shame?"

The Springvale crowd was disgusted and disappointed, and it had every reason to be.

Of course Wilton was blamed by everybody, and he felt that he was disgraced. When he was told that he had made a fool of himself, he simply said, "I know it."
The cadets gathered up their bats and things and hurried from the field to catch a train. On the way to the train they cheered and sang.

A dozen times Ted was compelled to explain how he had succeeded in arousing Wilton by taunting him until the fellow had made the challenge to run him down with the ball. He told it in his own quaint way, and the boys roared with laughter at his manner.

Buckhart rushed on ahead to the telegraph-office at the station and wired the news to Fardale. He stated that Smart had won the game in the ninth by a home run that brought in four scores, but he did not explain how the home run had been made.

When Ted arrived at the station the boys had decorated him with wild roses and green things plucked along the roadside. Fardale flags were tied about his cap and to various portions of his clothing.

Putting aside their bitter disappointment, some of the Springvale fellows came down to the station to see the victors off.

"We had to give you chaps the game," they declared.

"It was too kind of you!" chirped Ted.

The train pulled out with a hilarious lot of boys on board. The Springvale chaps cheered half-heartedly from the platform.

Dave Flint sat and looked out of the window at some
Rejoicing Victors,

rising storm-clouds, a rather doleful expression on his face.

“Whatever is the matter with you, Cupid?” cried Brad Buckhart, hitting Dave a rap on the shoulder. “You look as if we had lost to-day. Come out of your trance!”

Dave tried to smile, but the effort was a failure.

“What is the mum-mum-matter with you?” asked Chip Jolliby. “Aren’t you satisfied, old mum-mum-man?”

“No,” answered Dave, in a low tone.

“Eh? Wh-wh-why not?”

“I wish we had won the game in the regular manner. It almost seems to me that we didn’t win it at all.”

“That’s ’ow Hi feel habout hit,” nodded Billy Bradley. “Hit was a haxident.”

“Well, dud-dud-dud-don’t you care!” said Jolliby. “The accident cuc-cuc-cuc-counted for us this tut-time. Usually it cuc-cuc-cuc-counts for the other fuf-feller, and we have to sus-sus-stand it.”

But already Hal Darrell was beginning to feel sorry that the game had not been won differently, although glad that it had been won somehow.

A great crowd of cadets gathered at the Fardale station to welcome the victors. Despite the fact that it was beginning to rain, they all marched through the main street of the village, cheering and blowing horns.
Some fellows had loaded one of the old cannon on the parade-ground at the academy, and the piece thundered a salute when the cheering and singing cadets came down the hill in the gathering darkness of the stormy night. This was a breach of discipline, for the boys had been forbidden to fire the cannon, one having burst a year before on being discharged under similar circumstances.

Around the academy buildings marched the cheering cadets, being joined by others, who came pouring out to take part in the celebration.

By this time the story of the manner in which Smart had made his home run was in busy circulation, and the boys laughed heartily when they heard it. Smart was placed at the head of the marching and cheering lads.

"Oh, I'm a wonder to-night!" he said. "I hope no one will stop to think about it, 'cause they'll be disgusted if they do."

Beneath Dick Merriwell's window the crowd halted. There they cheered and cheered.

The sound stirred Dick so that he got up and went to the window. Without thinking of the danger, he flung it open, the raw wind rushing in upon him, bearing some of the driving mist and rain.

"'Rah for Captain Merriwell!" yelled somebody below.

"'Rah! 'rah! 'rah!" bawled the boys.
But as Dick started to say something the doctor entered the room and drew him away from the window, which he immediately closed.

"Do you want to get your death, Merriwell?" he demanded rather sharply. "Just because you've never been seriously ill before don't think you can expose yourself so foolishly. You're not over this attack by any means."

In a few moments the doctor appeared among the boys below.

"Go away and let Merriwell alone to-night," he commanded. "He is getting better, but he might have a serious relapse if he stood up there in his open window for three minutes on such a night as this. It won't do for him to get a chill. It might be fatal."

"All right, doctor!" cried Buckhart. "I opine thar's nobody in this yere school wants him to get a chill; but we're feeling so whooping good that we didn't think of the danger. We'll go away, you bet, sir."

Then, after another cheer for Dick and one for Smart, the rejoicing lads dispersed, departing to their rooms to study and to discuss the surprising manner in which the game had been won.

Buckhart was in high spirits when he went up to Dick's room to tell him about the game.

"Doc says I can stay ten minutes, pard," he explained. "Say, you're looking better! Why, great
horn spoon! you’re not sick! You’ll be out to-morrow.”

“I’m feeling better since I heard the result of the game,” smiled Dick. “But my confounded old throat is beastly sore to-night. I suppose it’s the weather. Tell me all about it.”

Which the Texan proceeded to do in his own characteristic way, causing Dick to laugh repeatedly at the description of the comical race around the bases between Wilton and Smart.

“I hope I may be shot if Ted didn’t hit a two-minute clip!” laughed the Texan. “Why, he fairly made the air smoke. He did, I know! You should have seen Wilton stretching himself and trying to nail the ball between Smart’s shoulders. His face looked like a calamity. Everybody howled. Pard, it was worth a year of a chap’s life just to see that! You hear me shout!”

But when the story was finished Dick ceased laughing and looked disappointed.

“What’s the matter?” asked Buckhart.

“Of course I’m glad we won the game,” said the captain of the nine, tenderly touching his sore throat; “but I wish we had done it some other way. It wasn’t really won on its merits. We came off best through the folly of Wilton and the speed of Smart.”

“That’s right, but I’ve noticed other teams are glad
enough and ready enough to beat Fardale any old way.”

Brad couldn’t quite understand Dick’s feelings about that point.

There came a knock on the door, and Darrell entered.

“We won the game, captain,” he said; “but I’m sorry to say it wasn’t through my good work. I suppose Buckhart has told you all about it.”

Dick got up.

“I’m almost sorry we won, Darrell,” he said.

Hal started as if he had been struck, and his face flushed.

“Well, I didn’t think you’d say that!” he exclaimed, unreasoning anger leaping into his heart. “I’m sure I did my best! I didn’t think you wanted me to lose the game! Of course, it would make your pitching show up all the more wonderful, as you have been downing everything you’ve pitched against. I don’t pretend to say that I’m as good in the box as you are; but you can bet your life I’d not pitched to-day if I had fancied you were counting on our losing the game in order to give you the reputation of being Fardale’s only winning pitcher.”

Dick had tried to stop him, but this flash of anger had led Hal to reel forth his words hotly. In a twinkle the old feeling of distrust and dislike for Merrifield had awakened in his heart.
"You misunderstand me, Darrell," declared Dick.

"Oh, I don't think so!" retorted Hal, with a harsh laugh. "I understand you very well, Captain Merriwell. You're clever, but you should know there are other chaps just as clever. Give somebody else a show once in a while—and don't always expect them to lose. That's my advice."

Now Dick had a temper of his own, and his illness had not left him in the most amiable frame of mind. He was touched because Darrell seemed so ready and eager to misunderstand him.

"If you won't get pig-headed, I'll make my meaning clear," he said.

"Who's pig-headed? Who are you calling that, Mr. Merriwell? I don't care a snap about pitching on the team, and I want you to understand it! I was glad of the chance to do something for old Fardale to-day, and it was for the school, not for you, that I pitched. We won the game, and you're sorry. That shows the kind of a chap you are!"

"Well, shoot me!" growled Buckhart, getting angry. "Don't you come here firing that kind of talk at my pard when he's sick! If you do I'll kick you out of the room! You hear me whisper!"

"If you ever tried to kick me, you wild and woolly cow-puncher, you'd carry off the Darrell brand on you!" fiercely flashed Hal.
In another moment they would have been at it, but Dick was between them.

"There'll be no fight in this room!" he said, in a manner that meant business. "I'm not in the mood to explain my meaning to Darrell to-night. When he has cooled down I'll do so."

"You don't have to," flung back Hal, retreating toward the door. "I'll pitch no more while you are on the team. But I think we might manage to worry along without you. There are others!"

Then he went out, slamming the door behind him.

"That galoot sure makes me a whole lot sick," said Brad, boiling with rage. "I never could hitch up to him."

"He misunderstood my words, that's all," said Dick, "and he's so hot-headed he wouldn't let me make it clear."

"Bet a steer he thinks he can pitch as well as you, pard."

"Perhaps he does; but that was not the trouble. He'll come around all right when he's had time to cool off."

"Mebbe so," admitted Brad doubtfully. "But you'll be all right to pitch the next game."

Buckhart and Merriwell had roomed together until Dick was taken ill, and then the doctor had directed that Dick should have a room by himself and the Texan moved out. Brad now departed for his own room,
and Dick prepared to retire for the night. He took some of the medicine the doctor had left for him, and then bound about his throat one of his handkerchiefs saturated with some sort of a preparation from another vial. Then he got into bed and put out the light, the quarrel with Darrell adding to his wretchedness.

Dick did not go to sleep for a long time. He lay thinking of the foolish and needless quarrel with Hal, regretting that it had occurred, yet satisfied that he was not to blame.

At last he slept.

Sometime in the night he was awakened by feeling the bedclothes quickly and violently jerked from his body. Before he could sit up he was suddenly drenched from head to feet with ice-water that was dashed over him from a pitcher.

The shock was great, but Dick was out of bed in a twinkling. In the darkness he saw a figure and made a grab at it.

“Got you,” muttered Dick.

The fellow whirled instantly, grasped Dick by the throat, and a furious struggle followed.

Dick was weakened by his illness, and this prevented him from putting up the sort of a fight that he might have done under more favorable conditions. Twice he seemed to be getting the best of the unknown, but at last the fellow tore himself away, at the same
time striking Merriwell a blow on the temple that staggered and stunned him.

Before Dick could recover, the mysterious assailant had vanished.

"Confound him!" chattered the shivering lad. "He's escaped. But I'll find out sometime who it was, and then there will be a time of reckoning."

He closed his door and lighted a lamp. He was chilled by the icy water, and he lost little time in stripping off his dripping night-dress, after which he found a bath-towel and rubbed himself until he felt somewhat better.

The handkerchief had been torn from his neck.

By that time, however, he was completely exhausted and compelled to fling himself on his Morris chair to rest, pulling a blanket over him.

When he had recovered sufficiently to inspect the bed he found it was soaking wet.

"I can't sleep there to-night," he said. "I'd be sure to get my death of cold."

So he was compelled to manufacture a bed on the Morris chair, which he did with the aid of such bedding as he could use.

He was wondering how the intruder got into the room, but believed he had forgotten to lock the door on retiring. Examination showed he had not sprung the catch on the door. This he now did, after which he took to the Morris chair, having put out the light.
But he had been so thoroughly chilled that he remained wretchedlycourting sleep until the gray light of morning began to creep in at his windows.

When Buckhart came early in the morning to inquire how Dick was he found him flushed and feverish.

"Why, what's the matter, pard?" asked the astonished Texan, staring at the bed. "What's happened?"

Dick told him, and Buckhart raged like a wild beast. "The onery varmint ought to be shot!" he declared. "Why, it was just plain fiendishness! Pard, I'll sure find out who did it, and I'll certain rip him into ribbons! You hear me!"

Then the Texan set out to do a little detective work and find out who had committed the dastardly attack on Dick.

In less than fifteen minutes he believed he had solved the problem.
CHAPTER XI.

BUCKHART ON THE TRAIL.

Brad suspected Hal Darrell. Having reasoned it all over in his own way, it seemed to him that Hal was the sort of fellow to do such a thing. Sometimes the Texan was an excellent judge of character; at other times he made fearful blunders.

Brad walked into Hal's room, and Art Andrews, who was still in bed, called:

"Hello, Hal, back already? Why, you must have half an hour before reveille!"

Andrews had not turned over to see who it was, but supposed from Buckhart's manner of entering that it must be his roommate.

"Excuse me," said the Texan bluffly; "but I reckon you have made a mistake in my brand, partner. I'm not Darrell, blessings on the head of fortune!"

Andrews flopped over and sat up in bed and stared at the intruder through the grayish light from the window.

"You?" he exclaimed, astonished. "Why, what are you doing here at this unearthly hour?"

"I just dropped in," returned the Texan indifferently. "Where's your side partner?"

"Darrell's gone out."
"Out—at this hour? Whatever is the matter with him?"

"I don’t know—something. He couldn’t sleep last night. He was up and down a dozen times. Never saw him in such a condition. The game yesterday must have been too much for his nerves."

Brad stood in the middle of the floor, his feet wide apart, his hands on his hips, looking around.

"So Darrell didn’t sleep well, eh? Got up often, hey? And he’s gone out now, what? Did he go out in the night, do you know?"

Andrews opened his eyes in surprise.

"Why, no, I don’t believe he did."

"Well, do you know? That’s what I’m asking. Did he leave this yere room in the night any time? Or mebbe he notified you not to say anything about it?"

Andrews swung onto the edge of the bed, sitting there and staring harder than ever at the Texan.

"What’s happened?" he demanded. "Why do you come here and ask me these questions? I know something’s up."

"Never mind, now, but just get busy with the answers."

Andrews, however, although a quiet fellow, was not the sort to be driven in a case like this, and he proceeded to shut up and decline to say anything more unless Brad explained his reasons for asking the questions.
Then the Texan sat down and announced his intention of remaining to question Hal when he returned.

Barely was he seated when, hanging over the transom above the door, something caught his eye. The transom was open, and this object, which Buckhart immediately secured, looked as if it had lodged there when some one attempted to throw it out of the room.

"Whatever is this?" cried the Texan, as he hurried to the window in order to get a better light.

It was a handkerchief, and it smelled strongly of some sort of liniment. When he spread it out he found the letters "R. M." on one corner.

Brad’s voice was very harsh when he turned toward Andrews, who had started to dress.

"Do you know anything about this yere handkerchief?" demanded the Texan.

"It isn’t mine," answered Art.

"I opine not. And it’s not Darrell’s. However did it come in this yere room?"

"I don’t know."

"You’re all right, Andrews; but your side partner has a whole lot of explaining to do. It’s up to him to make things clear in a great hurry."

"Whose handkerchief is it?"

"If it doesn’t belong to my pard Dick I’m a donkey! He lost one last night, and the circumstances were a whole lot peculiar. This is the one he lost."

"You don’t mean to say that my roommate would
stoop to steal a handkerchief? Why, Buckhart, you don’t know him.”

“Did you know that he and my pard had a leak difference last night?”

“No.”

“He didn’t tell you anything about it?”

“Not a thing.”

“Well, I happened to be around, and Darrell ambled out with a large load of mad on. That’s whatever. He made some warm talk. You know my pard’s right sick. Well, some low-down, sneaking, measly, onery, doggone varmint sneaked in on him in the night and doused him with ice-water. Think of that! And him a heap sick with tonsilitis! The doc said it might be fatal for him if he took a fresh cold. And the sneaking dog just drenched him and his bed with ice-water! Whoop! I’m on the war-path! I’m out for blood! You hear me gently warble! When I get my paws on the coyote I’m jest naturally going to put him in condition for the morgue!”

“Darrell didn’t do it!” declared Andrew positively.

“Didn’t?”

“No.”

“How do you know?”

“He wouldn’t do such a thing. I know Hal.”

“How about this yere handkerchief? Dick had it around his neck last night. He had medicine on it—something for his throat. Smell it. That’s the odor!
those are his initials. And you saw me find it hanging over the edge of that transom. What have you to say about that?

"I don't know how the handkerchief came to be here; but I'll stake my life that Hal did not put it here."

"Somebody did. Somebody tried to throw it out through the transom into the corridor. I opine he thought he'd done it. But it lodged yonder, and here it is in the way of evidence against some galoot in this room. If it doesn't talk against you, then it certain does against Darrell. You can't get around that."

Andrews shook his head.

"You're on the wrong track, Buckhart," he averred. 'I know it."

"Darrell doesn't like my pard any whatever. He never has."

"But he fights openly, and you can be sure of that. He's no cur to sneak into the room of a sick fellow and throw water on him."

"Let him prove that to me. He'll have to prove it before I'll be satisfied."

Andrews saw it was useless to try to argue with Brad.

Reveille sounded, and the barracks suddenly started to life. A beautiful spring day had dawned.

The Texan remained waiting for Hal. Andrews explained that Darrell had risen almost before the first
peep of day and had dressed, saying that he was going to slip out for some air.

"Guilty conscience," declared Brad. "I allow I know the symptoms."

He waited in vain for Darrell to return. The call to service came and Hal had not appeared. So Brad marched down to service with his comrades, the handkerchief in his pocket and glowing rage in his heart.

Darrell was there. Buckhart saw him in his place with the second class, and the sight of Hal's dark handsome face served to arouse the hot-headed Texan still more.

"It sure is up to me to get a-plenty busy with you right away at the first opening," he thought.

When the morning exercises were over and the boys filed out there came a short interval before breakfast. The moment he could break from the rest of his class, the Texan sought Darrell.

Hal was hurrying away when Brad placed himself in his path.

"Just check yourself, my friend," he commanded. "I allow I have a leetle business to chin over with you."

Darrell flushed and frowned.

"I haven't any time to bother with you," he instantly declared.

"Then you'll have to make time," retorted the Texan. "You hear me whisper."

Hal tried to pass.
“Don’t!” said Brad hissingly, putting out a hand. ‘Come along with me to the cedars. We can fix things there a heap sight better than yere.”

“Why should I? There is no reason why I should meet you in the cedars.”

“If you refuse to come,” said Brad, “I’m sure going to fix it so you can’t, for I swear I’ll strike you in the face right here before everybody! You takes your choice!”

The flush left Darrell’s face and he turned pale, while into his eyes there flashed a dangerous gleam.

“Go ahead!” he muttered harshly. “I’ll follow you, and you’ll get all you want before we are through!”

Many a fight had taken place in the cedars, which were situated a short distance behind the gymnasium. The place was convenient to settle differences which might arise between the cadets; but it was too near the academy, and it had obtained a bad reputation on account of the many fierce encounters that had taken place there. Besides, it was now watched so closely that it seemed almost impossible for a fight to take place there without interruption and arrest of the participants. Still boys who were anxious to settle some quarrel in a hurry continued to resort to the shelter of the cedars.

Buckhart did not look around to see if Darrell followed him. Hal had given his word, and that was enough, so the Texan strolled out toward the gym,
walked carelessly around the corner, and proceeded to go into the cedars.

Now the rumor of a fight had gone forth, and those who learned of it were eager to witness the "mill," so many cadets were seen turning their steps toward the cedars.

Buckhart did not have long to wait, for Darrell with a dozen other fellows were on hand by the time Brad arrived.

Darrell was pale, but he walked straight up to Brad demanding:

"Well, what's it all about? I suppose you are taking up the quarrel for your friend Merriwell?"

"Hit the bull's-eye plumb center first shot," retorted Brad. "Any onery galoot as will play such dirty game as you did is due to get it square between the horns. When he's on his pins he fights his own battles; but I'm his side pard, and now that he's down and out I chips into the game and plays a hand for him. It's plain enough you know a whole lot what's coming to you and why, so shed your coat and we'll rip up the sod around yere just a little."

"I'm more than willing to fight you," returned Hal, "but first I want you to make it plain just why we're going to have this little mill, so there will be no misunderstanding."

Brad jerked Dick's handkerchief from his pocket.

"I found this yere in your room," he said. "It be
Buckhart On the Trail.

longs to my pard, and it was ripped off him last night by the low-down varmint what sneaked into his wig-wam and doused him with ice-water. That was the dirtiest trick I ever heard of, and, as your roommate allows he had no hand in it, it's up to you to settle with me."

Brad had his coat off by this time and was ready to begin the fight. Hal had also stripped off his coat, but now he called for the Texan to wait a bit.

"Before we start this thing," he said, "I want to say that if you claim I did any such trick as you've just described, you're the biggest liar in the school! Now come on!"

"How did the handkerchief come to be in your room?"

"I don't know."

"That's all you've got to say?"

"Yes."

Hal was ready. His flashing dark eyes were surveying Buckhart with an expression of supreme disdain and contempt.

But at this moment, just as the two lads were on the point of flying at each other, a boy with flushed face came hurrying into the cedars, broke through the ring and stepped between the fighters.

Every one was surprised, for it was Dick Merriwell.

"Hold on, both of you!" he commanded. "You fellows are not going to fight over me! Buckhart, you're
my friend, but you're carrying this thing too far. I know I'm under the doctor's care, but when I get out I can settle my own troubles. If necessary, I'll dip into this now and do my best to thrash you both!"

Buckhart was disgusted at this interference, for he was really thirsting to get at Hal. Neither of the boys had dreamed that Merriwell would appear to stop the "go" between them.

"Why, pard," gasped Brad; "whatever are you doing here?"

"I got wind of this business," said Dick. "Andrews came to see me about it. You're carrying things altogether too far, Brad."

"But here's your handkerchief that I found in this chap's room. Look at it. It's yours, isn't it?"

Dick took the handkerchief and put it into his own pocket without even glancing at it.

"I'll look it over when I'm feeling better," he said; "and then, if I think it necessary, I'll settle with somebody. But you are to drop it, Brad—understand? I want no one to fight my battles. I won't have it, either! Is that plain enough?"

"But—"

"There's no 'but' to it. If you fight Darrell on my account you are no longer a friend of mine."

"Oh, let him come on," said Hal. "We'll drop you out of the question. I'm ready to fight him on general principles. I like him just well enough!"
But Dick was there to stop the fight, and stop it he did, much to the dissatisfaction of both Buckhart and Darrell.

About this time Chip Jolliby came scudding into the cedars and excitedly warned them that the lieutenant in charge had learned what was taking place and had ordered a corporal’s guard to appear on the scene and arrest both participants.

"Dud-dud-dud-dig out, fuf-fuf-fuf-fellers!" he palpitated. "If you dud-dud-dud-don’t, you’ll all get pup-pup-pup-punched!"

Immediately the boys melted away and disappeared, making haste to get away from the locality.

Therefore it happened that when the cadet corporal and the guard came rushing to the cedars no one was found to place under arrest.

Buckhart was worried over Dick, for he saw that, in spite of the surprising appearance of the captain of the team in the cedars, he was very ill.

"Back to your room, pard—back, back, back!" said the Texan, as he urged Dick to the barracks building and up the stairs. "Doc will have a fit if he finds out what you have done."

They were passing along the corridor to Dick’s room when they came upon three fellows who were not far from Merriwell’s door.

Two of these chaps were Hector Marsh and Tom
Walker, both of whom had been strong friends of Chester Arlington.

The third was a new fellow in the school, Flavel Wyman by name, generally called Flip by everyone. He was a conceited, weak-minded chap, whose great desire was to be popular with everybody. He was a fellow easily influenced. On one or two previous occasions Merriwell had noticed Wyman in company with Marsh and Walker, and had thought of warning him at the first opportunity that he was selecting very bad companions.

Just now the three seemed to be quarreling, and it became evident that both Marsh and Walker were pitching into Wyman. Even as Dick appeared on the scene, with Buckhart by his side, Marsh seized Wyman by the throat and pushed him against the wall, while Walker hit him in the face with his open hand.

Before the Texan could move Merriwell sprang forward and pitched into the two fellows, exclaiming:

"What do you two cowards mean by setting onto one chap like this! What you need——"

"Is a right good hammering!" growled Brad, as he came up, on the verge of stripping off his coat.

Wyman leaned against the wall, gasping for breath and rubbing his throat, giving every evidence of fear.

Buckhart would have waded into the chap's assailants, but again Dick held him in check.
"We can't fight them here," he said. "We'll all go to the guard-house if we do! Steady, Brad!"

He pushed Buckhart back, turning to Wyman and asking:

"Why were they going for you that way? What have you been doing?"

"Tell him!" grated Walker, who was white as a sheet and shaking. "Tell him—if you dare!"

"You know what you'll get if you do!" quickly put in Marsh, who betrayed an equal amount of consternation and fear.

The new fellow hesitated. Plainly he was afraid of Marsh and Walker. He seemed to wish to say something, but it was plain that he lacked the courage.

"Go ahead," urged Dick. "I'll stick by you. I won't let these chaps hurt you."

Wyman opened his mouth as if to speak, whereupon Walker jumped to his side and hissed in his ear:

"If you squeal we'll kill you!"

Buckhart clutched Walker by the collar and flung him aside with such violence that the fellow was slammed against the wall of the corridor.

Wyman closed his lips, then opened them again to utter a cry of alarm, for Merriwell had turned very white and was swaying weakly.

The excitement had been too much for Dick in his weakened condition, and now Buckhart was forced to
give him every attention, supporting him with his strong arms and almost carrying him to his room.

Never in his life had Dick come nearer fainting, but he revived when Brad placed him on the bed and rubbed his hands and sprinkled a little water on his face.

Buckhart was fearfully concerned.

"I'm going to call the doc right away, pard," he said. "You're in powerful bad shape; you are, I know!"

"I'm all right now," assured Dick. "Where's that new fellow they were bullying?"

"I dunno. Didn't pay any further attention to him after I saw you getting wobbly."

"Go find him if he's still out there. Bring him here."

But Marsh, Walker and Wyman had vanished from the corridor.
CHAPTER XII.

DICK'S PERSUASION.

That day Fardale received a challenge from Springvale. Hime Bartlett wrote it, and he urged that his team had not been defeated in a satisfactory manner, claiming that the result could give pleasure to neither side. He urged Captain Merriwell to give Springvale another game at once, agreeing that the game should be played on Fardale field, if Merriwell wished.

Although the challenge was courteous enough, it contained the plain statement that Captain Bartlett was absolutely certain Springvale could defeat Fardale. This was said in a manner intended to arouse the pride of the cadets and to stir Dick Merriwell in particular.

The challenge was brought to Dick's room by Buckhart and several others of the team. Phil Warne, chairman of the athletic committee, was also in the party.

Dick was in bed again, but he declared that he was feeling much better and was abed only because the doctor had insisted upon it.

"I'll be all right to-morrow, fellows," he averred.

"Well, what dud-do you th-think of this ch-chal-
lenge?" asked Chip Jolliby, his Adam's apple bobbing excitedly.

"We'll have to accept it," said Dick.

"But the only open date we have is Saturday," said Phil Warne. "Hudsonville has changed her date and left Saturday open."

"Then we'll play Springvale again Saturday," decided the captain of the team, without hesitation.

"But you——"

"Never mind me. You can win from those chaps with Darrell in the box, if necessary; but I'll be all right to pitch in case I have to do it."

"Never!" grunted big Bob Singleton.

"Well, if he can't pitch the game, you can put me in the box," chirped Ted Smart. "I won the other game, you know; and I'd surprise you all in the box."

"You pitch?" squealed Obediah Tubbs, in disdain.

"Why, dern my picter! I kin pitch better then you kin!"

"Why, you little runt!" retorted Ted, staring at Obed's huge bulk. "The only thing you can get over the plate is pie. But this is going to be no pie-pitching contest. This is going to be a baseball game."

"At any rate," said Dick, "we must give Springvale satisfaction. Hime Bartlett is right in saying the result of the last game can't be satisfactory to either side. We'll play 'em Saturday—eh, Warne?"

"If we were sure of having you in the game. or
even on the bench—” said the chairman of the athletic committee, shaking his head doubtfully.

“Well, you can bet your bottom dollar I’ll be on the bench, at least,” laughed Dick. “Accept the challenge, Warne—in my name. We’ve got to do it.”

So it was settled, and Springvale’s challenge was accepted.

But Dick did not recover as fast as he had expected. When Saturday rolled around the doctor declared that it would be exceedingly dangerous for Merriwell to go into the game, even though he was up and around the academy. He admitted that Dick might be able to pitch two innings, but to do more than that would tax his strength too severely.

Then it was arranged that Darrell should pitch. But immediately on being notified of the fact Hal quietly but firmly declined to do so. Argument and persuasion had no effect on him.

When Dick heard this he straightaway sought Darrell, whom he found in the gym. Dick walked up in a friendly manner, greeting Darrell pleasantly.

“See here, Darrell,” he said, “they’ve been telling me you don’t want to pitch again against Springvale.”

“I’m not going to pitch,” said Hal grimly.

“And the doctor says I must not pitch. You are leaving Fardale in a bad hole, old man. I didn’t think it of you. I can’t think it of you now! You’re not
that kind of a fellow. For the sake of the school you'll pitch the game, I'm sure."

Hal was flushed, but he looked obstinate and defiant.

"I suppose you want me to pitch so that we may lose the game and give you that satisfaction?" he said harshly.

Dick placed his hand on Hal's arm.

"I will not believe you suppose anything of the sort!" he declared.

"But you said you were sorry we did not lose the other game."

"I said that I was almost sorry, and that was because we won it in the manner we did. You misunderstood me at the time, Hal, and you would not listen."

"Well, I told you I'd pitch no more while you captained the team."

"You were angry at the time."

"And since then I've been accused of playing a dirty trick on you."

"I do not believe you did it, Darrell."

Something like a look of relief flitted across Hal's face.

"Do you mean that?"

"Am I in the habit of saying things I do not mean?"

"No, but—"

"I'm not beginning now."
"Your friend Buckhart believes it."

"And you hold me responsible for what he believes?"

"Well, no; but it seemed that you might think the same thing, and I—"

"Hal, I can't pitch the whole of that game and win it. Fardale will lose if you do not pitch six innings, at least. I'm sure you are loyal to the school, no matter what your feelings toward me may be. I appeal to your loyalty. We must beat Springvale in a regular manner this time."

"Will you pitch part of the game?"

"If you want me to."

"Which part?"

"Make your choice, either the first three or the last three innings. You will pitch the other six?"

"All right!" exclaimed Darrell suddenly. "It's a go. But I may not be able to hold those fellows down. I'll do my best, and you are not to blame me, no matter what the result is. I'll pitch the first six innings, if you will finish the game. The team will finish strong with you in the box."

"Done!" exclaimed Dick, holding out his hand, which Hal did not refuse to take.
CHAPTER XIII.

A GAME WORTH WINNING.

Springvale came to Fardale in force that beautiful Saturday. The visitors brought horns, cowbells and megaphones. Fully a hundred and fifty loyal "rooters" escorted the Springvale team to the Fardale baseball ground. Never were fellows more confident than were those Springvale chaps of winning.

Wilton was with them, looking rather ashamed, but still having a grim expression on his face.

"Hello, Speed!" cried Ted Smart, when he saw the catcher of the visiting team. "I'll go you again! You can beat me this time! I know you can!"

"You go to thunder!" returned the disgusted catcher, looking very crestfallen. "You'll never work me again that way."

"I'll let you catch me this time to even it up," said Ted, grinning.

But Wilton would have nothing more to say to him. He had received instructions from Hime Bartlett, and he meant to stick to them.

Bartlett hurried up to Dick, who was sitting on the bench, wearing a long coat, and shook hands with him.

"So you're going to play to-day, Captain Merriwell?" said Bartlett. "I'm glad of that."
"Are you?" smiled Dick, who looked rather thin and tired.

"You bet I am! It will give us the very chance we want. Your chaps can't touch Pawn."

"And, of course, you fellows will hammer Captain Merriwell all over the pasture!" chirped Smart, in his provoking manner.

"Oh, I think we'll be able to rap out enough to win this game on its merits. We're going to play for every point."

"We won't!" said Ted. "We'll just throw the game away! We love to do that!"

"You've got to keep still to-day," said Bartlett rather hotly. "Mr. Merriwell must keep you still. I won't have you talking to Wilton or any other player."

"Get a muzzle for me!" cried Ted. "You'll have to put one on me if you keep me still."

"Then I'll have you put out of the game."

"How cruel you are! You should be ashamed of yourself!"

Ted was getting Bartlett angry, and the captain of the visiting team turned his back on the little fellow.

"I have to thank you, Captain Merriwell," he said, "for giving us this chance at you; but I knew you were not the kind of fellow to take satisfaction in a victory won the way your team won from us."
"It was not a very satisfactory game," confessed Dick.

"Certainly not. We had you beaten to a standstill. Pawn was monkeying with every man who came up. Then Wilton made that awful break, and—I don't like to think about it."

"Can't blame you," admitted Dick.

"I hope you are in good condition to-day."

"Not very."

"My men have their batting togs on. Darrell would be a cinch."

"Well, you'll have a chance to find out how much of a cinch he is."

"Why, is he going to pitch?"

"He's going to start the game, anyhow."

"You'll be sorry. We'll bat him out inside of three innings."

"If you do, I'll have to go in; but I'm thinking you won't do anything of the sort."

"You'll see," laughed Bartlett.

The cadet band was out for the game, and the music seemed to put every player on his mettle. Never had eighteen players put up better practise on that field than did the members of those two teams. The practise was just the sort to whet the spectators for the game and make them anticipate something exceptionally brilliant.
A Game *Worth Winning.*

The two teams gave their batting orders to the scorers as follows:

**FARDALE.**
- Gardner, 1f.
- Bradley, 3d b.
- Singleton, 1st b.
- Flint, c.
- Jolliby, cf.
- Buckhart, rf.
- Tubbs, 2d b.
- Smart, ss.
- Darrell, p.

**SPRINGVALE.**
- Rafe, rf.
- Bartlett, 2d b.
- Brooks, cf.
- Belmont, ss.
- St. James, 1f.
- Wilton, c.
- Bradshaw, 3d b.
- Kilday, 1st b.
- Pawn, p.

Buckhart’s shoulder was not in condition to permit him to play a position where it was possible that he would be compelled to do much sharp throwing, but he had begged to get into the game somewhere, and, as Sprague was indisposed, he was sent out to right field.

Springvale went to bat first.

Darrell had warmed up a little, and he went into the box with an air of calm confidence and determination. He was surprised at his own feeling of confidence, but he did not know it had come to him from Dick, who had a way of imparting strength and steadiness to every man on the team.

The first inning was short and sweet, neither side getting a run, although Pawn struck out two men, while Darrell struck out but one.

“Don’t let that fellow disturb you, boys,” said Dick, as the Springvale pitcher made his second strike out.
“The situation wasn’t critical. I’ve seen lots of pitchers who could strike batters out when the situation was not strained, but who lost their nerve in tight places.”

“Hi think this fellow is pretty good hall the time,” said Billy Bradley.

“So much the better,” Dick declared. “It will make the game interesting, and that’s what we want.”

Although he had brought every player up to a point where he felt the necessity of playing the game for all there was in him, still Dick gave them that feeling of confidence and strength that is necessary for a winning baseball team or for a successful man in the struggle of life.

In the second inning Darrell got into a tight place. With only one out, Springvale got a runner around to third, with another on second.

“Here’s where we score!” cried Hime Bartlett confidently. “There is about to be a grand balloon ascension. Watch out for the parachute drop.”

Darrell had been about to pitch a ball to the batter, but at the word “drop” from Bartlett’s lips he suspected something and made a signal to Flint that told the scar-faced catcher the ball would come straight over.

The batter struck far under it.

Sitting on the bench, Dick Merriwell laughed and nodded. The ready wit of Darrell had saved the situation. In some manner Bartlett had discovered
that Flint's signal was for a drop, and he had given the word to the batter, who had calculated on a drop.

Bartlett was surprised. He had been watching Flint, and he was sure Dave had not given another signal. This being the case, he decided at once that he was mistaken in the meaning of the signal he had detected.

So Darrell struck out the befooled batter and caused the next man to put up an easy fly.

When Hal came in to the bench, Dick said before the other players:

"That was as clever as anything I ever saw, Hal. You're playing the game. It took headwork to get out of that hole, and you did the trick beautifully."

This was honest praise, and Hal knew it. He felt his heart warm a little. Then he happened to observe Buckhart, and the old feeling of bitterness assailed him.

Fardale managed to hit the ball hard in the second inning, but every batter hit straight at somebody, and the sharp fielding of the visitors soon retired the cadets.

The practise had promised a brilliant game, and thus far there had not been a thing to disappoint any of the expectant witnesses.

Hime Bartlett and his players came trotting in to the bench for another trial, and every man of them wore the same air of supreme confidence with which they had come to Fardale. They were sure the time
would come before long when they would get Darrell and hit him hard, and they meant to take advantage of the opportunity when it presented itself.

The loyal rooters with the horns, megaphones and cowbells were biding their time to break loose and make such a racket as no visiting crowd had ever made on that field. They cheered brilliant plays at intervals; but the regular cheering of the massed cadets was far more interesting.

The first Springvale man in the third batted a terrific grounder at Smart, and it nearly scorched the little chap’s hands when he froze to it. But Ted got it and whistled it over into big Bob’s big mitt with ease and accuracy, putting the man out.

“It’s a shame!” said Ted. “It’s a shame! I didn’t mean to do it! I’ll throw the next one wild!”

“That’s the wonderful sprinter!” cried a Springvale fellow.

“Don’t say a word!” said Ted. “I’m a turtle on my feet, but I happened to be fast enough for Wilton. Oh, dear! what a joke that was!”

’Rah for Smart!” cried the cadets on the bleachers, waving their colors. “’Rah! ’rah! ’rah!”

The band began to play “For he’s a jolly good fellow.”

“Throw the calcium on me,” called Ted. “Let me stand forth in the glare of the limelight! I’m sure I must make a noble and heroic figure!”
‘E talks too much with ’is mouth!” growled Billy Bradley.

“You’re jealous, that’s what’s the matter with you,” said Ted.

But the next batter hit a still hotter one to Bradley, and the cockney youth, who had developed into a wonderful player under Dick Merriwell’s coaching, stopped the ball, dove at it when it twisted out of his hands, got it up and made a throw that was fully as accurate and clever as that of Smart a few moments before.

“’Rah for Bradley! ’Rah! ’rah! ’rah!” roared the cadets.

Ted shook his fist at Billy.

“Needn’t think you have to do something like that just because I did!” he cried.

Then the third batter lined one past Hal, who reached out one hand in a vain effort to stop it.

Obediah Tubbs seemed too far to one side to touch the ball; but the fat boy made a wonderful spring and got it in his hand, although he lost his footing when he dropped and fell to the earth with a thud that drove the breath from his lips in a great grunt.

He dropped the ball.

Obed tried to get up, but bungled about it and flopped over flat on his back, with his feet toward first base.
A great shout of satisfaction went up from the Springvale crowd.

A moment later a roar arose from the Fardale side. For, lying just as he had fallen, Obediah caught up the ball from the ground and made a handsome throw to first.

Spud!—the ball came into Singleton's mitt just before the runner reached the bag.

"Out!" eried the umpire.

No wonder the Fardale lads shouted!

Tubbs sat up, his face very red, grinning sheepishly. When he saw that he had managed to get the ball to first in time he seemed to puff out like a young balloon. He lifted his cap and bowed, after which he stood on his head and cracked his heels together.

"We-ee-ee!" he squealed in his shrill, peculiar voice. "Dern my picter! I kin make a grand-stand play sometimes, jest as well as anybody."

Smart, appearing very angry, ran over and punched Obed in the ribs.

"You little runt!" he said. "You ought to go hide your head! How do you dare do such a thing while I'm on the field!"

To the surprise of almost everybody, Dick was looking rather sober when they came in to the bench.

"It's all right thus far," he said. "But you all know I don't approve of grand-stand playing. Steady down, Smart. You're putting up a great game, but
don't get in any frills. If we get to fooling in the least we'll lose this game, and we can't afford to do that."

"Dern my pieter!" said Obed, rather crestfallen. "I didn't try to make no grand-stand play."

"It's all right," Dick again assured. "But I want you to forget there is any one watching you. Play just as if you were alone on the field."

"They must have a whole barrel of horse-shoes with them," said Hime Bartlett in disgust. "That fatty made a play that he couldn't duplicate in a lifetime. That hit was tagged for two bags at least, and he spoiled it."

Pawn looked fierce as he went into the box. But the first man hit out a clean single and the next one sacrificed him to second. Then came a good batter, and a long fly was lifted into right field. Rafe went clean up against the fence and picked it off the boards, driving the base-runner back to second, which he barely reached ahead of the ball.

Such playing was enough to thrill all who saw it. Both teams were fighting for a score as if their lives depended on the issue, but the wonderful fielding was preventing them from accomplishing their object.

Rafe's catch caused the Springvale crowd to break forth with their horns, megaphones and cowbells, and the din was intense for some moments.

Pawn looked relieved. He smiled, showing his
teeth, as he faced the next batter. Then he did his best to fool the fellow, finally compelling him to put up a fly to the infield.

Without looking to see the ball caught, without even glancing at it, Pawn walked toward the bench.

Hime Bartlett took the ball as it came down. Still neither side had scored.

Hal Darrell was beginning to feel the strain. There was an anxious look in his dark eyes as he again toed the rubber.

Dick was watching Hal closely. Darrell looked toward the bench, and the captain of the team smiled and nodded. What was it that passed between them? Who can say? Certain it is that in his mind Dick was saying that Darrell was all right, and certain it was that Hal seemed to understand as plainly as if the words had been spoken aloud.

Hal had his troubles in that inning, for two hits were made off him, but still he was well supported, and Springvale could not score.

Dick urged his men to get after Pawn. The first batter was Flint. Dave was regarded as dangerous, and the fielders moved back a little.

Flint picked out the second ball pitched and—bunted.

It was a great surprise, for something entirely different had been expected. Before Pawn could get the ball
and throw to first Flint had raced down the line and crossed the bag.

"Here's where something happens!" said Singleton. Smart ran down back of first to coach.

"Do your best to get out, Dave!" he urged. "We can't afford to spoil the game by getting in any runs now. It will discourage those fellows too much. Please don't do it!"

"Don't worry about that!" cried a Springvale rooter. "He'll never get around the bags."

"Thank you! thank you!" exclaimed Ted. "You make me so happy. I was really and truly afraid we might get in a score."

Jolliby stalked out to the plate, long, lank and awkward. His Adam's apple was bobbing with excitement, but not a sound came from his lips.

Flint worried Pawn at first, causing him to throw over several times to keep him from getting too much of a lead.

While this was going on, Dick gave a signal that Jolliby saw and understood. Immediately Chip passed the signal to Flint.

So it happened that, when Pawn pitched the first ball over the plate Chip struck at it with such fury that he seemed to lose his balance and have a terrible time to keep on his feet, staggering in front of Wilton.

That was just enough to spoil Wilton's throw to
second without seeming to be intentional interference on the part of the batter.

Flint had gone down. He was not a great runner, but he had taken chances, and, aided by Chip's business at the plate, he was able to slide under Hime Bartlett, for Bartlett had been drawn out of reach in order to get the throw.

Ted Smart pretended to sob.

"Oh, I did hope they would put him out!" came dolefully from the little chap. "It's not fair! He has no right to steal! It's unlawful!"

"What's the matter with you, you long-legged beanpole?" snarled Wilton, glaring at Jolliby. "The air was full of arms and legs, so I couldn't see second base."

Chip grinned.

"'Scuse mum-mum-me!" he chattered.

"Next time I'll let the ball go right through you!" declared the angry catcher.

"Pup-pup-pup-please dud-dud-dud-don't!" begged Jolliby.

Then Pawn proceeded to work hard for Chip, finally causing the lanky fellow to lift a fly foul and go out.

"Give me hold of my slugger!" growled Buckhart. "If I can't knock a stitch out of that ball I ought to be shot!"

He strode out to the plate and cracked the very first ball pitched, sending it far into right field.
A Game Worth Winning.

Again Rafe made a wonderful catch, but Flint was ff for third as the ball dropped into the Springvale lan's hands.

Rafe lined the sphere for third to cut the runner off. t was a handsome throw, but Flint slid under Brad- haw and was declared safe.

Still two men were out, and Buckhart growled like dog with a sore ear as he returned to the bench.

"I knew I could hit it," he said; "but think of put- ing it into that fellow's paws! Waugh!"

"Oh, look at this!" yelled a Springvale chap on the seats as Obediah Tubbs waddled out.

"You go to grass!" squealed Obed.

They roared with laughter, and Pawn grinned de- risively.

"He's a mark, Pawn!" said one of the rooters.

"Airy, fairy Jumbo!"

"What a dear, sweet thing!" mocked another chap.

"He's so dainty and delicate!" said another.

While Obed was shaking his bat at the crowd Pawn put one over and a strike was called.

"Jeeminy!" squealed the fat boy. "Guess by gun! I'd better 'tend to business!"

Then he spat on his hands and gripped the bat hard, trying to look very fierce, which made him appear more comical than ever.

The next one fooled Tubbs, who dashed at it furiously.
"That's right!" came from Smart. "Do strike out!
"He will," shouted one of the mockers. "Don't worry about that."
"You see if I do!" squeaked Obed.
And he hit the next one.
The ball went over Belmont's head, but Brooks hadn't been playing in, and he made a great run for it.
Flint came home, while Obediah tore down to first.
"It's a score!" roared Buckhart, leaping up in the light. "He can't catch it!"
But Belmont flung himself forward, and the ball struck in his hands as he was falling. He rolled completely over, but sat up with the ball in his hand high over his head.
"Out!" declared the umpire.
No wonder the Springvale crowd went wild.
CHAPTER XIV.

MERRIWELL GOES IN.

Up to the fifth inning neither side scored. Never had a more exciting and sensational game been witnessed on Fardale field. It was full of hair-raising plays, and the spectators were kept on edge all the time. Both teams were playing for every point.

Darrell received remarkable support. In the fifth inning, however, Springvale fell on him for two hits and a sacrifice, and then, as one of the visiting players came racing over the rubber, the crowd with horns and cowbells produced an uproar sufficient for five times their number.

Toot! toot! Rattle-te-bang! Roar roar! roar! They arose and jumped up and down. They waved flags and flung hats into the air. They hammered one another on the back. They screeched, and shrieked, and howled until they were black in the face. Every one present felt that this was the kind of a game that might be won by a single score.

Pawn was in fine fettle, and his support was perfect. If he could continue to hold the cadets down, the game was won already.

Hime Bartlett laughed and shook hands with the fellow who had made the first run.
“Got ’em going, boys—got ’em going!” he declared.
“We win the game in this inning!”

Darrell looked toward Dick Merriwell. Had there appeared on Dick’s face the slightest shadow of doubt Hal must have lost his nerve or permitted his temper to get the best of him. But Dick simply called:
“It’s all right, old man. Accidents will happen.”
“He has confidence in me!” thought Hal. “I’ve wronged Merriwell! I’m ashamed of myself!”

Then he pitched with the same skill that had marked his work up to that inning, and Springvale could not squeeze another man around the bags.
“I’m awfully sorry!” said Darrell, as he came in and sat down beside Dick.

Merriwell grasped his hand.
“You are pitching a corking game, Hal,” he said earnestly. “I’m proud of you!”
“But that run——"
“I don’t believe they are going to shut us out. They will have to get more runs than that to win this game.”
“Hadn’t you better go into the box next inning?”
“I don’t believe I’m strong enough to last four innings. Hang to it one more.”
“If you’ll make me one promise.”
“What’s that?”
“That you will take me out if they get to hitting me.”
“If I make that promise, you must make me one.”

“All right.”

“In case I take you out, you will not hold any feelings—you will not misunderstand me. You will know to do it in hopes of saving the game.”

“Here’s my hand on it,” said Hal.

But for the one shadow that hung over them, the mystery of the ducking given Dick in the night, they could have been bound together on stronger and more harmonious terms than ever. A bond of sympathy was growing between them. Both could feel it, and till there was that one unfortunate thing to keep them part.

Dick talked to his players a little. He did not say much, but he made them feel the necessity of getting some runs.

They responded with another splendid effort, but it was no use. Springvale was playing such a game as he had never put up before, and Fardale was still held in check.

Hal went into the box again, and the visitors went at him with great confidence. They felt that they could hit him, and they were determined to do so.

The first man singled. The second sacrificed handsomely. Then came a batter who managed to drop put a little one that let the runner on second get up to third, while he reached first.
The situation was growing desperate. A clean hit would mean another run.

Hal stopped and gave Dick a look. He found Merriwell was throwing aside the heavy coat he had kept on all through the game.

"Make him pitch the ball!" shouted Hime Bartlett.
"Make him pitch, Mr. Umpire!"

Darrell stepped out of the box.

Peeling off the sweater he had on beneath the coat, Dick walked onto the field. That was the signal for every Fardale man on the bleachers to stand up and cheer.

"Merriwell!" they roared. "'Rah! 'rah! 'rah! Merriwell! Merriwell! Merriwell!"

Dick met Hal and took the ball from him.

"It's all right, Hal!" he said, in that strangely winning and soothing way that went straight to a fellow's heart. "The change may stop the business. You've pitched a wonderful game."

Having walked out, he turned and asked Captain Bartlett's permission to throw a few to limber his arm.

Hime Bartlett nodded.

"Go ahead," he said. "We'll use you rough enough, anyhow."

So Dick threw a few to Singleton, and then took his position with his toe on the slab.

The runner on first started for second the moment Dick started to deliver the ball. Flint drove the ball
wn like a bullet, and the runner on third scooted for the plate.
Tubbs did not try to put the ball onto the fellow running down from first, but whipped it back to the site with a throw that was handsome in the superlative degree.
“Slide!” shrieked twenty voices.
But the ball came into Flint’s hands low down, and punched it into the sliding man.
“You’re out!” declared the umpire.
Then the great Fardale crowd had an opportunity to roar with delight, and the opportunity was not missed.
Excitement was at the highest pitch.
With two men out, the best batter on the Springdale team faced Dick. A significant look passed between Merriwell and Flint. Then Dick sent in his famous combination ball.
The batter fanned.
“One!” counted the cadets, in a great shout.
Again Dick gave the batter the combination.
Again a miss.
“Two!”
With a smile on his pale face, the captain of the cadets deliberately used the same ball a third time.
Another miss.
“Three!” shrieked the delighted cadets.
“You’re out!” declared the umpire, and Springvale was retired.

The combination had worked beautifully, and Springale’s streak was broken.

“Oh, pard!” burst from Brad Buckhart, as he came prancing in from the field; “it’s a glorious thing to see you in the box again! Why, they can hit greased lightning easier than they can hit you!”

“Better be careful, Dick,” warned Flint in a low tone. “You are starting off pretty steep. You know what the combination does to your arm.”

“I know,” smiled Dick quietly; “but my arm will have to stand it to-day. My body is not strong enough to pitch any great length of time, and so I must make the work in the box as short as possible. That’s what I’m trying to do.”

Pawn kept his nerve, and again he did such splendid work that Fardale made a poor showing against him.

Darrell was worried.

“I fear that one run wins this game,” he said.

The seventh inning was over quickly. Again the visitors fell easy victims to Merriwell’s wonderful rise and drop.

In the eighth the first batter was hit by the ball. Then Tubbs fumbled a throw from Flint as the base-runner stole second. With no one out, the visitors began to roar again, feeling that there was a chance for a score.
Dick struck out the following three men so quickly that it made Springvale gasp.

"Oh, he's a poor pitcher!" declared Smart. "We just keep him to fill in when there's no one else to pitch!"

"That's all right," Bartlett told his men. "We have one run, and this game is getting near the end. We must shut them out."

Fardale could not score in the seventh, and Dick was beginning to show the strain when he entered the box in the eighth. He found that pitching was making a great demand on his strength.

Flint had urged him to let up on the combination ball, and he decided to do so. Darrell had been given splendid support, and now Dick resolved to depend to a certain extent upon the men behind him. This was how it came about that the first batter got a hit, the second walked and an error filled the bags.

Then Dick pulled himself together. His face hardened, and he whistled over the combination ball. It was utterly impossible for the batters to get a hit off him when he used that ball. They fanned one after another and stepped back in disgust.

Although Springvale had filled the bags before a man was out, she could not squeeze in another score. Jolliby was the first batter for Fardale in the eighth. Pawn fancied he knew the kind of ball the tall lad could not hit. He threw it.
Chip met it fairly and easily, and dropped out a pretty single.

Buckhart was eager to knock the cover off the ball, but Dick demanded a sacrifice. Brad did his best to bunt toward third, but the ball struck the bat in such a manner that it popped into the air and dropped inside the line toward first.

The Texan jumped over it and ran as if his life depended on it, but he was thrown out. Jolliby, however, had reached second.

Once more Obediah Tubbs waddled forth to the plate.

At this moment there was a commotion back of the home team's bench, and, looking around, Dick saw Flip Wyman struggling with Marsh and Walker, who were joined by some other fellows, and the whole bunch ran Wyman off in a hurry.

"I'd like to know what's the matter with those chaps," said Dick. "They seem to nose Wyman around just as they please. What was he doing then?"

"I thought he was trying to get up to the bench here," said Earl Gardner. "They wouldn't let him."

"I must hunt him up after the game and have a talk with him."

Tubbs hit the third ball pitched and put it into center field. Brooks was compelled to turn and run back for it, but Jolliby held second, which proved to be a
The pitching of Dick in the ninth astonished everybody. Even Dave Flint gasped. Never before had he
seemed to have such speed, and never had the double
curve of his combination seemed so sharp. Three men
were out in order.

The last half of the inning brought Dick first to bat.
Pawn was nervous. Dick saw it and made him more
so by laughing at him.

Then Merriwell found one that pleased him and
laced it handsomely for two bags.

Gardner hit to short right field, but was thrown out
at first.

Dick reached third.

Pawn seemed to get his nerve back, and struck Brad-
ley out.

Singleton came up and slashed twice at the ball,
missing it both times.

Dick fancied Pawn had found big Bob's weakness,
and it seemed that the game would run over into an
extra inning.

But, suddenly, as Wilton lobbed the ball back to
Pawn, Dick Merriwell was seen darting in from third
like a streak.

In a moment Pawn was quivering with excitement.
The ball seemed to hang in the air. He snatched it
and threw hastily to Wilton to stop Dick. It was a bad
throw, forcing Wilton to reach for the ball.

Dick cast himself headlong into a beautiful slide,
going under the catcher, who failed to tag him in time,
and the game was won by a sensational steal home.
CHAPTER XV.

WYMAN'S CONFESSION.

In making his way to the gymnasium after the game Dick saw Hector Marsh run into the cedars and disappear. Marsh's manner aroused his suspicions, and he lost little time in hurrying toward the cedars himself. He was followed by Buckhart, Darrell and several others, who wondered what was up.

As Dick came near the cedars he heard a cry that seemed broken and checked suddenly. When he burst through into the open spot where so many fights had taken place he found Hector Marsh and Tom Walker, the latter with his coat and vest off, brutally kicking Flip Wyman, who was also minus coat and vest.

Apparently Walker and Wyman had been fighting, but now Marsh was aiding Walker. Wyman was down, and the two young ruffians were giving it to him.

Before either of them knew Dick was there Marsh got a blow under the ear that sent him reeling. Then Dick turned on Walker and they clinched.

Then the fellows who had followed Merriwell came rushing to the spot, and Wyman's assailants were seized and held.

Wyman himself was in pretty bad shape. He had
Wyman's Confession.

been beaten and kicked until he seemed like a wreck. However, in a few minutes he was able to talk.

"What's all this about?" asked Dick. "Tell me, why were these brave fellows kicking you in such a manner?"

Then Wyman told a strange story. Marsh and Walker had led him to believe that in order to be popular in the school he must "haze" the most popular cadet. They had planned it all, and the silly fellow had been induced to creep into Dick's room at night and drench him with ice-water. In the struggle he had torn off Dick's handkerchief, which he tried to fling through the open transom above a door as he was scudding along the corridor. The transom happened to open into Darrell's room, and the handkerchief had lodged there.

Not until the next day, when he found how indignant the boys of the school were over the trick played on Merriwell, did Wyman realize that he had made a fool of himself. Then he announced his intention to go to Dick and confess, but Marsh and Walker prevented him by threats and violence.

During the baseball game Wyman again attempted to speak to Dick, meaning to tell everything; but the fellows who had led him into the dirty work, aided by a few sympathizers, rushed him away.

Walker forced him into the fight in the cedars, and
when it seemed that Wyman was holding his own
Marsh appeared and pitched into him also.

Having heard all this, Brad Buckhart promptly declared himself a chump and apologized to Darrell.

Dick turned to Hal and held out his hand.

"Won't you take it?" he asked. "I think we'll be better friends in the future than we have in the past."

"I think so, too," said Hal, as he promptly grasped Merriwell's hand.

"But these yere p'isen purps?" said Brad, with a look of contempt toward Marsh and Walker, who were pale and frightened. "Whatever are we going to give them as a reward of merit?"

"A nice little ducking in Lily Lake will be fine for them," suggested Ted Smart. "I know they'll enjoy it."

Ted's suggestion was promptly acted upon.
CHAPTER XVI.

DICK ASSERTS HIMSELF.

The baseball season was drawing toward a close, for the end of the spring term was not far away. Fardale had met defeat once, but not with Dick Merriwell in the box. Uniontown had won with another pitcher doing the twirling for the cadets.

This fact was enough to make the Fardale lads eager to again meet Uniontown on the diamond that season, even though the team was not a regular school nine and was made up of semi-professional players.

In the past the Union A. A. of Uniontown had pretended to look down on the little military academy; but Dick had been able to teach the high-headed semi-professionals a lesson, both on the diamond and the gridiron. Now once more, having defeated Fardale, the Uniontown fellows were very "chesty," declaring the cadets had never been in their class.

This had irritated Dick, and he sent U. A. A. a challenge, offering to play the game in Uniontown on certain dates, the winning team to take all the gate-money.

The manager of the Uniontown team answered saying that he had but one date open, and giving Fardale the privilege of playing on that date or not at all.

This had been done to head off the Fardale team and
escape playing another game, as the manager of the challenged team knew that Fardale was scheduled to play an important game at home on that date.

Dick, however, got to work in a hurry and succeeded in changing dates in such a manner that he was able to notify Uniontown that he would positively appear on the field on the date set.

Immediately the manager of the Uniontown team wrote back that he could not arrange for the game without being absolutely positive that Fardale would appear, at the same time demanding that the cadets should put up one hundred dollars, to be forfeited in case they failed to reach Uniontown in time for the game that day.

The athletic committee at Fardale was opposed to putting up such a forfeit. The members of the committee became very warm over what they considered an insult from the Uniontown manager, and were eager to tell him what they thought of him.

Dick argued that such a course would please Uniontown, as it would leave U. A. A. victorious over Fardale for the season. When he found the committee would not agree to put up the forfeit money, Dick rather hotly proposed to put it up himself.

At this Phil Warne, the chairman, simply shrugged his shoulders and said, "Go ahead."

So Dick went ahead and put up the hundred dollars in the hands of the postmaster at Uniontown, to be
forfeited if Fardale failed to appear on the date agreed upon.

Barely had Captain Merriwell done this when forces were set at work at Fardale to compel him to play the regular games as scheduled, regardless of the new arrangement. Phil Warne came to him and told him that he was against switching the games around, and that the committee as a whole advised and practically insisted that the regular schedule should be followed and the second Uniontown game dropped.

Dick came near blazing with anger at this. He felt his face burn and then knew he had turned deathly white. He looked at Warne in such a manner that the chairman of the committee could not meet those burning, dark eyes. They were standing outside the gymnasium in the gathering dusk of evening, and all the sweet odors of blooming spring came to their nostrils. The barracks windows were open, and the sounds of boys' voices calling here and there could be heard. It was the most peaceful hour of the day at Fardale.

In spite of his effort at mastery, Dick's voice trembled a little when he spoke.

"What kind of a game is this, Mr. Warne?" he asked harshly.

"Game?" said Warne nervously. "Why——"

"You know I have agreed to play in Uniontown, and the other game has been changed to another date."

"It seems to me, Captain Merriwell," said Warne,
attempting to be stiff, "that you have taken altogether too much authority on your shoulders. You have been running things pretty nearly as you liked here this spring, regardless of any one else."

"You know well enough the conditions on which I took hold of the team. It was understood that I was to manage and captain it both."

"But you were not to do everything you chose, regardless of the athletic committee."

"Nor have I."

"Well, you have pretty nearly."

"Has the team been successful, Mr. Warne?"

"Why, yes, in a sense."

"In a sense! Hasn't it been successful in every way? Answer me! We have won more games than ever before, and we are in better condition financially. Isn't that true?"

"Well, yes, but——"

"There is no dissension in the team. The players work together harmoniously."

"I suppose so."

"You know so, Warne. You also know that it has galled the team and the whole school to be defeated by Uniontown."

"But Uniontown has no standing in school sports."

"Nevertheless, she has broken our clean record. I discussed the matter with the committee, and——"

"The committee has considered the matter since then
and decided that it is for the best to cut this Union-town business entirely. You will have to abide by our decision."

"Do you think so?"

"I certainly do."

"You are wrong!"

"What?" cried Warne, astonished. "Do you mean?"

"I mean that you can't play this sort of a trick on me," retorted Dick firmly. "You know what I have done."

"What have you done?"

"You know I have deposited one hundred dollars as a forfeit to be given up in case Fardale fails to appear on the field at Uniontown next Saturday afternoon at three."

"Well, that's your own risk," returned Warne coldly.

"Nothing of the sort!" retorted Dick. "You told me to go ahead when I proposed doing it. I have witnesses to your words. Now you will have to stand by me."

"Oh, I supposed you were joking. I didn't think you would be chump enough to put up all that money yourself."

"Mr. Warne," said Dick in a low tone, "I advise you to choose your words with more care! I do not fancy being called a chump by you or any one else! Don't do it again!"
Dick Asserts Himself.

“If I do——”

“You’ll wish you hadn’t!” said Dick; and, in spite of himself, Warne took a step backward.

The look on Dick Merriwell’s face at that moment told Phil Warne that the danger-point had been reached and that he might expect an explosion in another moment.

For some time Warne had entertained a secret dislike for Dick. This had come about through the fact that Merriwell was given the credit for the wonderful success of the team, and Warne thought that a good part of this credit and glory belonged to the athletic committee and to him in particular as chairman of that committee.

Once Warne had seemed to favor Merriwell, but that was at a time when another fellow was chairman of the committee. The simple truth is that Warne was egotistical, and vain, and covetous. The retirement of the former chairman had advanced him, and he had seemed satisfied for the time being. Now conditions had seemed to change again, and his jealousy of Dick had grown steadily for several weeks. He had kept all this to himself; but the present occasion was bringing it to the surface.

Warne knew Merriwell was dangerous, and it was a bold thing to arouse him. Every one at Fardale knew this, for all that Dick seemed the most quiet, self-contained chap in the school. On first coming to Fardale
Dick had shown that he had a fiery temper, and he had likewise proved that it was not a healthy thing for any fellow to awaken it.

No man or boy ever obtains power without arousing jealousy. No matter how popular he may be with the masses, he has his secret foes, who hate him while they pretend to admire him. This was the case with Dick.

Often had Warne thought that all he wished for was an opportunity to show Dick that he possessed the power to balk him in some pet design, and this the fellow had seized upon as the best opportunity.

But all at once he comprehended that it would not do to carry matters too far at a single stroke. He must be diplomatic. Therefore he assumed a smile and said:

"I have no desire to quarrel with you, Merriwell. It seems that you have made an unfortunate mistake—"

"No!" interrupted Dick grimly. "It is you who have made the mistake."

"I?"

"Yes. You made a mistake in thinking you can give me instructions before the committee and then go back on them."

"Instructions? Why—"

"That's what they were. When I proposed to put up the forfeit money of my own accord, you said, 'Go ahead.' Those were instructions."
"I'm sorry you interpreted the words as anything of the sort."

"Sorry or not, you will have to stand behind me now."

"Have to?"

"Exactly. I do not propose to let you beat me out of a hundred dollars."

"You are altogether too independent, Mr. Merriwell."

"And you are altogether too vacillating, Mr. Warne. Fardale will play Uniontown next Saturday."

"Will play! Now, I don't like the way you say that."

"You like it, without doubt, quite as much as I like some of the things you have said to me. It's business. You are in this bargain. You can't go back on it. I'll not permit it."

"Why, what would you do if the committee declined to let the team play in Uniontown?"

Dick looked the other straight in the eyes and firmly answered:

"If the team does not play that game it will play no more games this season."

Warne caught his breath.

"What's that?" he gasped, amazed. "Do you mean——"

"I mean business! I give you my word that the game with Uniontown will be played as arranged,
barring bad weather, or there will be no more baseball for Fardale this season."

"Why, you're crazy!"

"Am I? I think not."

"What would you do? How would you prevent the team from playing? You're not the whole team."

"But I am its captain, and I know the fellows will stand by me to a man."

"Then this is a threat!" exclaimed Warne, white with rage. "You threaten to disorganize the team, to use your influence to keep it from playing other games if the committee does not bow to your will? This is fine! This will create a sensation!"

Dick shrugged his shoulders.

"Why, I never heard of such a cheeky thing!" fumed Warne. "It is outrageous! We'll see if you can carry matters with such a high hand!"

"Then you propose to make a fight of it? Very well; every man on the team shall know the truth of the matter, and you'll see if they will stand by me."

"We'll see! we'll see!" snapped the chairman, as he turned away.
CHAPTER XVII.

THE STOLEN PIES.

When Dick left Warne he had entirely recovered his self-control, the color returned to his face, and even a little smile played around the corners of his mouth. He had determined to await a move by Warne.

"It is evidently a fight to a finish," he muttered to himself as he entered the lower hall of the academy, where he was accosted by the janitor, who said:

"If you please, Cadet Merriwell, Bridget, the cook, is very anxious to speak with you, sir."

Dick whistled softly.

"The cook?" he exclaimed, in mild surprise.

"Yes, sir," said the janitor. "She is in trouble."

"Eh? Trouble?"

"Yes, sir."

"What sort of trouble?"

"Indeed, sir, she cautioned me not to say a word about it; but she asked me to beg you to come to the kitchen, sir. Bridget is a mighty fine woman, sir, and you will do me a favor, sir, if you will come."

Dick laughed softly. The tender attachment of the janitor for the cook was suspected at the school, and the janitor had been chaffed about it by the boys.
However, he preserved a certain air of dignity, for all of his position.

"All right," said Dick, "I'll see her."

"Thank you, sir; and please do so, sir, as soon as possible. It is very important."

"All right," nodded Dick again. "I have a moment now."

So he hurried to the kitchen, where he found Bridget, a big, stout, red-faced woman, who immediately assumed a most doleful expression on beholding her young visitor.

"It's Hivven's mercy ye have come t' me, Misther Dick!" she declared. "It's sore throuble Oi'm in, goodness knows. Och, hóné! it's a worrisome life a poor woman lades in a place loike this, pwhere there do be tin thousan' rickless young thaves who are reddy to stale innything they can lay their fingers on. Oi've had me share av throuble in this worruld, but this larrust do be too much."

Bridget had her soiled, flour-covered apron at her eyes by this time. Her sleeves were up and her red elbows made Dick think of nutmeg-graters. She gave a heart-rending sob and tottered toward Dick, who shyed off.

"If I can do anything for you, Bridget——" he began.

"Av ye can't, Misther Dick, it's ruined Oi am!"
The Stolen Pies.

came from behind the apron in accents of deepest despair.

"Oh, not as bad as that!" said Dick.

"Indade it is! It's me repertashun as a lady that's at shtake!"

"That being the case," said Dick gallantly, "rely on me to do everything in my power for you."

"Ah! it's a good, koind broth av a bhoy ye are!" exclaimed the cook, dropping her apron and starting for Dick, who immediately placed a table between himself and the advancing woman.

"Steady, Bridget!" he laughed. "Don't get excited. Just tell me what's up. I haven't much time to spare. How can I be of service to you?"

"D' yez see thim?" asked the cook, pointing to a long row of freshly-cooked pies, which were placed on some shelves to cool.

"I see them."

"Oi know th' ixact noomber av poies there do be there."

"You have counted them?"

"Oi have."

"Well?"

"Oi have me assistants in makin' all av thim poies, but Oi kape thrack av iverything that is cooked here. Now av late me poies have been floying away."

"Flying away?"

"Yis. It's not wings they have, yit they disappear.
Not wan, ur two, ur thray, but a doozen in a boonch.
Oi can’t kape me poies."

"They are being stolen?"

"It’s roight ye are. Somebody is shtaling me poies, Misther Dick."

"You are sure of this?"

"As sure as Oi am that Oi’m living."

"Well, this is serious."

"Indade it is! Now, Oi hearrud all aboot how ye achted th’ detictive an’ wur afther savin’ poor Misther Flint from disgrace. Arrh! it’s a wondrous bhoy ye be! They do say ye kin foind out innything at all, at all."

"I’m afraid they give me too much credit, Bridget," laughed Dick, slipping around the table with the cook in gentle pursuit.

"Don’t say thot—don’t say it!” she begged. "Don’t be afther sayin’ ye can do nothing to help a poor girrul. Whoy, Oi’m aven suspected av givin’ th’ poies away—av shtaling thim, as it wur, mesilf! Think av thot, Misther Dick! Oi have me friends, th’ janitur, th’ watchman, a young gentleman from th’ village, an’ they do be afther suspictin’ that Oi give th’ poies to thim, an’ Oi’ve nivver trated wan av them to a poie! But Oi must be vindycated! Misther Dick, it’s yesilf must hilp me, ur Oi’m lost, ruined!"

Dick dodged around a chair, still keeping away from Bridget’s clutching hands.
"Tell me! tell me!" she implored—"tell me ye'll detict th' thafe! Oi'll lose me place! Oi'll be sint out in disgrace! Me characthur'll be gone! Think av thot! Oh, wurra! wurra! whqy did Oi' ivver ixcept such a place!"

"Cheer up, Bridget," urged Dick. "How long since you began missing the pies?"

"A wake gone yisterday."

"When do you lose them? When are they stolen?"

"Inny toime—ivery toime."

"At night?"

"Twoice."

"Then the thief must have a key to the pantry."

"Sure it's roight ye are."

"They have been stolen in the daytime, also?"

"Yis. Once Oi barely turnd me back an' shteped into another room. Twinty poies wur shtandin' roight on that table. When Oi turnd siven av them poies wur gone! As Hivven hears me, ivery worrud Oi shpake is thrue!"

"Somebody must have slipped in and stolen the pies almost from under your nose."

"Thot's roight, th' thafe av th' worruld! It makes me blood boil! Misther Dick, will yez thry to' detict th' thafe an' save me from disgrace?"

"Sure, Bridget; you may count on me. I'll try my best."

Dick could not avoid her rush now. She pinned him
into a corner, and, before he could dodge away, she had both her red arms about his neck.

"May all th' saints defend yez!" she cried joyously, embracing him with great vigor. "It's a swate bhoy ye are!"

And then she kissed him.

"Oh, my!" called a chirpy voice. "Excuse me! I'm sorry to interrupt such a sad occasion!"

"Smart!" exploded Dick, as he fairly tore himself from the arms of the cook, his face flaming red. "Confound him!"

There stood Ted, just as he had slipped down the back stairs and entered the kitchen, the tips of the fingers of his wide-open hand pressed to his lips, his head tipped to one side, and his eyes fastened on Dick with a sad, reproachful gaze. He was not laughing, but there was in his pose and look something intensely ludicrous.

"I know you're glad I came!" he said. "You look so happy and relieved! Don't let me stop the exercises. Don't let me interfere with the rounds. Go ahead and finish the bout. Round one: Bridget gets a strangle hold and lands heavily on Merriwell's mouth. Break away. Second round: Don't throw up the sponge, Dick! You're still in the ring."

"I'll wring your neck, hang you!" exclaimed Dick, starting for the little joker, who danced away.

"Oi belave he shtole the poies!" cried Bridget.
The Stolen Pies.

"Pwhat is he doín' here, Oi'd loike t' know? Saze him, Misther Dick!"

"Pie!" exclaimed Ted, in disdain. "I hate pie! It is the abhorrence of my life! Who says pie to me is my mortal enemy forever?"

"What brought you here?" asked Dick, intensely displeased.

"My automobile," was the prompt answer. "I ran it right down the stairs. It stands without the door."

"Come away," said Dick. "I'll spare your life, but only on one condition: You'll have to keep still."

"I love to keep still!" snickered Ted, laughing at last. "It is one of my greatest joys in life. I never say anything."

"That's right," agreed Dick; "you talk a lot, but you never say anything. Come on. Bridget, rely on me. I promise to do my best to solve the mystery and exonerate you."

Then he hastened from the kitchen, dragging Smart with him.

"I ought to shoot you, you little wretch!" said Dick, as they mounted the stairs. "What brought you to the kitchen? Tell the truth; don't give me one of your flip answers."

"I was looking for you, Richard," answered Ted, chuckling in a manner that was extremely annoying to Dick. "I found you. La, me! What a flirt you are! But how can you have the heart to trifle with the
tender affections of a sweet young thing like Bridget! It is—"

"If you don't shut up," said Dick fiercely, "I'll smash you! See here, Ted: Bridget let me into a mystery."

"And I was just in time to hear the explosion. Oh, what a smacker it was! It sounded like a horse pulling his hoof out of the mud! Yum! yum!"

Dick gave Ted a shake.

"Do you want to know anything about this mystery?"

"Not if I have to get my information from Bridget. She's too ruddy, and healthy, and muscular for me. Why, she'd crush me if she ever got such a hold on me as she had on you!"

"Just as true as I live," said Dick grimly, "I'll biff you one under the ear if you don't let up on that joshing."

"I know how it is," murmured the little pest. "I've felt the same way when I was caught hugging some girl."

"Smart," said Dick, "you're in a bad scrape."

"I thought the same about you when I saw you a few minutes ago."

"You're suspected."

"You were detected."

"You're suspected of being a thief. This is no joke, you young heathen! I'm in grim earnest about this."
Several robberies have been committed in the house, and it is thought that you had a hand in them."

"Oh, come off!"

"Straight goods, you reprobate. You may be expelled from the school. Better get serious now."

"What are you giving me, Dick?"

"Am I in the habit of lying?"

"No, but——"

"There's no but about this business. Why were you sneaking down to the kitchen? You have not answered. Pies have been stolen from the kitchen. Did you come for more pie? Ha! You see what a scrape you're in!"

"Oh, fudge!" said Ted, snapping his fingers. "I'm on the baseball team, and I have to follow a course of diet. I can't eat pie without breaking training."

"All the more reason to suspect you of stealing pies and eating them secretly. I tell you, you're in a bad place."

Dick was laughing inwardly, for he saw at last that he had the little chap cornered. Smart was beginning to look serious. They had paused at the head of the back stairs, where they could talk with little danger of interruption. Dick felt that it was necessary to get a good grip on Ted to prevent the little joker from rushing straight away and telling every one what he had seen in the kitchen.

"Now you know, Dick, that I wouldn't steal pies
and eat them. That’s all nonsense. Tell you how I happened to come to the kitchen. I saw you talking with the janitor. I have a big bump of curiosity. Something in your manner made me curious. You were so careful and secret in your movements and what you said. When you departed I questioned the janitor. Couldn’t get a blessed thing out of him. That made me all the more curious. Then I took up the trail. Like a red Indian I trailed you to the kitchen, and that’s all there is to it. I satisfied my curiosity. I found out what you were doing. Also what the cook was doing."

And Ted chuckled again, seeming to feel that he had lifted suspicion from his shoulders.

"You tell that well," said Dick, with a faint laugh of derision. "But I know you of old, Smart. It’s no use. I’m sorry for you, but I’m afraid I’ll have to report you. You know I stand pretty well with the powers that be. If I say I suspect you, it’s sure you’ll find yourself under a pretty black cloud."

"Say, don’t!" exclaimed Ted, again showing his concern. "I’m suspected now. Old Gooch is certain I never swallowed that alligator you pretended to pull out of my mouth in the lecture-room. I know he’d like to run me out of school. He has it in for me. If he could get hold of anything that indicated I had been stealing pies—well, my name would be Mud, with a large, fat M."
Ted threw up his hands.

"I surrender!" he cried. "You're too much for me."

"It's a good thing you came to your senses. But now I want you to help me to find the real culprit—the fellow who has been stealing pies."

"Why, you—"

"I've promised Bridget to do a little detective work. I have a suspicion that I know the rascal."

"Why, I thought you suspected me!"

"Temporarily—perhaps. I said you were suspected. Bridget must have suspected you. Your appearance in the kitchen was quite enough to arouse her suspicion. Walk straight, Ted. You must give me your promise not to say a word about anything you happened to see."

"I've surrendered already," said Ted. "I promise. Can't get ahead of you, Dick. No use to try. But say, who do you really suspect?"

"You know one chap here who revels in pie."

"But we've reformed him. Of course you mean Tubbs?"

"Yes."
"We nearly frightened him out of his wits—made him believe pie was poison to him."

"And the fellows have joshed him about it ever since. By this time he knows he was fooled."

"That's right."

"Well, what would be more natural than for him to backslide and take to pie? He can't do it publicly, for he knows he would be dropped from the team. He believes pie doesn't hurt him. He will do almost anything to get pie. Tubbs is the fellow I'm after."

"Away to the Tubbs—away!" cried Ted.

"But we must be cautious," said Dick. "He must not suspect. Possibly, if we can get into his room, we may find some evidence of his guilt."

"If he's out, we can get in all right."

"How?"

"Come ahead and I'll show you."

They went straight to Obediah's room. The fat boy roomed alone, for he was not the kind of a chap to desire a roommate, and no one in his class cared to sleep with such a tremendously big chap.

Obed's door was locked, and repeated knocks failed to bring a response. But the transom above the door was open, and by this Ted proposed to gain admission. Dick lifted the little chap, who managed to squeeze through the opening and drop inside. Then he sprang the catch-lock and Dick entered, closing the door behind him.
CHAPTER XVIII.

THE DOWNFALL OF OBEDEIAH.

"Here we are," chuckled Smart. "Now to do the great detecting act before Obed returns. If he happens to come back and finds us here, we'll be in a jolly scrape."

"That's right," nodded Dick. "It would be a case of breaking and entering. We must do what we have to do in a hurry and get out of here."

So they began to look around. Dick hastened to Obed's dressing-case and pulled open a drawer.

A stifled cry escaped his lips.

"Look, Ted—look here! Will you see this!"

The drawer seemed stuffed full of clothing, but Dick had moved some on top, and beneath at least a dozen pies were exposed, packed in layer upon layer. The smell of pastry arose to their nostrils.

"It just breaks my heart!" sobbed Smart. "And I was suspected! Confound you, Dick, you played that slick on me!"

"But your promise," reminded Merriwell. "I have
Dick covered them as before, and pushed back the drawer.

"Let's look further," he said, and opened another drawer.

Again were many pies found hidden beneath clothing and old newspapers.

"They're all nice and fresh, aren't they?" said Ted, turning up his nose.

"Well, what do you think of this?" muttered Dick, almost overcome by the discovery.

"It's a shame!" said Ted.

They continued to investigate, and in every place in that room where they could be successfully hidden they found pies. They were—in the wardrobe, in the table-drawer, under the bed, and one was discovered beneath the inverted washbowl.

"I wonder why he doesn't have some more!" said Ted. "I'm surprised that we have found so few!"

"The fellow's cracked on the pie question," declared Dick. "I don't wonder the cook complained."

"I think it was just shameful of her to mention it!" said Ted.

"But I don't believe he's eating them."

"Evidently not."

"Then what is he doing with them?"

"Storing them up against the end of the season. He must be planning to go on a regular pie debauch as soon as the season is over and he stops training."
“But they’ll spoil.”

“Oh, is it possible! Why, they smell so sweet! Some of them must be getting good and ripe already!”

Dick looked at Ted, who returned his gaze in the most solemn manner. It was very comical, and Merriwell burst into a fit of suppressed laughter.

“This beats anything I ever heard of!” he averred. “Ted, Obed surely must be cracked on the pie subject.”

“It’s awful dangerous for him to have all these around him. What if he should take a notion to plunge in and gorge himself! He’d be in danger of splitting.”

“He’d be sure to make himself ill. Let’s put everything back as we found it. I’ve got to have time to consider what’s best to be done.”

Barely had they hidden all traces of their investigation when the voice of Tubbs, squeaky and babyish, was heard calling to some other boy in the corridor.

“This is fine!” hissed Ted. “He’s coming!”

“Right!” whispered Dick, casting a quick look around. “We must hide.”

“Where?”

“Behind the bed. Lively, Ted!”

They had just time enough to hide behind the bed when Obediah unlocked the door and entered. The door closed with a snap behind him.
There, by Jim!” he said, as he flung aside his cap. “I’m tarnation glad I ain’t gotter go inter any old classroom ag’in to-day! Old Barny is so dry he alwus makes me hungry. Hungry! My gracious! I bin hungry for two months now! I’ll never git over it till I kin fill up oncet more on pie. Jest the minute we finish the last baseball game I’m goin’ to stuff to the muzzle, if it kills me! I jest be! Them fellers needn’t try to fool me ag’in. I know pie never hurt me none. An’ I’ll hev a feast reddy. It jest does me good to look at ’em. But it jest about sets me crazy at the same time. I got a lot of beauties. I’ll jest take some of ’em out an’ feast my eyes on ’em.”

They heard him pull open a drawer, and then the boys ventured to peer over the bed. Tubbs was bringing out the pies, one after another, and spreading them about on the table. He chuckled and laughed over each one, smacking his lips and rolling his eyes. He presented such a comical picture that Ted was compelled to press his hand over his mouth to keep from shrieking with merriment.

Obediah fairly covered the top of the table, and then he began to stack the pies up. He arranged them in a certain order to please his eye, and then stood off to admire them.

“Oh, my goodness!” he muttered, his hands clasped over his stomach. “Ain’t that a be-e-eautiful sight! There’s mince pie, an’ apple pie, an’ peach pie, an’ pun-
The Downfall of Obediah.

kin pie, an' lemon meringue pie, an' custard pie, an' lots of other pies all jest aching to be et. An' I'm achin' to eat um. It's awful, this self-denial! An' who'd ever know if I jest dipped in and et two or three of um? Oh, how be I goin' to resist the temptation!"

The fat boy walked round and round the table, viewing his treasures from every side. He stood off and looked at the pies with such intense longing that Smart was compelled to "duck" and stuff the bedspread into his mouth.

"I'd jest like to take one little teenty bite!" moaned Tubbs. "I've almost fergot how pie tastes. I know it won't hurt me. An' nobody can't never find it out."

He crept up closer to the table, then backed off, shaking his head.

"What if somebody should ax me?" he huskily whispered. "I'd have to lie 'bout it."

Thus he hesitated and faltered. It is an old saying that "he who hesitates is lost," and this proved true in Obediah's case. While Dick was wondering if he would overcome his longing for pie and again put them away, the fat boy suddenly stepped forward and picked one of the pies up.

"I'm jest goin' to taste of this one," he said. "I won't take only one little teenty taste."

He nibbled off a small bite, and an expression of ecstasy spread over his moonlike face. That first taste
completely destroyed his power of self-restraint. With a cry of despair, he bit out a huge mouthful, and, in another moment, he was literally stuffing the pie into his mouth.

Having given way to his abnormal craving for pie, he lost entire control of himself.

"Do you see that, Pick?" whispered Smart. "Better stop him!"

"Too late now," said Dick. "He's broken over, and it wouldn't do any good. Let him eat. I'll have to devise some scheme to punish him."

So Obediah was not interrupted, and he spent one of the happiest half-hours of his life devouring pie after pie with marvelous speed. Indeed, the watching boys were astounded at his capacity. It did not seem possible that any human being could eat so much without bursting. Ted began to fear that Tubbs would eat all the pies on the table and come after those he had hidden beneath the bed, in which case he must discover the concealed boys.

But, although his capacity was something to marvel over, the time came when he began to eat slower and slower, and finally he stopped, although not without many sighs of regret. He had washed the pies down with frequent drinks of water, and this giving out, the end came at last.

"I don't hardly feel full now," he muttered, in such regret that Smart had a convulsion behind the bed. "If
I hed some more water I’d eat a few more jest to fill out the corners. My goodness! but warn’t them fine!”

He wiped his mouth with his sleeve and looked sadly at the depleted pies.

“All them gone!” he said; “an’ I can’t never eat um ag’in! It’s too bad! But I gotter practise this afternoon. I wonder if I’ll be in good condition. If I ain’t, they’ll never know why. They hed a good time foolin’ me inter believin’ pies was hurtin’ me, an’ now I’ll fool them by not lettin’ ’em know a tarnal thing erbout it. Dern my picter! that will be a good joke on them!”

He laughed over it a little, and then seemed suddenly conscience-stricken.

“I don’t mind foolin’ ev’rybody but Dick,” he said. “It ain’t jest right to fool him. Still I know he was in that business of makin’ me believe pie was givin’ me delirium tremens. When he sets out, he kin put up the worst old jokes of anybody in this school. I guess it’ll be all right as long’s he never knows about this, an’ there, ain’t no way for him to find out, for I’ll never tell a single soul.”

Then he set about clearing away all signs of his recent feast, carefully scraping and brushing up the crumbs. It made him groan to bend down, for his stomach was stuffed as it had not been before in many weeks.

Dick and Ted were getting very tired behind the
bed, and they longed to have Tubbs leave the room and give them a chance to get out. At last he departed, and the boys were out from behind the bed as soon as the door had closed behind his massive form.

"Now, Ted!" whispered Dick; "we must move lively."

"What are you going to do?"

"I'm going to make Tubbs believe that pie has been his complete undoing and downfall. You must help me, and we haven't a moment to lose."

"Count on me," grinned Ted, ready for any kind of a joke.
CHAPTER XIX.

TUBBS IN TROUBLE.

After getting out of the fat boy's room, Dick lost not a moment in giving Smart the outlines of his scheme to punish Obediah for his secret break in training. Ted chuckled as he listened to Dick's plan.

"Oh, we'll make him so happy!" chuckled the little fellow. "I know he'll enjoy it."

"Get to work," urged Dick. "We haven't a moment to lose. You say you can get into Obed's locker where he keeps his baseball suit?"

"Sure. I sprang the lock the other day, and I can do it again."

"Then make the change as I have told you, and do it in a hurry. Tip off every fellow you see."

"'Tis done!" grinned Ted, as he waltzed away.

It happened that Obediah was somewhat late about appearing in the dressing-room of the gym that afternoon. When he arrived all the other fellows on the team, together with some substitutes and enthusiasts, were there and nearly dressed to go out for practise.

"How's this, Obed?" cried Dick, rather sharply. "You're behind hand, and you know we're going to make the practise short and sharp to-day. I warned everybody to be on hand promptly."
"I know it," said Tubbs; "but dern my picter! I kinder slipped up on the time. Didn’t know it was so late."

"Well, get a move on! Jerk yourself into your suit in a hurry now. You’re looking thinner than usual. Are you training down? Haven’t you eaten anything lately?"

"Oh, thutter, yes!" said Tubbs, turning red. "But not a great deal."

"Why, he is growing thin!" cried Smart. "I never saw him look so poor and emaciated! He must be eating pie."

"You shet up!" shouted Tubbs, hurling the catcher’s mitt at Ted, who ducked.

Then, as Tubbs jumped for his locker, he found long, lank, solemn Chip Jolliby standing in front of it.

"Well, I hardly knew you, O-o-obed-di-di-diah," said Chip, as if quite surprised. "If you kuk-kuk-keep on losing fuf-fuf-fuf-flesh at this rate you’ll sus-sus-sus-soon be a living sus-sus-sus-skeleton!"

"Git out of my way!" squealed the fat boy, hurling Chip aside. "You make me sick!"

As Tubbs ripped off his coat and followed with the remainder of his outside clothing, Billy Bradley, fully dressed for the field, wandered over and stopped nearby, surveying him with an expression of great wonderment on his face.

"'Ow is this?" asked the cockney youth. "Hi
thought you chaps were joking, don't you now; but Hi see hit really is a fact that Hobediah is hawful thin. 'E must 'ave taken some sort hof medicine to do it. Per'aps 'e's taking hobesity pills."

"I'll give you some medicine you won't like, by Jim!" shrilled Tubbs, as he hurled a shoe at Bradley.

"'Ow fretful 'e is!" said Billy, moving away. "Hi've 'eard it halways makes fat hindividuals fretful to lose flesh. Yaas."

"Ya-a-as!" mocked Obed, in a rage.

The other boys began to mutter among themselves, commenting on Tubbs' appearance, all agreeing that he was looking very thin and ill. This made the fat boy so nervous and angry that he found much difficulty in getting ready to put on his baseball suit.

"Don't let them annoy you, Obediah," said Dick gently, as he approached the sweating fat youth. "It's true you don't appear quite the same as usual to-day, but I think you'll recover all right. I hope you have not eaten anything that disagrees with you."

"How could I?" squeaked Obed fiercely. "Don't we hev to eat the same old stuff over day arter day till we're thutterin' sick of it! Where's my shirt?"

He jerked the suit out of his locker and started to pull it on. In a moment he was startled to find he could scarcely get into the shirt. He stopped and jerked it off.

"Hey!" he cried. "Where's my shirt?"
“In your hand,” answered several.

“This ain’t mine,” said Obed. “It belongs to somebody else. I can’t git it on.”

He flung it down and attempted to pull the pants on. In a moment he uttered another squeal of rage.

“These things ain’t mine!” he yelled. “Who’s got my clothes? Whose old suit is this?”

“Why, of course it is your suit!” said Ted Smart, drawing near and picking up the shirt. “No other fellow on the team wears such an enormous thing as this.”

“What be you talkin’ about! That shirt ain’t big. It’s just about right fer Singleton.”

“Why, I have my own shirt on,” said big Bob. “So it can’t be mine, can it? It’s your own shirt, Tubbs. Never mind if it does seem rather large for you.”

“Large!” panted Obediah. “Why, the dinky thing’s too small!”

“Now that’s all in your imagination,” said Dick.

The others assured Obediah that he was mistaken, and they all gathered about him, offering to assist him in dressing.

Smart whispered in his ear:

“I’m afraid you’ve been eating pie, old man! It’s gone to your head! Don’t let the fellows know it. Try to act natural, if you can, for they’ll suspect you if you don’t.”

The fat boy reeked with perspiration. They seized
hold of him, forced the shirt over his head, poked his arms into it, and, with it seeming ready to burst in every seam, they managed to pull it on. It was skin-tight.

"Now don't none of you fools try to tell me this thing is big enough!" squeaked the agitated fat boy.

"Why, it's lovely and large!" said Singleton.

And the others agreed with him.

Then they grasped the fat boy and helped him get into the pants, which were dragged onto him with even more difficulty than the shirt. They continued dressing him, all the time talking among themselves. By the time they had finished him poor Obediah was in a state of almost complete collapse. At the finish, Smart clapped a tiny cap onto Obed's head, and then they all retired, leaving him standing alone, with a terrible look of rage and agony on his face.

The boys were laughing. Smart solemnly declared:

"Pie has done its fearful work! I feel sure of it—he has been eating pie!"

"Oh, no!" exclaimed Dick, as if refusing to believe such a thing. "He knows the terrible danger. He would not venture to indulge in that deadly food."

"I tell you he has!" cried Smart, pointing at the tortured fat boy. "I recognized the symptoms. Oh, Obediah! How big and loose your clothes are since you ate that last piece of pie!"
"Mebbe you fellers think this is a fine joke!" yelled Tubbs furiously.

"Joke!" said Dick soberly. "Why, no! We're very sorry you're so thin and wan."

Tubbs rolled his eyes around at Dick, and that look set the boys into another shout of laughter.

"I can't breathe in these things!" he said.

"Oh, that's all imagination!" said Dick, patting him on the shoulder in a soothing manner. "You'll get over it in a little while."

"Somebody's goin' to pay fer all this fun with me!" vowed Tubbs.

"I hope you haven't been eating pie?" said Dick.

"Of course I know you haven't."

"Of course you do," muttered Obed.

"That's enough," smiled the captain of the team. "Come on; we'll go out for practise."

He took hold of the fat boy's right arm.

"Not in this rig, by Jim!" cried Tubbs, holding back.

"What you need is the open air," said big Bob, taking Obediah's left arm.

Obediah tried to fling them off. In a moment the boys gathered about him; the door was flung open, and forth they rushed with the red-faced, confused, angry, rebelling fat boy in their midst.

At this hour a crowd of cadets had assembled to see the boys come from the gym and trot out to the baseball field, as was their custom. When the members
of the nine emerged with Obediah in their midst. Dressed in that ridiculous fashion, it created a stir at once. The waiting boys called to their comrades to come and see, and a great shout of laughter went up.

"Larf, drat ye, larf!" panted the fat boy. "I'd jest like to git holt of some of ye! I'd make ye larf outer the other corner of your maouths!"

He found it was useless to try to break away from the other members of the team, and so he submitted to his fate, being hustled away to the field. The shouting crowd fell in behind.

On a trot, the boys rushed Tubbs away to the field, and the cadets swarmed along behind.

"Now, remember," said Dick, "that we're going to hustle through with practise. There is to be no fooling to-day."

"But I can't practise in this rig!" wailed Tubbs.

"Why, what's the matter with you?" cried Dick, in pretended astonishment. "Your clothes may be a trifle loose for you, but I'm sure they will not interfere with your movements for that reason."

"Somebody's a fool, or we're all crazy, or somethin'!" declared Tubbs despairingly. "Here, these dern clothes are so hanged tight that they choke me, an' ev'rybody says they're loose!"

"Right out for business," called Dick sharply. "Every man to his position."

The boys trotted onto the field, Tubbs presenting a
most comical aspect as he waddled into the right gar-
den, his clothing seeming ready to burst at every
movement.

Two boys prepared to bat, one to the outfield and the other to the infield. The one who was batting to the outfield began with the left-fielder, then knocked one to center field, and followed by turning as if to bat to Tubbs.

Obed was ready to swear the ball was not hit at all, but every one seemed to turn in his direction, as if watching for him to catch the ball.

"Hi! hi!" they shouted. "Get it, Tubbs! Wake up, there!"

"What's the matter with ye?" snarled Obediah. "Why don't ye knock the dratted old ball out here?"

Jolliby ran over from center field and picked up a ball from the grass near Obediah, saying:

"Kuk-kuk-kuk-keep your eyes open! It came nigh hitting you on the hu-hu-head."

"Waal, consarned ef I saw it at all!" said the fat boy, astonished.

"Wh-wh-what's the matter with your eyes?" demanded Jolliby.

In a few moments this was repeated again, the batter making all the movements of knocking a ball to right field, but Tubbs did not see anything of the ball until Chip appeared to pick it up within four feet of him.

"You must be gettin' bub-bub-bub-blind," said Jol-
Tubbs in Trouble.

“Bimeby one of them’ll hit you on the head, an’ you won’t see it.”

“I guess I’m sick!” exclaimed Tubbs, as he started to go in; and he really looked ill.

As he was coming in, the infield hitter sent a hot one at him. Obediah put up his hands and caught it, but it knocked him over. As he fell to the ground, he heard something give way. When he arose the back seam of his shirt had burst from top to bottom, and he was a sight to behold.

The witnesses shrieked with laughter.

Obediah twisted himself around to see what had happened, but he was so fat he could not look over his own shoulder, and his gyrations and grimaces were of the most ludicrous order.

The boys of the team came hurrying in to gather around him.

“Dern my picter!” spluttered the agonized fat boy. “Why wuz I born?”

“What is the matter, Obediah?” asked Smart, in an innocent manner. “Has anything happened?”

“You go to grass!” squealed the fat boy, in the greatest rage.

“Hi wonder what hails ’im?” said Billy Bradley, pretending to be much concerned over Obed’s actions.

“You dud-dud-dud-don’t seem to be fuf-fuf-fuf-feeling well, Tubbsie; boy,” chattered Chip Jolliby.
"I'd like to punch your head!" yelled the victim, in a perfect transport of fury and shame.

"You should try to control your angry passions when there is no cause for them to arise, Obediah," observed Dick severely.

"No cause!" howled Obed. "Whut's the matter with you? By Jim! if ever a feller hed a cause, I've got it!"

"I believe he is under the delusion that something has happened to him!" exclaimed Dick. "His head seems to be filled with strange hallucinations."

"Hallucinations? Is that what you call those wheels he has in his head?" inquired Smart.

"I'll soak you some time!" promised Obed.

"It is a dreadful thing to behold such an exhibition of temper," said Dick, sadly shaking his head. "I can't understand it. I fear Obediah has been doing something he should not do."

"Pie!" cried Smart. "I told you he'd been eatin' pie!"

"I will smash you!" snarled Tubbs.

"Obediah, have you been eating pie?" asked the captain of the team. "Is that the cause of your strange behavior?"

Tubbs refused to answer.

"Hi believe that his hit," said Billy Bradley, taking care the victim of the joke should hear him.
“He has the symptoms of a confirmed pie-eater,” put in Earl Gardner.

“No doubt about it,” agreed Hal Darrell.

At this moment one of the boys on the outside of the circle plunged in and tore his way through, as if he had just come running and panting to the spot.

“Oh, fellows, have you heard about it?” he cried.

“About what?” demanded twenty voices.

“I’ll never eat another piece of pie while I’m in this old school,” declared the fellow.

“Why not?”

“The cook——”

“Yes, yes?”

“She’s doctored the pies.”

“Doctored them?”

“Put something in them.”

“I suspected it!” said Smart, with a gesture of despair. “I knew that woman was just wicked enough to put something in her pies. But I never could tell what in the world it was she put in them.”

“It’s dope,” declared the fellow, who was pretending to have just arrived.

“Dope?” they gasped, while Obed’s eyes bulged and he began to turn ashen.

“Just plain dope. To think she could do such a terrible thing! She says she has lost pies lately—says they have been stolen. And she says lots of the stolen pies had dope in them.”
“Oh—my—heavings!” sobbed Smart, pressing one hand to his heart and clutching wildly at the air with the other hand. “Can it be we have such a monster for a cook?”

“But what will this dope do if any one eats a pie that has the stuff in it?” breathlessly inquired Dick.

“First it fills the one who eats the stuff with all kinds of wild fancies,” was the answer. “Makes him act as if he had gone crazy.”

Smart backed off from Tubbs, pointing at him. Obediah was shivering now.

“I believe that’s what ails him,” whispered Ted, to a chap near him, but the whisper was intended for the fat boy’s ears.

“In the end,” said the rascal who was carrying out the joke, “the wretch who eats one of the pies must die. He can’t go right on living. His breath stops. It is said that there is a chance that he will blow up—explode. But there is no antidote for the poison.”

“Poison?” panted Tubbs.

“Poison!” shrieked Smart.

Then, with a wild yell of despair, the fat boy flung himself to the ground.

“I’m done for!” he shrieked. “I’ve been eating some of those pies! I’ve begun to blow up already! I’m going to explode in a minute! I have a feeling of tightness all over me! Oh, Lordy! Oh, mercy!”
CHAPTER XX.

DICK'S FIRMNESS.

It was with the greatest difficulty that Tubbs was dragged to his feet and led off the field. He continued to protest that he was dying. He begged them to see that the cook was punished for her crime.

When the victim of the joke was gone, Dick sent the players back to the field for further practise, filling Obed's place with a substitute.

Before practise was over Dick observed Phil Warne and two other members of the athletic committee come hastily through the gate onto the field.

"That will do, fellows," called the captain of the nine. "Don't work any longer to-day. It won't pay."

The boys came in. Warne was near the bench, when he motioned to Dick.

"I wish to speak with you, captain," he called.

"All right," said Dick, approaching and feeling at the same time that the tug of war was at hand.

The chairman of the athletic committee pulled a letter from his pocket.

"I have a letter here from Harry Chambers, manager of the Viewland team," said Warne.

Dick waited for him to proceed. As there seemed
to be no secrecy about it, the other members of the team gathered about.

“Chambers says,” explained Warne, “that he will bring his team to Fardale Saturday afternoon to play the regularly scheduled game.”

“How does he happen to say anything like that?” asked Dick quietly, for he saw the necessity of keeping a strong rein on his temper now. He knew the clash was to come, and the one who lost his temper would stand a good show of being defeated.

“He says it,” returned Warne, “and that is enough.”

“Not for me,” declared Dick.

“It will have to be! You see there is now no way out of playing this game. The committee has decided that it must be played.”

“How about the game with Uniontown?” asked Bob Singleton.

“That will have to be given up,” asserted Warne.

At this an exclamation of dismay arose on all sides, for the boys were more than eager to meet Uniontown again and wipe away the stain of defeat.

“It’s a sus-sus-shame!” said Chip Jolliby.

“Put-up job!” exclaimed Hal Darrell hotly.

“That’s whatever!” exploded Brad Buckhart.

“Now don’t you chaps go to getting uppish!” warned the chairman of the committee. “You are not running the team.”

“Captain Merriwell is.”
"He may think he is, but there are others who have something to say, as he will find out."

"Mr. Warne," said Dick quietly, "will you permit me to read that letter?"

Phil put it in his pocket.

"No, sir!" was his decisive answer.

"I thought not!" said Dick significantly.

The manner in which he uttered those words struck Warne hard, and he snapped:

"What do you mean to insinuate?"

"I do not mean to insinuate a thing," said Dick; "but I'm going to make a plain statement. I am satisfied that you are behind this piece of business. You have induced Chambers to change his plans. You did it after knowing that I had posted the forfeit money required by Uniontown."

"What you think about it is of no consequence to me," said Warne. "You will play the game with Viewland and cut this other game with Uniontown out."

"It's a shame!" cried several of the boys.

"I have told you," said Dick, "that we were going to play Uniontown. I have not changed my mind in the least about that."

"Good! good! good!" cried the boys.

Warne's lips hardened for a moment.

"If you disobey orders," he said, "you'll be promptly,
suspended from the team for the remainder of the season."

"Oh! oh!" came from the boys.

"Whatever is this yere I hears?" shouted Brad Buckhart, attempting to push forward, only to be held back and silenced by Dick.

"I am doing this, Brad," said the captain of the nine, with perfect coolness.

"But I just want to wade inter somebody!" growled the angry Texan.

"I suppose you have authority for what you have just said, Mr. Warne?" asked Dick.

"The authority of a majority of the committee."

"Evidently you do not have the entire committee with you."

"I have a majority."

Dick glanced toward the other two members who had accompanied the chairman to the field. They did not meet his eyes. Warne had mastered them, but they were ashamed to look Dick Merriwell in the face.

"There is no need to make any further talk about it," said Phil, rather anxious to get away. "You have your orders, and you will follow them."

"Don't be in such a rush," advised Dick. "This little chat is not over yet."

"I have no more to say."

"But I have something more to say."

"It can be of no concern to me."
"You are entirely mistaken, sir; it is of the greatest concern to you."

"You can't mean that you are going to set your authority against the committee?"

Dick turned to the members of the nine.

"Fellows," he said, "who wants to play Uniontown instead of Viewland on Saturday?"

"I do!" cried every one of them, in chorus.

"It makes not the slightest difference what you want to do," put in Warne savagely. "You will take your orders from me—and obey them, too!"

"Won't that be nice!" said Smart, with such rare sarcasm as only he was capable of expressing.

"What if we don't?" asked big Bob.

"You will!"

"Boys," said Dick, "you all know that I made arrangements with Viewland to change the date of their game in order to accept the only open date we could get with Uniontown, which is Saturday."

"We know! we know!"

"If we do not play Uniontown Saturday we cannot play that team again this season."

"Play 'em! play 'em!"

"Viewland was willing to accommodate us. It was all fixed. Then I was informed by Mr. Warne that we must give it up and stick to the regular schedule. I declined to do so. He had corresponded with Harry Chambers, and it seems by his statement that Cham-
bers is ready to bring his team here day after to-mor-
row. Yet Mr. Warne said 'go ahead' when I proposed
to put up the hundred dollars forfeit required by
Uniontown. The money is up. Mr. Warne seems de-
termined to beat me out of it.”

“Shame! shame!” again was the cry.

“You have heard him threaten me. I’ll tell you what
I told him when he first came at me about giving up
the game. I told him it was impossible, and that I
proposed to play Uniontown regardless of conse-
quences. On his threat to suspend me, I informed him
that I should ask the other members of the team to
stand by me.”

“We will!” was the shout.
Warne tried to interrupt.

“You’re inciting mutiny, Merriwell!” he snarled.

“Go on, Dick—go on!” urged the players.

“I further informed him,” Dick calmly proceeded,
“that if we did not play Uniontown as arranged there
would be no further baseball at Fardale this season. I
told him I would ask you fellows to strike and refuse
to play.”

“We’re with you, you bet your boots, pard!” burst
enthusiastically from Brad Buckhart. “You’ve got
him on the hip!”

“Buckhart, you shall regret this!” cried Warne,
white and quivering.

“Now, fellows,” said Dick, “I want to know now
how many of you will decline to play any more this season in case Mr. Warne pushes through his little scheme to knock us out of the Uniontown game.”

Every one of them announced his readiness to stand by Dick to the utmost extremity.

“That’s all I want to know,” said Merriwell quietly. “You see how the land lies, Mr. Warne.”

“I see that you’re a swelled-head upstart!” palpitated Warne. “You’re no longer captain of the team! Do you get that, sir?”

“You mean—just what?”

“You’re suspended, sir—suspended!” Warne almost screamed. “I have the authority, and I suspend you!”

“That’s plain enough,” said Dick quietly.

“You bet it is!”

“Then I resign from the team, you bet your sweet life!” said Brad Buckhart.

“And I’m another!” promptly spoke up Earl Gardner.

“I’m in line,” came from Dave Flint.

“Me, too!” grunted big Bob Singleton.

“Cuc-cuc-cuc-count me,” chattered Chip Jolliby.

“Hi rawther think Hi’ll ’ave to resign, don’t y’ now,” said Billy Bradley.

“And I’m with Merriwell,” averred Sprague.

“Oh, dear me!” piped Ted Smart. “Where is the Fardale baseball team vanishing to? I’m out of it with the rest.”
“It strikes me,” said Dick, with just the faintest suggestion of a smile, “that there’s very little of the baseball team left, Mr. Warne.”

Phil Warne almost choked with rage. He longed to strike Dick, but he had not the courage. At last he knew what it was to get up against a fellow of Merrifield’s caliber. He had pitted his strength against Dick’s, and he felt that he would lose. It infuriated him beyond measure.

“All right!” he snarled. “I refuse to accept the resignations of fellows who have been so hot to offer them. You’ll change your minds by to-morrow. You’ll come to your senses. If you don’t, there may be a way to make you. We’ll see.”

Then he turned and hurried from the field, followed by his two companions.
CHAPTER XXI.

DICK ARRANGES MATTERS.

Dick lost no time in hastening to a telephone and calling up Harry Chambers, the manager of the Viewland team. It was necessary to send for Chambers at the other end, but he was found and brought to the instrument in less than thirty minutes.

"Hello, Mr. Chambers," called Dick.

"Hello," was the answer.

"This is Merriwell, Fardale."

"Oh, Merriwell! How are you, Captain Merriwell?"

"Slightly mixed. How are you?"

"Also mixed. You fellows seem to change your minds often."

"I haven't."

"What? You? Why, I had a letter from Philip Warne saying the Uniontown game was off, and asking me if it was not possible for us to fill the regular date with you."

"That's about the kind of a letter I thought you received from him."

"Isn't it all right?"

"No; all wrong."

"Why, how's-that?"
Dick proceeded to explain at length, making it as clear as he could over the wire.

"Well, say!" exclaimed Chambers; "Warne has put you in a bad hole, hasn't he?"

"Rather. Now he informs me that you are ready to come and fill the regular date here."

"That was because he urged it. We had arranged to play Barrows Falls here Saturday, but, on getting his letter, I 'phoned the manager of the Falls team and asked him to cancel the engagement. He was sore, too."

"Sore, was he?"

"You bet."

"Then he wanted to play you?"

"Said he couldn't get another game for Saturday, as it was too late; but I didn't want to knock you fellows out, as I supposed I'd be doing, and I stuck to him until he gave it up."

"Don't you suppose you could get him to come now?"

"Well, I might, though he was awfully hot under the collar."

"Will you try it? It will be a great favor to me. At any rate, there will be no game played in Fardale next Saturday, for I have been suspended and the rest of the team has resigned."

"Well, you must be having things pretty warm over there!"
“Just a little,” laughed Dick. “But, if you can get that game with Barrows Falls and you’ll stay away from Fardale Saturday, I think we’ll pull things around all right.”

“Say, Merriwell, I’ll stay away anyhow, if you say so. But I think I may be able to fix it up with the Falls. At any rate, since hearing from you that your team has disbanded, I shall not take my team to Fardale Saturday. Is this satisfactory?”

“Perfectly so, and I have to thank you for a favor.”

“Don’t mention it, old man. I hope you come out on top in this little scrap with Phil Warne.”

“Thanks again. Now, no matter what you hear, keep away from Fardale Saturday. Don’t take any word to come. If any one sends you word, you’ll know it’s a fake. Perhaps it will be done to put me in a hole here.”

“I’m on. Good luck to you.”

“Same to you. Good-by.”

“Good-by.”

Dick left the ’phone, feeling satisfied that he had fixed that matter to his satisfaction.

But fifteen minutes later he received a telegram from Uniontown that gave him a jump. This is what he read:

“Notified Fardale will not appear Saturday. You understand we take forfeit money in that case.

“WALTER COOK.”
Cook was the manager of the Uniontown baseball team.

"Some more of Warne's work!" exclaimed Dick, and, without a moment of delay, he sat down and wrote the following answer:

"Fardale will appear Saturday, just as arranged. No matter what you hear, depend on us.

"RICHARD MERRIWELL."

Dick was not inclined to let the grass grow under his feet. That night he called together the members of the team and consulted with them. It was decided that they would go to Uniontown as an independent team on Saturday in case the affair was not settled.

"You're going to come out on top, Dick," assured Buckhart, with absolute confidence. "Warne is going to get it in the neck. You hear me chirp!"

The report of what Dick was doing reached the ears of Warne, with the result that Merriwell was summoned before the athletic committee in a body the following day.

The committee met in a room chosen for the purpose, and no one but Dick was admitted to their presence.

Phil Warne, still looking stubborn and resentful, presided. He gave Dick a savage glare, which was returned with calm indifference.

"Mr. Merriwell," said Warne, "this committee has
decided that it is best to have a serious talk with you just to let you know where you stand.”

“Very well, sir,” said Dick quietly. “I think it would have been much better in the first place if the committee had met in a body and attempted to come at this matter, instead of intrusting it entirely to one man.”

“What you think on that point you will please keep to yourself. You have succeeded in disorganizing and disrupting the baseball team, and I presume you are satisfied.”

“I did not do it, Mr. Warne: you are the guilty party, sir.”

“I?”

“Yes, sir.”

“How do you make that out?”

“You brought the whole thing about by your effort to beat me out of a hundred dollars, and, incidentally, to show me at the same time that you had the power to make me bend to your will.”

“I’ve stood enough of your insulting talk!” fumed Warne. “You have not your gang behind you now, and so I decline to take any more of it from you.”

“You are easily insulted by plain facts, sir,” smiled Dick coolly. “But for your changing your mind and attempting to make me bow to your despotic power there would have been no trouble on the team, so you are the real disorganizer.”
“It’s your place to take orders from the committee.”

“Possibly that is correct, and I’ve stood ready to take them always when given properly. You led me into supposing it all right to change Viewland’s date and arrange the game with Uniontown, which is desired by the whole school. The team is not alone in its eagerness to play Uniontown again. Almost every fellow in the school is eager for such a game. In trying to defeat the object you are making yourself very unpopular, Mr. Warne.”

“It’s not popularity, I’m after. A chap can’t hold my position and keep his popularity.”

“Perhaps we had better listen to Merriwell’s side of the question,” said Oliver Stone.

“I’ve told you his side,” said Warne quickly.

“But let him tell it.”

So Dick stated his position concisely and clearly, giving his reasons for everything he had done.

Warne interrupted several times, but Dick paid not the least attention to him.

“Well, there you have it!” cried the chairman of the committee. “You can do as you like, gentlemen. You can support me, or you may support this fellow, who has run things with a high hand from the very start of the season.”

“It seems to me,” said Oliver Stone, “that Fardale has profited by his high-handed style.”

Warne smiled derisively.
"It's too late to make any changes now," he said. "Viewland will appear here to-morrow, and the game must be played. I have expressed my willingness to restore Merriwell to his authority and let him captain the team. We have called him here mainly to make him that offer."

"Before you do so," said Dick, "I wish to inform you that Viewland will not appear here to-morrow."

"What?" shouted Warne, starting up. "Why, I have a letter——"

"And since then I have talked by 'phone with Harry Chambers. He explained fully how he was led to write you that he would bring his team over, and he also agreed not to come. It is fixed so that no further arrangements can be made with him. It is an absolute certainty that there will be no game in Far-dale to-morrow."

Warne arose from his chair and then sat down again. He seemed at a loss for words. He glared at Dick, who looked him quietly and unflinchingly in the eye.

"That being the case," said Oliver Stone, "it strikes me that the only thing to do is to let this game with Uniontown go on."

"And that's a weak surrender to Merriwell!" choked Warne. "I'll never agree to it—never!"

"Let the committee vote on it."

"All right!" exclaimed Warne. "Let it vote."
Dick Arranges Matters.

He felt confident that two of the committee would vote in his favor, which would make a draw, leaving the matter to be settled by him.

Dick was also satisfied that Warne would continue to be triumphant, but he said nothing.

The matter was put to vote, and, to the disgust and rage of the chairman, there were three votes to one in favor of the game with Uniontown.

One of Warne's trusties had gone back on him.
CHAPTER XXII.

FRUITLESS DELAY.

Never in the history of baseball in Fardale had such a crowd accompanied the team away from home. Every fellow who could get away and had the price of carfare seemed to be with the nine.

Dick Merriwell, restored to his former authority, was taking along his best team, Tubbs alone being dropped. Obadiah confessed to stealing the pies, and punishment had fallen upon him. Besides that, from fright or from indigestion, the fat boy fell ill and was in no condition to play when Saturday came.

But Brad Buckhart’s shoulder had recovered so he could get into the game again, and he was rejoicing to be with the team in uniform.

It was well known that Dick had been compelled to fight hard to carry his point in regard to the game with Uniontown, and his success won him fresh admiration.

When the train pulled out of Fardale few knew that Phil Warne was in the engine-cab. Warne knew the engineer, and he was able to obtain permission to ride on the engine, although the rules of the road prohibited anything of the sort.

The train was loaded with singing, laughing, joy-
Fruitless Delay.

Ors cadets, all bearing colors, horns, cowbells or something of the sort. Somehow every one seemed confident of Fardale's success in this game.

Dick was going to pitch, and Buckhart would again be behind the bat. Flint had shown that he was a splendid catcher, but there were many who rejoiced to know that old Brad, the loud-mouthed, yet efficient, would again take his favorite position.

But on the road something happened. Something more than half the distance had been made when the train pulled up some miles from any town or siding.

Then the report came back that something was the matter with the engine.

The boys fancied the delay would be slight, but it continued, much to their annoyance. Some of them began to look at their watches.

"By Jove!" exclaimed one fellow. "If we don't get a move on pretty soon, we'll arrive behind time for the game."

Dick had been thinking of that. It had been arranged that the money he had posted was to be forfeited in case the Fardale team failed to appear on the field at Uniontown by three o'clock.

A short time later Dick dropped down from the car and went forward to the engine, where he found a crowd watching the investigations of the engineer and fireman.
Fruitless Delay.

Warne had discreetly left the engine, and he had no intention of returning. His work was done. He had bribed the engineer, and he was satisfied that the Fardale team would not reach Uniontown until it was too late.

"At least, you’ll lose a hundred dollars to-day, Mr. Merriwell!" he muttered to himself. "I’ll have the satisfaction of knowing that."

* * * * * * *

An unusually large crowd had turned out at Uniontown to witness the game. The particulars of Fardale’s challenge had been used to advertise the occasion, and it was known that the winning team was to take all the gate-money. Likewise that one hundred dollars had been deposited as an assurance that Fardale would be on hand to play the game.

But the cadets did not show up when expected. The game was scheduled for three o’clock, and the Fardale team was expected to arrive by half-past two.

As three o’clock approached the spectators grew nervous.

"Where’s the little sojer boys?" cried a fellow from the bleachers.

"Don’t believe they’re coming," shouted another chap.

As the hour for the game drew still nearer Walter Cook grew nervous and began to walk up and down.
He called Noel, the captain of the team, and consulted with him.

"What do you suppose this means?" asked Cook.
"Do you think those fellows are going to fail us?"
"Why, you have their word?"
"More than that. They have put up a hundred dollars forfeit money."
"Then they'll be here."
"But it's now nine minutes of three."
"Anyhow, you'll get the hundred."
"But look at this crowd. Three hundred wouldn't pay me for losing this. And we'd surely win to-day, so we'd get all the gate-money."
"Win!" laughed Noel. "Why, those fellows are a snap. They're nothing but kids. We've got one of the best semi-professional teams in the State, and it would be a shame to have them get a score on us to-day."

"But I want them to come!"

As it drew close to three the crowd became very impatient. Five minutes before three the whistle of the train was heard.

It was just three o'clock when a private carriage, bearing Dick Merriwell, came through the big gate. Dick leaped out and walked rapidly toward Walter Cook, who advanced to meet him.

"Well, you're here, I see," said Cook; "but where is your team?"
"Coming from the station in a big carryall," said Dick. "It will be on hand in less than five minutes. Sorry there was the slightest delay, but an accident happened to the engine, and we were stalled on the road for more than half an hour."

"All right," said Cook. "You're here now, and we'll give you a right good beating."

"Possibly," smiled Dick; "but I have a suspicion of a doubt about it."

The rest of the players arrived as Dick said they would, and then the Fardale crowd streamed in through the gates, packing the space for spectators. The cadets came on cheering. Fardale enthusiasm was at a high pitch.

Dick and his team warmed up hastily, and then they were sent to bat.

This was the batting order of the two teams:

**FARDALE.**
- Gardner, 2d b.
- Bradley, 3d b.
- Singleton, 1st b.
- Flint, 1f.
- Buckhart, c.
- Jolliby, cf.
- Sprague, rf.
- Smart, ss.
- Merriwell, p.

**UNIONTOWN.**
- Ibson, rf.
- Shadd, cf.
- Noel, 3d b.
- Callahan, 1f.
- Phillips, ss.
- Winkle, 2d b.
- Farlow, 1st b.
- Hix, c.
- Nixon, p.

Uniontown had an entirely different team than the one Fardale had played against a year before. Almost every man on the team was under salary, and several
of them had made reputations as players. They were much larger and older than the Fardale boys, and the two nines did not seem well matched.

Phil Warne had arrived with the rest of the Fardale crowd. He was rather sore over the failure of his scheme to hold the train long enough so Merriwell would lose the hundred dollars he had posted, and he did not understand how it had happened. Therefore he sought out Anson Day, the one fellow who had stood by him through everything on the committee, and questioned him.

"How was it, Day?" he asked. "What made the engineer start up so soon? If he'd held the train ten minutes longer, Merriwell would have arrived here to find his money forfeited."

"Merriwell did it himself," said Day.

"Did what?" exclaimed Warne, not understanding.

"Started the train."

"Oh, come off!"

"It's true."

"How could he do that?"

"He found out what ailed the engine and showed the engineer. It seems that it was some simple little thing."

"But, great Scott! I wasn't aware that Merriwell knew anything at all about locomotives!"

"Nor was I; but will you tell me anything he does not seem to know something about?"
“He’s altogether too smart!” growled Warne. “But he can’t win this game to-day.”

“Do you believe that?”

“Why, just look those fellows over! They’re swift. And they know the game. There are Callahan, Noel, Winkle, and Nixon who have played in fast company and have reputations. They’ll just snow our team under.”

“Well, they may,” admitted Day.

“I haven’t the least doubt of it. If I had, I’d not be here. Why, if Merriwell should win to-day I’d resign from the athletic committee. There would be no getting along with Merriwell. He’d just ride right over everybody.”

“I never thought him so bad that way,” confessed Day.

“You don’t know him! There, the game is going to begin. Uniontown takes the field. They’re off!”
CHAPTER XXIII.

DICK'S GREAT STEAL.

The game was a scorcher. For four innings neither team scored. In the fifth inning Dick was the first man up.

Nixon fancied he had found Merriwell's weak spot. That was where he fooled himself. He gave Dick a high one on the inside corner, and Dick sent it to right field, reaching first.

"Accidents will happen," said Nixon scornfully.

Gardner looked at Dick as he walked out to the bat. Dick signaled for a sacrifice, and Earl cleverly bunted the very first ball pitched, dumping it down about three feet from the pan.

When the bunt was made Dick was already well on his way to second, and so there was no chance to get him. But Nixon threw Gardner out at first.

Bradley was the next hitter.

He fanned twice.

"Got him, Nix!" yelled a delighted admirer of the home team. "He couldn't hit it in a year!"

But the cockney youth did hit it, and he put a high one into right field.

Dick held second until the ball alighted in Ibson's
hands, and then he scooted for third with all the speed he could muster.

He reached the bag ahead of the ball. But two men were out.

Singleton was the next batter, and Dick felt that big Bob stood small show of getting a clean hit off Nixon, who was shooting over all sorts of benders and putting lots of head-work into his pitching at the same time.

Nixon was no ordinary pitcher; he was the kind that shows up best in a tight pinch.

Smart was coaching.

"We don't want this score!" he declared, in his usual manner. "We wouldn't take it for a gift! All we want to do is get up a little excitement. Don't score, captain—please don't!"

"Don't weary about that," called a Uniontown man derisively. "He won't."

"Thank you—oh, thank you!" said Ted, with passionate intensity. "You fill me with exceeding great joy!"

Dick took a long lead off third. He was afraid Singleton would strike at the next ball pitched.

Nixon was in the first movements of his delivery when Merriwell ran down from third and halted, as if ready to try to get back on a throw to the base.

Hix turned the moment the ball came into his hands and lined it to Noel.
The moment the catcher started to throw to third Dick scooted at marvelous speed for the home plate. This act was a surprise to all, for they had expected he would try to get back to third.

The throw to third was not as accurate as it might have been, and Noel was compelled to shift his position to get the ball, which put him in bad form for a quick return to the plate. However, he did his best to send it back in time, and it seemed that Dick would be caught ten feet away from the pan.

Dick's daring attempt to steal home astounded and thrilled all who saw it. Not a soul stirred save those who took part in the play. The spectators sat like graven images, every one holding his breath.

The runner flung himself forward in a slide for the plate. He shot along the ground as if it had been greased for the occasion. It was one of the handsomest slides ever witnessed by any one in that great crowd. Indeed, after starting to slide Dick's speed did not seem to diminish in the least until he was within reach of the plate and had his hand on it.

One second after he touched the plate Hix put the ball onto him.

Noel's throw had not been perfect, while Dick's dash for the plate had been the quickest work imaginable in the way of base-stealing.

"Safe!" shouted the umpire.

Then the loyal Fardale boys arose to their feet, and
the red and black fluttered wildly. Horns were blown, bells rung, yells rent the air. The cadets thumped, and punched, and hugged one another. They howled until they were black in the face. In the first burst of joyous admiration and delight there was no attempt at regular cheering. When the leaders could be heard they directed the outburst, and the Fardale cheer boomed forth again and again.

It was with difficulty that the cadets were restrained from rushing onto the field and seizing Dick. They shrieked his name. In that moment they expressed their intense admiration of his nerve, judgment, and skill.

Nixon was angry, while Captain Noel was disgusted.

Out back of third base, Ted Smart pretended to shed torrents of tears and wring the water from an imaginary handkerchief.

One Fardale lad was present who bit his lip and looked the disgust he did not speak. Phil Warne realized that Dick’s power after this would be greater than ever.

“But one run will never win this game!” he muttered to himself.

When he could make himself heard, Ted turned toward the man who had declared Dick would not score.

“It’s a shame!” said the little fellow. “He had no right to do it, sir! I apologize for him!”
“That’s all right,” said the man, with a sickly grin. “Accidents will happen.”

“And that was such a frightful blunder, don’t you think!” said Ted. “I don’t believe he meant to do it. He just didn’t know any better! He doesn’t know much about this game of baseball anyway!”

“Of course I’m glad you made that steal, captain,” said Singleton; “but it wasn’t necessary, for I’m going to slam the ball hard.”

Then he struck out on the very next one pitched.

The cadets, however, had secured a run, and that was something.

There was some growling among the home players as they came in to the bench. Captain Noel blamed Hix for his poor throw to third, while Hix sullenly asserted that it would have been all right if Noel had returned the throw low enough so he could have tagged the sliding runner quickly after catching the ball.

Nixon was not in a pleasant frame of mind.

“I’m not pitching my arm off on these kids to let you fellows give them scores that way!” he said.

“That will do!” exclaimed the captain. “Stop this chewing the rag! They can’t beat us with one run. We’ll get after Merriwell yet and put him to the stable. Start in right now and bat out some runs. It’s easy enough.”

But was it?

Dick realized from the very start of the game that
he was not up against ordinary batters. The Union-town men were scientific hitters. They were the kind to knock an ordinary pitcher out of the box in a hurry.

But Dick Merriwell, in spite of his years, was no ordinary pitcher. To begin with, he had brains, and he knew how to use them, which is more than may be said of many pitchers who are called good. Besides, he had one or two peculiar “benders” which were enough to make a batter blink. His jump ball was a wonder, but his combination ball was the one that made them gasp.

Dick did not use the combination unless forced to do so. He knew its effectiveness depended on using it only on rare occasions at critical moments. When he did use it, it proved the kind that caused a batter to think he had trouble with his eyes.

Following Dick’s wonderful steal home, the home team made a hot try for a tally. The first man up managed to get hit by the ball, the next batter sacrificed him to second. Then a sharp hit to Gardner forced Earl to play for the batter in order to be sure of getting a man at all, and the runner on second reached third.

With two men out, the situation of the home team was the same as that of the visitors had been when Dick had stolen the run.

Could Uniontown tie the score by any means?
One of her best batters was up, and the crowd was rooting hard, hoping to disturb Dick, but never in all his life had Merriwell been steadier. He had perfect control of the ball. He could put it exactly where he chose, and his curves were sharp and deceptive.

The runner on third was anxious. Somebody advised him to duplicate Merriwell’s trick. Dick smiled.

“Go ahead,” he said. “It’s easy enough.”

“Of course it is!” said Ted Smart. “Didn’t you see how easy it was for him?”

Two balls and no strikes had been called. Then Dick used the jump, and the batter swung without touching the ball. The Fardale crowd shouted.

Next came a sharp in-shoot that fooled the batter, and another strike was called, which brought another roar from the watching cadets.

Then a queer thing happened. Dick seemed to let the ball slip from his fingers as he threw it, and it went behind the batter.

But this was a trick to lead the runner into getting too far away from third, for Buckhart was prepared for just that sort of a ball and was in the right place to take it.

The runner, however, was wary and was not to be trapped, getting back to third quickly when he saw Buckhart was ready to throw there.

With three balls and two strikes called, all felt that something was about to happen. They were right.
Dick's Great Steal.

Dick toed the slab and threw the combination ball. It seemed to start like a rise, but just as the batter swung to hit it the ball took a drop downward and only empty air was encountered by the bat.

How the cadets cheered as Dick came in from the box! Never had he pitched a prettier game. He was holding the wonderful semi-professionals down in a manner to delight the heart of every loyal Fardale lad.

Nixon showed his caliber in the next inning. He was aroused, and he struck out two of the three batters who faced him. The third put up an easy fly.

It was a battle royal between the pitchers, with the advantage slightly in Dick's favor at the middle of the game.

How would it be at the end? Was it possible that this mere boy was going to prove a match for a salaried veteran with a reputation, like Mike Nixon. A stranger seeing the two for the first time would have declared that Merriwell was not in Nixon's class.

Dick kept his players well in hand. He talked to them quietly, filling them with confidence, yet keeping them keyed to a pitch where they were certain to do their level best. He seemed, figuratively speaking, to have his fingers on the pulse of every one of his players from the start of the game to the finish.

Dick was anxious for more scores. He realized that one run was a narrow margin. A fluke might enable Uniontown to tie the score.
The sixth inning passed, and the game remained the same. The seventh followed without changing the standing.

"Still the Uniontown crowd was confident that their team would win out. But they were beginning to say to one another that Richard Merriwell was a wizard. They had been led to admire him by past performances, but this day's work had shown them that he was far better than they had fancied he could be.

"Pard," whispered Buckhart, as the Fardale boys gathered on the bench at the beginning of the eighth, "we've got 'em! That run of yours wins this game!"

"I hope you're right," said Dick; "but these fellows are the kind who are never whipped until the game is finished. They fight right up until the third man dies in the ninth inning."

"If we can shut 'em out!" breathed the Texan. "Oh, that's all I ask! I'll die happy!"

Flint opened the eighth with a two-bagger, but the next three men failed to reach first, and no more runs were forthcoming.

"Up, up for Uniontown!" roared a man on the bench as the home players came in to the bench.

Those loyal to the home team stood up. They appealed to Noel.

"Come there, Jack, what are you doing? Are you going to let these kids whitewash you?"

Noel shook his head.
“This is our inning,” he said. “Watch us.”

Callahan started it with a scorcher that got through Bradley.

Phillips followed with a fly that Sprague dropped, and Callahan moved up.

Winkle bunted, advancing both men and getting safe on first himself as Browning dropped Buckhart’s throw.

“It’s all off now!” cried Noel in delight.

Uniontown had filled the bags, and not a man was out. A clean hit at this point would be almost certain to win the game.

Dick had found Farlow’s weak point, but he feared that the fellow might try a bunt and succeed. This being the case, he gave Buckhart the sign that he would use the combination ball from the start.

Farlow tried to bunt the first one, but he held his bat too high, and a strike was called.

When he failed again in an effort to bunt the next one pitched, the Fardale crowd woke up once more.

The third ball was a splendid “cork-screw,” and Farlow slashed at it vainly, flinging down his bat in a rage when he missed.

Dick had struck the fellow out with three pitched balls.

“He won’t do that to me!” growled Hix, waddling out to the plate.
This made Buckhart anxious for Dick to repeat the trick with Hix.

Merriwell had learned that Hix liked speed, so he made all the movements for delivering a speedy one, but threw a ball that wobbled in the air like a wounded pigeon as it came up to the plate.

Hix struck too soon, which made him angry, and he got out of position.

Quick as a flash, while the fellow was unprepared, Dick sent a straight one over the very heart of the plate.

"Two strikes!" called the umpire.

"That fellow Merriwell hasn't a bit of shame about him!" muttered Ted Smart. "I honestly believe he would strike poor Mr. Hix out if he could!"

Now Hix had been watching Dick closely, and had discovered that he was liable to use the combination ball to strike a batter out in a pinch. He had likewise discovered that Dick often failed to "waste" any balls on a batter after getting two strikes called.

"He'll give me that hanged drop that looks like a rise," thought Hix. "He'll use it to strike me out."

So he set his teeth and was prepared. When Dick threw the ball it seemed that Hix was right, for it was a rise.

Hix struck low to catch the drop when it came.
But it never came!
The ball kept on rising, and the batter struck under it so far that it was laughable.

Now the watching cadets had a chance to cheer, and they made the most of it.

Nixon rose, but Noel said something. Then a fellow who had been sitting on the bench ripped off his sweater and trotted out to the plate in Nixon's place.

This fellow was Hime Maddox, known far and wide as a mighty batter, and kept on the Uniontown team for the purpose of going in at a critical juncture like this. He was not a good player, but he was a remarkable batter, and up to this time he had not failed during the season to hit the ball when put in to bat in some other fellow's place.

As he sent Maddox out Captain Noel had whispered:
"Twenty-five dollars for a small, clean single!"
"How much for a home run?" asked Maddox.
"Not a blooming cent!" said the captain promptly, knowing the danger of striking out when slashing hard to get a long drive. "I'll fine you if you make a home run. I want a single."
"You shall have it," declared Maddox.

Then he went out and met the surprise of his life, for Dick caused him to fan in a hurry.

When Maddox struck at the third one and missed the Fardale crowd seemed to turn into a band of maniacs seeking one another's lives. Their joy was boundless.
It was necessary to send another pitcher into the box in Nixon's place, and Fardale came near scoring in the ninth, being prevented by a brilliant double play.

But Uniontown showed good pluck by fighting hard in her half of the final inning, though her only success was in getting one man to first on an error.

Dick's pitching in the last inning was swifter and more bewildering than ever, and he soon brought the game to an end, striking out the last man to face him.

Phil Warne turned away, looking ill.

"Cheer, you fools, cheer!" he muttered.

Somebody grasped his arm, and he looked around at Day, who said:

"Oh, we won anyhow! What do you care! Cheer up. Let's get onto the band-wagon and whoop her up."

"Not I!" said Warne hoarsely.

"What are you going to do?" asked Day.

"I'm going to resign from the athletic committee as soon as I get back to Fardale," answered Warne bitterly.

And he did, without a dissenting voice.
CHAPTER XXIV.

THE BOY WHO CAUGHT THE THIEF.

"Hi! hi! Stop that man!"
"Thief—stop thief!"
"Don't let him get by!"
"Grab him! Grab him!"

Such cries as these came from the lips of a crowd of boys who were in hot pursuit of a rough-looking man, who was running swiftly along a road that led from the outskirts of a beautiful village into the country.

Foremost among the pursuers were a number of boys dressed in baseball suits. The others were in ordinary clothing. Their ages ranged from fourteen to seventeen.

The fleeing man had a good start and seemed to be holding his own. But now ahead of him appeared another boy, who was mounted on a motor-cycle and coming directly toward him.

The pursuers had seen the boy on the motor-cycle and to him they were shouting. Almost immediately the speed of the machine seemed to slacken, and it appeared that the cyclist had heard the frantic appeals to him and meant to act upon them.

A snarl of rage broke from the lips of the man. But
just then he saw, turning to the right from the main highway, an almost disused country road, and into this he turned at once, avoiding meeting the lad on the motor-cycle.

"Come on and chase me here!" he muttered. "I'll give you a sprint if you try to run your old machine over this road!"

The crowd of pursuers shouted again, and the running man laughed. He saw the road led directly into a strip of thick woods.

"You'll have a fine time catching me now!" he said.

But when he looked around again he saw the motorcyclist had turned into the grassy road in pursuit of him.

In the very center of the road was a track that had been made by the horses at one time driven over this course, and it was fairly smooth, although barely a foot wide. The cyclist had chosen this path, and, having entered it, he turned on full head of power. The machine gained speed with every turn of its wheels.

The pursuers yelled with satisfaction, and another backward look told the fugitive that he was being overtaken.

"The young fool!" he grated, as he let himself out to the utmost. "What's the matter with him? Why does he dip in?"

The pursuit was becoming more and more exciting with each passing moment. The cyclist gained steadily
and swiftly, seeing which, the man suddenly turned and jumped the fence, striking across a rough field toward the woods which seemed to promise him shelter and concealment.

"He can't run his old machine here!" panted the ruffian in triumph.

The boy on the motor-cycle did not try. He brought the machine to a stop, leaped off, went flying over the fence with a leap, and continued the chase on foot. He was fresh, and he could spurt to his utmost. This he did, and the crowd saw that he was coming up with the man swiftly.

Still it seemed that the fugitive must reach the shelter of the woods before he could be overtaken. The young cyclist saw this, and he set his teeth and strained every nerve.

"He'll get into the woods!"
"He'll get away!"
"No, he won't."
"That fellow can't hold him!"
"He'll catch him! He'll catch him!"

Excited shouts like these came from the crowd. But, in spite of every effort, the cyclist saw that, in case nothing unexpected happened, the fugitive would plunge into the woods ahead of him.

"But I'll be pretty close," thought the determined boy. "He may have hard work to dodge me after that."
However, something unexpected did happen. The man turned his head once more to look back, which was an unfortunate thing for him, as he tripped and plunged headlong and violently to the ground. The shock of the fall seemed to stun him somewhat, and he was rather slow in getting up.

The crowd shouted like a pack of baying hounds.

When the man arose the cyclist was close upon him. He snarled and panted as he saw this.

"Better keep off!" he grated, running on.

Although the woods were near now, he heard the sound of running feet right behind him.

Then it was that he brought out a revolver and wheeled suddenly to confront the daring lad who had baffled him in his effort to obtain shelter in the woods and escape in that manner.

"Drat ye!" he howled huskily. "Take that!"

With those words, the ruffian flung up the pistol and fired while the boy was not more than fifteen feet away.

Nothing but the remarkable agility and readiness of this pursuer saved his life. With the skill of a trained football-player dodging a tackler by swerving to one side while at full speed, the lad sprang to the left and the bullet whistled past his ear.

He was not daunted in the least. Before the surprised wretch could shoot again the boy jumped
straight at him, hitting him a smashing blow in the face with a clenched fist.

Again the man went down. The attack of this ready-witted, determined youngster astounded him.

When he fell the boy flung himself upon him, clutching his wrist to prevent him from making another attempt to use the pistol.

"Got you!" he exultantly exclaimed.

"Yah!" rasped the desperado. "I'll kill ye! I'll murder——"

"Oh, no, you won't!" was the cool declaration. "You tried to, but failed. Now you'll lodge in jail, where you belong."

The man thrashed about furiously, trying to cast his assailant off, but, to his astonishment, all his efforts were failures. The lad clung like grim death, and he could not get his hand free to use his revolver.

The rest of the pursuers were wildly excited as they rushed on to give their aid to the determined assailant of the desperado. They had seen the ruffian turn and try to shoot the pursuer at his heels, and it seemed a marvel that, at that distance, the boy had escaped death.

"He's a corker! He's a corker!" panted Fred Grover, a fine-looking lad in a baseball suit, who had led the crowd all through the chase.

They came tearing up to where the struggle was ta-
king place and lost no time in giving assistance in over-
coming the ruffian. The man fought to the last,
squirming, kicking, snarling and doing his best to in-
jure some of them. The revolver was twisted from
his hand, and one of the boys struck him on the head
with the butt of it, which aided greatly in subduing
him.

After a time they were able to pin him face down-
ward on the ground, twist his arms behind him, and tie
his hands. When this was done, they drew off a little,
completely surrounding him, and regarded him with
satisfaction and interest.

Fred Grover turned to the boy who had overtaken
the ruffian and prevented him from escaping into the
shelter of the woods. He saw a well-built, clean-ap-
ppearing chap, about whose face there was something
that suggested pride and haughtiness. At a glance, it
was apparent that this was no ordinary fellow, even
if he had not already demonstrated the fact by his pur-
suit and capture of the fleeing ruffian.

"Say!" exclaimed Grover, holding out his hand; "I
want to shake with you!"

The strange boy accepted Grover's hand as if he
was doing Fred a favor. His manner was very lofty
and superior, but Grover did not permit his ardor to
become dampened.

"You're a dandy!" he exclaimed. "I have much
to thank you for."
"What has he been doing?" asked the stranger, with a contemptuous nod toward the captive.

"Stealing."

"Ah? What did he steal?"

"My watch, ring, scarf-pin and money," answered Fred. "I was foolish enough to fail to lock the dressing-room door while we were at practise. The dressing-room is under our grand stand on the baseball ground. He went in there and cleaned out my clothes. One of the fellows caught him in the act. He knocked the fellow down and took to his heels. Guess he hadn't had time to clean out anybody but me, but I don't know. Let's see what he has, fellows."

The captive was searched, and the things Grover spoke of were found upon his person.

"It would have broken me all up if he had managed to get away with that," said Fred, as he held up his watch. "It was a present to me from my uncle, and I think a lot of it."

"Yes, it looks like a fair sort of ticker," said the strange boy, as he carelessly brought out his own magnificent watch and glanced at its face.

This gave Grover an unpleasant sensation, for it almost seemed as if the stranger invited a comparison between the two watches.

"It's not so much its value," Fred hastened to say, "as the fact that it was a present from my uncle."
The boy who had overtaken the ruffian shrugged his shoulders.

"In my case," he said, "that would be an excellent reason why I should take pleasure in losing it. But I have no uncle who would presume to give me a watch."

"Presume?" exclaimed Grover.

"Exactly. They would know I could buy one to suit me much better than anything they could pick out for me."

Again the stranger assumed that lofty air that was so "jarring."

"You're in luck!" exclaimed Grover, not without a touch of sarcasm. "Not every fellow feels that way."

"Oh, I suppose not," was the reply, with something like a half-suppressed yawn.

The boys began to look on the stranger with wonderment. Not all of them were favorably impressed by his manner.

"I'm glad to get these things back," said Fred. "And we'll just march this rascal into town and turn him over to the sheriff. He'll get his due for this trick."

"That's the way to use fellows like him," agreed the haughty stranger. "I have no patience with them. I have no use for any man who resorts to stealing, no matter what his condition."
The Boy Who Caught the Thief.

"Oh, sometimes a fellow is driven to it by poverty," said one of the boys.

"Rot!" promptly said the lad who had been instrumental in the capture of the desperado. "I don't believe that! I have no patience with poor people. They make me ill. Money is easy enough for any one to get—any one who amounts to anything."

The boys stared at him in increasing surprise.

"You can't make everybody believe that," laughed Grover.

"No matter; I don't care. I'm no reformer. I have my own ideas, and I simply smile on those who do not think as I do."

"But there is a bare possibility," put in one of the older boys, "that you might be mistaken about some things."

The important stranger gave him a look of dislike, but said nothing.

"Come, fellows!" called a little chap. "We've got to get back to the academy."

"First," said Grover, "I want to find out who it is who did me this great favor. My name is Fred Grover, and I am captain of the Eaton Academy baseball team."

"I am very glad to know you, Grover!" declared the stranger, with fresh enthusiasm and interest. "My name is Chester Arlington, and my father is D. Ros-
coe Arlington, the great railroad man, of whom I presume you have heard.”

“Why, yes,” confessed Fred; “I presume almost everybody has heard of your father.”

“I presume so,” nodded Chester Arlington, in a self-satisfied manner. “It is natural. He is one of the money kings of America, you know.”

“So I have understood. But seems to me I heard you were attending school at Fardale.”

“I was.”

“Was?”

“Yes.”

“But—”

“I am not now.”

“You are not?” exclaimed Grover in surprise.

“No.”

“How is that?”

“Didn’t like it.”

“Oh! And you—”

“Left. That’s all.”

“Well, I was rather surprised when I heard you were attending school there, for Fardale is—er—is not exactly select.”

“Hardly!” laughed Arlington. “It’s quite the opposite.”

“Although,” said Grover, “it is getting a great reputation as a school and is making a wonderful record in athletics. I believe Dick Merriwell is responsible
for Fardale’s success in athletics. At least,” he added, seeing a deep shadow settle on Chester’s face, “he receives the credit for it.”

“He receives credit for much more than he deserves!” warmly exclaimed Arlington. “I know, for I have been there and seen the inside workings. He has a pull, and he works it to the limit. He’s slick enough to turn everything to his advantage.”

The boys were listening eagerly now. Several of them guarded the captive, one of the guards having the pistol that had been captured from the ruffian.

“Oh, but you can’t say he has not done some wonderful things in both football and baseball! And he is a corking pitcher. That is a fact no one can dispute.”

“He’s pretty good, but he has been overrated. I am a pitcher myself, and I know what I’m talking about.”

“You a pitcher? Why, you never did any pitching for Fardale, did you?”

“No.”

“Why not?”

“Because Merriwell had pull enough to keep every other fellow from getting any kind of a show. If he fancied there was the slightest danger that a chap might become a rival, he took pains to kill that chap’s chances immediately. It’s a fact. He has worked all his chummy friends onto the nine and the eleven, excluding every one he did not fancy.”
"Well," said Grover, with a laugh, "if that is the case, all I can say is that he has a mighty clever bunch of friends."

Arlington's proud lips curled in a pronounced sneer. "They're a lot of softies!" he averred. "They made me ill! I couldn't stand it. Merriwell ruled things like a czar. It made me hot to the core. He took a dislike to me, and he was afraid of me. For that reason I never had a show at Fardale. When I saw how he had the whole school and the faculty buffaloed I just pulled up stakes and got out. I'm going to school somewhere else in the fall. Thought I'd investigate this school. I'd like to get back at Fardale on the field, and Eaton is reckoned as Fardale's strongest enemy."

"Oh, we've given them many a hustle, and we'll hustle them again next Saturday, when we play the last championship game of the season with them. Our record this season is just the same as Fardale's. If we beat Saturday, we become the champions. If Fardale wins, that settles it."

"I suppose you want to win?"

"You bet we do!"

"Well, you'll have to learn a few things before you do it. I'm coming around to-morrow to see you practise. I shall stop at the best hotel in town, and I'll be pleased to entertain you or any of your friends this evening. Bring one, two, three—or twenty. It makes
The Boy Who Caught the Thief.

no difference to me. I have my roll with me, and I'll blow the gang. Be sure to come. Ask for Chester Arlington. I think you can take care of the thief. I must look out for my machine. So-long, Captain Grover."

Chet gave Grover his hand, still with that air of doing a favor, and hurried away toward the point where he had abandoned his motor-cycle, leaving behind him a crowd of boys, who found him a subject for eager discussion, and various and conflicting were the opinions expressed concerning him.
CHAPTER XXV.

GROVER DECLINES A PROPOSITION.

Faithful to his promise, Arlington was on hand the following afternoon to witness the practise of the Eaton baseball team.

By his sensational advent in the town he had produced no end of talk and discussion, and he found himself stared at from all sides by the large gathering of Eaton lads who were watching the work of their baseball nine.

He held his head high, wore his usual superior air, and walked with a haughty step. In his vain heart he was greatly rejoiced to think he had been able to show his caliber, promptly on striking the place, to the very ones he most wished to impress.

Besides, having thought the matter over, he fancied that the service he had rendered Fred Grover, captain of the team, ought to place him in particularly good standing with that fellow.

Grover saw Chester right away and hastened to meet him, again shaking hands. Fred had a hearty, manly grip of the hand, and, without knowing it and without intending anything of the sort, Arlington was counteracting the first favorable impression he had made by his lofty bearing and superior atmosphere in
accepting Grover’s hand. To Fred it was like a dash of cold water, and he bit his lip with annoyance.

“You didn’t come around to the hotel last night, Grover,” said Chester. “I looked for you. I hoped you would come with a lot of your friends, so I could give you a jolly blow.”

“But, you know we’re in training,” said Fred. “I could not go there to a blow. I sent you a note, thanking you for what you did in capturing that ruffian.”

“Oh, I received that this morning, all right. It wasn’t worth mentioning, anything I did.”

“But you came near being killed. The fellow fired at you.”

“My dear boy, do you think anything like that could happen—do you think the only son of D. Roscoe Arlington could be shot by a common tramp? Oh, no! If I had been some poor fellow it might have happened.”

Grover could not understand Chester, for it did not seem possible to him that Arlington’s conceit and extreme self-valuation could lead him to believe that he was immune from such misfortunes as fall to the common lot.

“I am sure it was your agility and quickness in springing aside while running at full speed that saved you,” said Fred. “All the fellows who saw you do that have spoken of it, and we agree that you must
have acquired the trick of dodging thus while playing football. Had you been carrying the ball, you could have dodged a tackler in that manner."

"I'm just as good at football as I am at baseball," declared Chester. "If I come here to school, I promise you I'll show you a few things on the eleven."

His manner of absolute assurance in saying such things struck Fred as remarkable.

Other boys had gathered around, and Arlington posed handsomely before their eyes, all the while pretending to be quite unconscious of their presence. There was about him not the least grain of embarrassment, even of modesty. His supreme self-conceit led him to think that it was his due that these boys should look on him with reverence and awe.

"One of the fellows said last night that he felt sure you were still a cadet at Fardale," said Grover, watching Chester's face closely.

"Just tell that chap he has another think coming to him! I'm done with Fardale and the gang over there. I was a fool to stay there as long as I did. Why, the chap who said that must fancy I'm here as a spy! He doesn't know me if he thinks for a moment that I'm the kind who would do anything to help Dick Merriwell. I've even pitched against Merriwell this season."

"Pitched against him?" asked Fred, puzzled, while the listening lads crowded nearer.
Arlington nodded.

"And I would have trimmed him if the team behind me hadn’t gone completely to pieces in the ninth inning," he averred. "I pitched for Hilsboro at Islington. They pitched me as Miller, and I was disguised so not one of the Fardale crowd knew me."

"And you are the fellow who pitched that game?" exclaimed Captain Fred. "We heard about it. Did the Fardale fellows find out who you were?"

"Oh, yes!" smiled Chester, shrugging his shoulders. "They know now that I can twirl a little."

"Evidently!" laughed Grover. "But what do they think of you for pitching against your own team?"

"Paugh! What do I care! They wouldn’t give me a show at Fardale. Go ahead and let me watch your team work a little. Who’s your pitcher?"

"That tall chap over there. Peters is his name."

"Is he good?"

"Well, we think he is. We have an idea that he’ll open Fardale’s eyes a little Saturday."

"Bring him up and introduce him," said Chester, with an air of authority.

Grover didn’t fancy Arlington’s manner, but, feeling that he was indebted to the fellow, he brought Peters over.

Chester looked the pitcher over from head to feet.

"You ought to be good," he said. "Show us your speed."
Peters flushed, but Grover said:
“We’re going to have some batting practise now, and Pete will hand up a few.”

Arlington walked out and took a position behind the catcher, where he could watch the pitcher’s curves. Resolved to be agreeable, for all of Chester’s manner, the captain of the team joined him.

Peters had wonderful speed and sharp curves, which “broke” abruptly. His control seemed good.

“What do you think of him?” asked Fred.

“He has everything but the head,” said Chester. “He needs another head on his shoulders.”

“Oh, we think he’s pretty clever!”

Chester smiled knowingly.

“With a little assistance, he could fool every batter on the Fardale team. See here, Grover, I have a proposition to make to you. I’m going to be present at the game in Fardale, and I can help you trim Merriwell and his gang. If you want me to, I’ll do it. Merriwell gives the signs in a critical game. I can get a position where I’ll be able to tip off every batter to his signs. Besides that, I can coach Peters on the weak points of every man on the team, so he can make monkeys of them. With my assistance, Grover, you can give those chaps the greatest trouncing they ever had.”

The captain of the Eaton team drew off a bit and
stared at Chester, his face flushed and indignation in his eyes.

“I wonder what you take me for!” he said rather hotly.

Chester lifted his eyebrows.

“Why, I took you for a very sensible-appearing fellow,” he said.

“But I don’t win games that way!” said Grover.

“Don’t you? Then you’re behind the times. Yale, Harvard, all the big colleges, try to find out about the weak points of their opponents, and they’re ready to receive any reliable information that will be of service to them. Do you pretend that you are so much better than the captains and managers of those teams?”

“I don’t pretend anything,” said Fred; “but you have made a mistake if you think I care to defeat Far-dale through trickery. Eaton always has played on the level in the past, and I think she’ll keep on doing so. You did me a great favor yesterday, even if the fellow did escape from the lock-up last night.”

“What? He escaped?”

“Yes, broke out.”

“Too bad! A thief ought to be punished, and that fellow attempted murder.”

“Yes; he swore he’d settle with you while we were marching him into town to turn him over to the sheriff.”

“Bah!” exclaimed Chester contemptuously. “If he
ever gives me any trouble I'll land him behind the bars for good. But I was speaking about a different matter. Don't be foolish, Grover; you'll need my help if you beat Fardale, and no one shall ever know a thing about it."

"Peters would know."

"Can't you trust Peters?"

"The whole team would know if you arranged it so you could give the batters Merriwell's signals."

"Oh, we can fix that all right!"

"But we will not fix it!" declared Grover determinedly. "We can beat Fardale without resorting to such a method."

Chester snapped his fingers.

"I wouldn't give that for your chance," he declared. "You are altogether too conscientious, Grover. You'll outgrow it, or you'll get the worst end of everything in the world, mind that. My father is one of the richest men in the world. Do you think he would be where he is to-day if he were fussy and finicky? Still he's respected and feared by everybody. He's on top. He got there by setting out to win anyhow, and that's the only way in this old world. If you don't get the best of the other fellow, he'll get the best of you, and he won't bother too much about how he does it."

This argument had no effect on Grover, and, not a little to his chagrin, Arlington found he could make no arrangement. He had come to Eaton for that pur-
pose, and failure made him pretty sore. It was with difficulty that he refrained from talking out and telling Grover some unpleasant things.

“All right,” he said finally, “if you will be a chump I can’t help it. You needn’t say anything about it to the rest of the fellows.”

“You may be sure I won’t mention it,” said Fred.

Chester found an opportunity to talk with Peters before leaving the ground. When he felt sure he would not be overheard, he said:

“You’re all right, old man. You can make the Fardale batters look like thirty cents, and I can help you do it.”

“How?” asked Peters doubtingly.

“I know every man on the team. I know all their weak spots. I can tell you just how to fool them. If you spend the evening with me at my rooms in the hotel, I’ll fix you so you’ll have every chap who bats against you Saturday fanning at the air. You’re a new pitcher with Eaton this year, and your reputation will be everlastingly made if you defeat Fardale.”

Peters had thought the same thing. He was not too conscientious or particular. Still he hesitated.

“If Grover knew——” he began.

“He’ll never know unless you tell him.”

“No danger of that; but you seemed very friendly with him, I thought——”

“My dear boy,” smiled Chester, “it’s plain you do
not understand me. I want to see Fardale beaten the worst way on Saturday. Come around to the hotel to-night and we'll talk things over. You'll come, won't you?"

After a quick glance around, Peters nodded.

"I'll be there," he promised.

Arlington was standing on the steps of the Mayfair House, smoking a cigarette about eight o'clock that evening when Peters came walking up.

"Hello!" smiled Chester, taking the arm of the pitcher and turning him toward the door. "I was beginning to think you had backed out. Come right up."

The pitcher looked around to make sure no one was watching him, and they entered the hotel.

Chester had the handsomest suite of rooms in the hotel. There were portières between the little parlor and the bedroom. On the parlor-table was a flask, and several glasses. A gold-mounted cigarette case lay open on the table.

Seeing Peters looking toward the flask, Chester smiled and asked:

"Will you take something?"

"No!" exclaimed the pitcher. "But I was wondering——"

"That I should have a flask? Well, I've found one never can get decent whisky in these little country
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towns, and so I carry a flask of my own stuff. That explains it. Will you smoke a cigarette?"

"I've sworn off till the season is over."

"Good idea, if you smoked too much; but one won't hurt you to-night. Have one."

Peters listened to the tempter and took one. Chester lighted a fresh one and deposited himself on a comfortable chair.

The pitcher sat near the table, on which was a curious paper-weight, which he picked up and inspected.

"Now we're comfortable," said Chester.

"But I hadn't ought to smoke this thing," said Peters, who was not exactly easy.

"Nonsense! One cigarette never harmed any one."

"But I'm a fiend when I get started on them."

"Oh, well, forget it! Here, this is Fardale's batting-list. Look it over. Get familiar with those names. Gardner is the first fellow on the list. He's a soft young plebe from Maine, but he's lucky on reaching first. Don't give him one close, for he can get hit by the ball in a manner that will fool the umpire. A slow drop for him. Work the outside corner. He uses a short bat.

"Next comes Bradley, a pig-headed cockney. He was weak on high ones close to his whiskers, but he's got so he can biff that kind. Don't give him a high in-shoot. An out-drop will keep him reaching, but don't put 'em over. Remember that, don't put 'em
over. Then comes a big chap, Singleton, who plays first. He's an awful hitter when he hits, but he'll never hit the ball in a thousand years if you skin his knuckles every time you hand one up. The in-shoot for him, but don't burn 'em along. Then comes Flint, and you'll find him the hardest man on the team to fool. He seems to hit anything that comes over, and lots that are wide. Better walk him every time it's dangerous. Don't make any mistake about that.

"Jolliby is a long, gangling chap who stutters. He can't find a low one that is close to his knees. Then comes a swaggering Western lout by the name of Buckhart, Merriwell's roommate and particular chum. In my estimation he ought to be the third batter on the list, and Singleton ought to be in his place. For your life don't give him a drop. He'll lift it a mile. Use a rise on him. It's the only ball that bothers him. When you put one straight over, work the rise every time.

"Tubbs is a fat slob who doesn't look as if he could hit, he has a way of sticking in what seems to be an accidental hit at the most unexpected times. Just when you think you have him, he'll lace it. If he fans three times and comes up the fourth time with any one on bases and a score needed, be suspicious, for then is just when he'll do something. He's another fellow to keep 'em low and close on.

"Smart is a sawed-off bit of a runt who does lots of
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talking about nothing. He plays short. Keep him reaching, for his arms are short.

"And last on the list is Merriwell. Now Merriwell does not make as many hits as that scar-faced fellow, Flint, but he's a timely hitter. If he comes up at a critical juncture he has a way of hitting hard. It's his luck. He has more luck than anybody I ever saw. I don't know what to tell you about him, but you want to walk him, just the same as Flint, if it's critical and there's anybody on the bags. Don't forget it.

"Now I've gone through the whole list. Just take this pencil and mark the peculiarities of each man as I go over them again. Get it by heart, as if it were a lesson you had to commit. Think it over every chance you get. If you stick by what I've told you, you ought to show those fellows up Saturday."

Peters took the pencil and marked down the directions given by Arlington. Following this Chester explained to the pitcher a code of signals by which he could post himself on the sort of balls Merriwell would deliver, and it was planned that Peters should tip off each batter at the plate by another code, without letting any one learn how it was that he knew what "was doing."

When this was over, Peters sat at the table, discussing Fardale's general style of playing. Arlington told him the base-running and batting signals used by the team. He explained how it was that a batter
walked out to the plate holding his bat in a certain manner to indicate to the men on bases that he meant to hit out, bunt, sacrifice, or place the ball in some particular portion of the field.

"Great Scott!" cried Peters. "Those chaps must have the signal system down like a lot of professionals!"

"They have," nodded Chester. "That's how it happens that they win so often. They don't go into a game and play it haphazard, any old way. Merriwell has everything down to a system. Still they manage to get some brains into the game. It's not all machine work."

"Well, I'm glad I came to see you and we talked this thing over," declared the pitcher. "With all this information, we ought to be able to trim them."

"If you can do that," said Chester, "you'll please me beyond measure."

Peters picked up the paper-weight again in a careless way. As he talked he turned it in his hands.

Suddenly he gave a little start. Arlington's back was toward the drawn portières that hid the bedroom. Peters saw those portières move a bit. Between them he saw a pair of eyes peering forth from the room beyond.

Quick as a flash, the pitcher of the Eaton team sent the paper-weight whistling past Chester's head and between the slightly parted portières.
It struck something, and there was a cry of surprise and pain.

Chester jumped up.

"Somebody in that room!" cried Peters. "A spy! Somebody has been listening!"

Arlington uttered a snarl of anger.

"Lock the door!" he said. "We won't let him out! We'll fix the sneak!"

Peters obeyed, while Chester seized a chair and advanced toward the bedroom. Within the room there was a scrambling, scraping sound.

Flinging back the portières, Arlington was just in time to see a man getting out of an open window. He saw him plainly, for the light fell full on his face, and he recognized the desperado he had helped capture. The ruffian gave him one look of hatred and then dropped from view. Running to the window, Chester saw the man had dropped to a low balcony, from which he had slid to the ground. There he paused to look up at the window.

"Next time!" he cried harshly. "Next time I'll fix you!"

"Goodness!" muttered Arlington, startled in spite of his nerve. "The wretch was hiding in there to murder me!"
CHAPTER XXVI.

THE GREAT DAY.

It was a great day for the finish of a glorious baseball season. The sun shone from a blue, cloudless sky, and all the world seemed smiling and fair.

Fardale field was decorated with flags and bunting. The high seats on one side bore the colors of the academy. On the opposite side was the section reserved for Eaton, and there the Eaton colors were to be seen. The grand stand was gay with decorations. The diamond was as smooth and hard as was necessary, with just enough spring to make the cleverest work possible. The long white chalk lines were laid out with perfect precision. The grass of the outfield had been trimmed close. Ropes were stretched to hold back the crowd and keep spectators from encroaching on the field.

Eaton came with a mighty following, bearing banners and megaphones. The players were the heroes. Peters stepped with a long, swinging stride, his cheeks flushed and his eyes clear. There was a smile in his face and confidence in his heart. Fred Grover laughed.

"Every fellow fit as a fighting cock," he declared. "Not a sprain, not a bruise, not a lame arm in the bunch. Look 'em over. There are the winners."

They formed at the station and marched directly to
the field, with a mighty throng following at their heels. The tramp of hundreds of feet sent up clouds of dust from the brown road.

The Fardale bays were waiting. As Eaton came down the hill the cadet band swung in ahead of them, playing "There'll Be a Hot Time in the Old Town To-night."

It was a beautiful sight to see them coming down the hill, waving their flags, the band stirring every fellow's blood with its lively music.

When they came pouring onto the field they found the Fardale seats packed. The great mass of cadets arose and stood watching their friendly foes. Eaton took possession of the section that had been kept clear for her.

The cadets waited until the Eaton fellows were in the section. Then, in one mighty volume, Fardale sent a greeting, welcoming cheer across the diamond.


There was a signal from a leader among the visitors, and up rose the Eaton chaps. Then the leader beat time for the cheer that followed, which ended with "Fardale" three times thundered.

It was a fine display of good feeling, of honest sentiment. At last Eaton recognized in the cadets foemen worthy of their steel. They were on the same level.

The grand stand was packed to overflowing. Colors
fluttered there. The stand was almost completely filled with ladies and young girls.

Back of the ropes the standing spectators swayed and murmured.

Then came the Fardale team trotting onto the field, with Captain Dick at the head. A roar seemed to leap from the throat of every spectator.

A cadet trotted out with a goat, adorned with the red and black and led it around over the field.

There was more enthusiasm.

Fardale’s bat-bags were opened and the bats were placed in regular order on the ground near the bench of the home team. Obediah Tubbs, the fat boy of the team, took pains to see that the handles of the bats were exactly even, so that the different lengths were discernible at a glance. While he was stooping over, engaged in this manner, the goat broke away. Obediah seemed to present an attractive mark for his goatship, and, with a loud “ba-a-a-a!” the animal charged.

There was a terrible shock when the goat’s head struck Obediah. The fat boy was sent forward upon his stomach, and he squealed:

“Well, dern my picter!"

The goat was seized and held by several fellows, while the spectators roared with laughter.

Then came the Eaton team, with a tiny colored boy, black as charcoal and shining like a polished bottle, at
The Great Day.

the head. This little fellow wore a suit made from goods to represent Eaton's colors.

The goat saw the little darky, and made fierce efforts to break away and butt him, dragging those who were trying to prevent such a thing from happening.

The colored boy lowered his head and shook it at the goat.

"Let the butters butt!" yelled somebody. "I'll bet on the coon!"

"Who's dat says coon?" cried the little chap, glaring around.

Fardale permitted Eaton to take the field for practise, and the work of the visitors was sufficient to bring forth many bursts of applause.

The band continued to play all through the time of practise.

Of course Doris Templeton, Felicia Dolores, Dick's cousin, and Zona Desmond were together in the grand stand. They were attired in cool, light dresses, and made a most charming trio.

"Isn't it fine!" laughed Doris.

"Splendid!" agreed Zona.

Felicia sat with clasped hands and parted lips, a flush in her usually pale cheeks, while her eyes followed Dick Merriwell's handsome figure.

"You're in a trance, Felicia!" exclaimed Doris. "Don't you think it's splendid!"
"Oh, yes, yes!" breathed Dick's cousin. "I can't tell you how I feel! I'm just quivering all over!"

"Doesn't Dick look fine?" whispered Doris.

"He's grand—grand!" declared Felicia. "I'm so proud of him! I'm so glad he's my cousin!"

"Yes, it's fine to have such a cousin," nodded Doris. "And still—and still I'm glad he's not my cousin!"

"You are?" asked Felicia, in surprise. "Why?"

"I—I can't tell just why, but I am."

"Do you think Fardale can win this game?" asked Zona.

"Why, of course!" said Doris positively. "It's a sure thing."

"I hope so!"

"Hope so! Why, just think what Fardale has done this spring!"

"That's it; Fardale has been almost too successful."

"How can you say anything like that!"

"And Eaton has won and lost the same number of games."

"Well?"

"The team that wins to-day gets the championship."

"That's right, and it will be Fardale."

"I hope so," said Zona again. "It would be awful to have them lose now!"

"They shall not lose!" declared Doris.

Just then Felicia, who had looked away from Dick.
for a moment, gave a little gasp and clutched the arm of Doris.

"Did you see him?" she exclaimed.

"See whom?"

"Why, I—I thought I saw Chester Arlington."

"Where?"

"Right over there in the crowd back of first base at the end of the seats."

"Chester Arlington?" cried Zona, with great interest. "Why, it can't be Chester is here!"

"I shouldn't think he'd dare show his face on this ground," said Doris. "He ought to be too ashamed."

"Still I am almost positive I saw him," declared Felicia.
CHAPTER XXVII.

FARDALE—TWO TO ONE.

It will be seen by the following line-up that was given to the scorers that Arlington had made no mistake in giving the Fardale batting order to Peters:

FARDALE.
Gardner, lf.
Bradley, 3d b.
Singleton, 1st b.
Flint, rf.
Jolliby, cf.
Buckhart, c.
Tubbs, 2d b.
Smart, ss.
Merriwell, p.

EATON.
Willow, rf.
Fickling, cf.
Hoey, 3d b.
Waller, lf.
Grover, 2d b.
Clack, 1st b.
Dobson, c.
Brisk, ss.
Peters, p.

Fardale took the field first, and Willow, tall and slim and swaying, walked out to the plate. Just as this occurred a Fardale cadet, who had been standing in front of the crowd against the ropes back of first base, pushed back and let another chap have his place.

The one who pushed back was Hector Marsh, and the fellow who now stood forward in his place was Chester Arlington. Marsh had been holding that position for Arlington.

Dick Merriwell toed the slab and assumed a position that indicated the kind of a ball he would deliver. Arlington lifted his right hand to the lapel of his coat.
On the bench Peters, who had been watching Arlington, gave a sign to the batter.

Dick delivered the ball.

Crack! Willow met it fairly.

Being fully prepared for what was to come, Willow smashed out a screaming liner between Gardner and Jolliby. Willow was a great runner, and for all of the fact that Earl Gardner secured the ball as quickly as any human being could accomplish the feat and lined it straight into the hands of Obediah Tubbs, the batter managed to reach second on a slide.

This was a sensational opening. The first man up had made a two-bagger off the first ball Dick had pitched. No wonder a wild shriek of joy went up from the Eaton section. No wonder the leaders led the cheering, which was sent across the field in a mighty volume by the megaphones.

Dick smiled the least bit.

Fickling took his place at the bat. He was a clever bunter.

Dick, however, used a high in-shoot, and Fickling’s first attempt to bunt resulted in a little foul.

“One strike!” called the umpire.

Dick tried the jump ball, and Arlington’s signal system was worked as swiftly as possible, but the ball was too high for a bunt, so Fickling let it pass, crouching a little to make it appear to pass above his shoulders.
“One ball!”

Buckhart shook his head over the decision, but Dick made no sign of disapproval.

The next pitched ball was an out-curve beyond the plate; but Fickling managed to reach over and bunt it toward third. Being a left-hand hitter, he was in position to drop his bat and get off before the ball touched the ground.

Left-hand hitters can bunt with greater success than right-handers, as they are nearer first, and they bunt in a position that lets them get into their stride quicker.

Willow was prepared, and he was off for third at the moment when ball and bat met.

Buckhart and Dick had been playing for bunts, but this one belonged to Dick, who took it on the jump and threw to first, getting Fickling by a foot.

But Willow had been advanced to third, and only one man was out. This was good work, and Eaton rooted for a score.

Hoey trotted out. Arlington's signal system worked, and Hoey drove out a single on the second pitch.

This brought Willow trotting in with the first score, and the Eaton megaphones bellowed their joy.

Dick seemed to stop a moment to think. The visitors laughed when he scratched his head in what seemed to be a puzzled manner.

Somehow Dick was satisfied that something was
wrong, but he had not yet discovered what it was. He looked around, but could see nothing suspicious. Grover was on the bench, keeping very quiet. Brisk was coaching. There was nothing remarkable in the fact that Peters seemed nervous and shifted his position frequently.

Indeed, Dick seemed so dazed that Hoey fancied he might get a long start toward second without attracting his attention, and he edged off from first.

In a twinkling Dick snapped a foot out toward first and whizzed the ball over to Singleton.

Brisk yelled a warning to Hoey, but the fellow was tagged before he could get back, and the umpire declared him out.

This little piece of work delighted the cadets and brought a great cheer from them. The strain was relieved in a measure. With two out and no one on the bags, it seemed that further scoring might be stopped.

But Waller was a hitter, and, having received a signal from Peters at the last moment, he lined out a whistler that seemed good for the entire course.

Jolliby got the ball and sent it in with a beautiful throw, so that Brisk found it necessary to hold Waller on third.

The Eaton crowd arose in a mass and cheered Waller. Never had they seen any hitting like that off Merrriwell. They knew nothing of the signal system in
use, and it simply seemed that the batters had turned loose on Fardale's great pitcher with the prospect of pounding him out of the box.

Dick made a sudden decision. He resolved to use his left hand for a time, in which case he fancied it was best to permit Buckhart to give the signs. Having cleverly informed Brad of his purpose without leaving the box, he took the catcher's signal and began pitching with his left.

Grover didn't like a left-handed pitcher. Besides, he was the only one on the team who knew nothing of Arlington's signal system. The scheme had been kept from him, and so he would have been compelled to use his own judgment in hitting, even though Dick had not changed.

Having done little left-handed pitching of late, Dick's control was far from good. The first two delivered were balls. Then he got a curve over and fooled Grover. Another ball followed, and Dick seemed "in a hole." But he simply whistled in a swift high one, and it was "strike two."

Apparently Dick put plenty of force into the next ball, but it proved to be one of his deceptive slow ones, hanging in the air, and Grover struck too soon. This change of pace did the work, and Grover was out.

It was a great relief to the Fardale crowd.

"Boys," said Dick, as they gathered at the bench. "I want every one of you to keep his eyes open. I
feel that there is something under the surface in this game—something wrong."

"And you bet your boots that’s right!" nodded Buckhart. "They can’t hit you that way right off the reel unless there is something wrong. You’ve got everything up your sleeve to-day, pard. Never saw better speed or handsomer curves. You hear me!"

“Oh, we’ll make it all right!” said Smart. “We like to see the other fellows doing something.”

Peters threw two or three to Clack before delivering the first one to Gardner. Earl stood as close to the plate as was admissible, gripping his short bat and watching Peters—like a hawk.

"Now you have him, Pete!” cried Grover.

"Get the first man,” urged Hoey.

“He’s easy,” declared Clack.

“He’ll never touch you,” assured Brisk.

"Show ’em your speed, Pete,” cried Willow.

Peters remembered Arlington’s instructions. He kept the ball far away from Earl, using an out that seemed bound for the plate but curved beyond it.

Gardner went after the first one and missed. The next was a ball. The next one Earl fouled with the tip of his bat.

As the four-strike rule was in force, this counted as the second strike.

"Got him! Got him!” cried several of the Eaton players.
Then Peters made a mistake. He started a ball straight at the batter. It was an out-curve and would have passed over the plate, except that Gardner landed on it for a two-bagger.

“Well, there are others!” cried Smart, as he trotted out to the coaching line. “My gracious! but that was a weak one! I'm ashamed of you, Gardner, you jay from the pine woods!”

Peters shook his head. He felt that it was his own fault, and he could not help glancing toward Arlington, who also shook his head, doing so involuntarily.

Now Dick Merriwell's keen eyes were wide open, and he did not fail to notice this. For the first time he saw Arlington. He noted the glance that passed between the pitcher and Chester, and like a flash the truth dawned on him. His face hardened.

“So that's how it came about!” he thought. “Well, Arlington has the biggest crust of any fellow I ever saw. Confound him! I have to admire his persistency and nerve!”

Bradley took his position to hit.

“Please strike out, Billy!” implored Smart.

Peters used the out-drop, and Billy fanned at the first two.

Then the pitcher sent a swift one straight at the English youth, who was compelled to drop his bat and jump like a flash.
"'Old hon!' he cried. "What hare you trying to do?"

Then came another out-drop, and Billy fanned, much to his disgust.

Arlington nodded his satisfaction, and Peters looked pleased.

Singleton stepped out, swinging his heavy bat. Peters had his lesson by heart, and he kept the ball close to big Bob's hands.

The big fellow fouled twice. Then he let two pass, ending by putting up a weak little fly, that Peters caught.

The cadets roared when they saw Flint leave the bench. Peters remembered Arlington's warning concerning the boy with the scar, and he deliberately gave Dave four balls.

Dick Merriwell saw that this was done intentionally, and it confirmed his belief that Arlington had been coaching the Eaton pitcher.

"We're up against the hardest proposition of the season to-day," he decided, but kept this thought to himself. However, he turned to Buckhart, saying:

"Bart, I want you to give the signals after this."

"Do you reckon you're being piped off again, pard?" asked the Texan.

"That's it."

"Well, maybe that's the matter. I'll do the signaling."

"Old hon!" he cried. "What hare you trying to do?"

Then came another out-drop, and Billy fanned, much to his disgust.

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Dick Merriwell saw that this was done intentionally, and it confirmed his belief that Arlington had been coaching the Eaton pitcher.

"We're up against the hardest proposition of the season to-day," he decided, but kept this thought to himself. However, he turned to Buckhart, saying:

"Bart, I want you to give the signals after this."

"Do you reckon you're being piped off again, pard?" asked the Texan.

"That's it."

"Well, maybe that's the matter. I'll do the signaling."
Peters used a low ball, keeping it in close on Chip Jolliby, much to the disgust of the tall lad, who was aware of his own weakness. Chip struck out, and the first inning ended with the score 1 to 0 in favor of the visitors.

Felicia had been watching, and she saw Arlington again soon after Chester took his place signal to Peters.

“There he is!” she breathed to Doris. “Look—back of first base! There is Chester Arlington!”

In a moment Doris saw him.

“I didn’t think any one could be so shameless!” she exclaimed, her face flushed with indignation. “Why, they ought to mob him!”

“Who are you talking about?” asked Zona.

“Chester Arlington.”

“Where is he?”

Doris pointed him out.

“Well,” said Zona, “that shows he’s not afraid of anything. You seem to forget, Doris, that he saved us from the bull! I don’t see how you can say bad things against him!”

“I have not forgotten that,” asserted Doris; “nor have I forgotten the many mean things he did while in this school. He had to leave after that trick when he pitched against his own team. Every fellow in the school was down on him.”
"Oh, not every one! There's one of the fellows with him now."

"Hector Marsh?"

"Yes."

"And he's almost as unpopular as Chester Arlington was."

"Oh, you can't keep a fellow like Chester down!" said Zona. "He's too rich."

"Rich! Do you think money is everything, Zona?"

"Well, it's a whole lot in this world," was the answer.

Arlington was pretty well satisfied over the result of the first inning.

"Peters has them on the string!" he said in a low tone, speaking to Marsh, who was keeping close behind him. "He'll show them up to-day!"

"Can he keep it up?" asked Marsh.

"Can he? Wait and see. He's my pupil. If Eaton wins to-day, and she will, I'll be the cause of Merriwell's defeat."

"That will kill him," said Marsh. "He is awfully anxious to wind up the season in a blaze of glory before he goes West."

"Eh?" exclaimed Chester. "Goes West?"

"Yes."

"Is he going West?"

"Yes?"

"When?"
"Right away after school closes."
"Sure of it?"
"Dead sure."
"How do you know?"
"I happened to pick up a letter he dropped."
"A letter from whom?"
"His brother."
"Say, this is interesting! What did the letter say?"
"I have it in my pocket."
"Then let me see it."
Marsh hesitated.
"If any one should happen to recognize the letter——"
"Oh, rot! Nobody will. Let me have it, I tell you!"

So Hector took the letter from his pocket and turned it over to Chester, who lost no time in reading it. His eyes gleamed as he glared over the contents.

"By Jove!" he muttered. "That settles it! Now I know what to do! Why, Frank Merriwell has directed him to bring those papers concerning the Queen Mystery and San Pablo mines the mining association has been trying to get, and if it succeeds the Merriwells will be paupers."

"Yes."

"Well, if I could get my hands on—— Marsh, I'm going West, too. Those papers belong to the Consolidated Mining Association of America. It was not
meant that any one should know about this business.
Dick Merriwell is to take them from the bank and
carry them to his brother."

"That's what the letter says."

"You can bet your life I'll watch him every foot of
the journey! I'll look out for my opportunity. When
I find it, I'll get my hands on those papers. Marsh,
do you want to make this trip with me?"

"Do I? Well, you bet I'd like to, but I can't."

"Why not?"

"Why, I haven't the money, and my parents
wouldn't let me go if I had it."

"Oh, bother! I have plenty of money. I'll pay
all expenses."

The eyes of Hector Marsh took on an eager look.

"I'd like to do it!" he declared. "But——"

"Come on," urged the tempter. "Your folks will
be expecting you home, but you can wire them after
we get well on the way, explaining how it happened.
Just say you are going with a friend to see the coun-
try. What do you say?"

"Done!" exclaimed Marsh. "I'm with you!"

"That's the talk!" nodded Chester. "Now we'll
watch this game and witness the downfall of the
mighty Richard Merriwell."

But it was not long before he discovered that Dick
had ceased to give the signals.

Peters looked in vain for Arlington to continue
their arrangement. With Buckhart signaling under his mitt, and Dick making no signs, the whole scheme suddenly fell through, with the result that Eaton did not secure a safe hit in the second inning.

However, Peters continued to work the batters as directed by Chester, and it proved very effective, for only one Fardale man reached first in the last half of the second. Merriwell hit the ball hard on a line, and Brisk made a phenomenal one-hand catch after jumping into the air.

Not until the fifth inning was Fardale given another chance to score. In that inning Tubbs led off with a hit, but Smart fell an easy victim.

Peters failed to heed Arlington’s advice concerning Merriwell, and Dick smashed a long drive into left garden.

Tubbs should have scored, but he slipped and nearly fell after crossing third. Recovering, he strained every nerve to reach the plate, but was thrown out by Brisk, who relayed the ball from the field. Dick, however, landed on third.

The spectators were shaken with excitement.

Gardner crowded close to the plate and succeeded in getting hit by the ball, not a little to the disgust of Peters.

Then a trick was worked that should not have fooled the visitors. Earl seemed to start slowly from first, and then make a desperate effort to steal second. This
was done on a pitched ball, and Dobson lined it down to Grover. Gardner stopped about two-thirds of the way to second, so that he could not be tagged out.

Dick had scooted for home plate, and Grover was compelled to return Dobson's throw. But Merriwell beat the ball to the plate by a few inches and was declared safe.

Up arose every cadet, and cheer followed cheer. The grand stand joined with a shrill note, while the red and black fluttered everywhere save on Eaton's side.

"That was a dumb piece of business!" growled Arlington, thoroughly disgusted.

Peters threw down his cap and kicked it. Then he turned on Dobson, who was flushed and flustered.

Grover saw the situation was critical, as an occurrence like that might send the whole team "into the air."

"Never mind, fellows!" he cried. "They'll never get another. That doesn't win this game!"

"We're glad of that!" squealed Ted Smart. "We want the game to be interesting."

Peters cooled down somewhat, but Dobson could not recover his composure at once, which caused him to have a passed ball, and Gardner romped to third.

Right on top of this Bradley hit a weak one to Brisk. The ball rolled slowly, and Brisk was compelled to jump for it in order to be quick enough in the play.
He got the ball, but it slipped from his fingers in throwing to first, causing Clack to jump far to one side to stop it. Gardner scored and Bradley landed on first safely amid the greatest commotion.

The cadets cheered until they were black in the face and their voices were husky.

With his face very pale, Peters struck Singleton out.

Thus the fifth inning ended with the score 2 to 1 in Fardale's favor and the band playing "Fardale's Way."
CHAPTER XXVIII.

EATON TIES THE SCORE.

Arlington's state of mind may be imagined.
“Well, it's the same old story!” he growled in disgust, turning away. “Merriwell's luck stands by him. But wait—wait until he starts for the West. Then he——”

He stopped short, for close to him in the crowd he saw a man at sight of whom he recoiled a bit. It was the ruffian he had captured in Eaton. The fellow was within arm's length of Chester, whose first thought was to raise an alarm and bring about the desperado's arrest.

To Arlington's surprise, the man looked straight at him and made a peculiar sign. The boy was more startled by this sign than by the appearance of the man so near him.

“What?” he muttered. “Why, he—he is——”

The fellow pushed forward and whispered something in Chester's ear.

“Blazes!” gasped Arlington.

The man turned and forced his way through the crowd toward the gate.

“Excuse me,” said Chester to Marsh. “I'll be back pretty soon.”
“Are you going?” asked Hector, surprised.
“For a few minutes, that’s all.”
“But I shouldn’t think you’d want to lose any of this game.”
“Oh, what’s the use to watch it! I know how it will come out. Eaton is beaten.”
“Then you’ve given it up?”
“Might just as well,” said Chester disgustedly.
He crowded through the throng after the man who had whispered in his ear. This man glanced back once or twice, saw Arlington was following, and then passed out through the gate. Chester found him waiting outside.
“Look here, young fellow,” said the man, “it seems that you and I are in the same line of business.”
“Our general appearance wouldn’t seem to indicate anything of the sort,” returned Chester, contemptuously surveying the man from head to feet. “But you gave me a sign and——”
“That was enough, eh? I happened to be near enough to rubber over your shoulder and read a part of that letter.”
“What letter?”
“The one t’other chap gave ye to read. I caught some of your talk, too. Say, I’m looking for those papers. That’s what has brought me here. Now, if there’s any way that we can stand together and do business, I’m willing to make a deal. It’s plain you’re
in the game, or you’d never tumbled to my sign. I tried it to see if you were one of us.”

“Now, don’t talk too fast,” advised Chester: “and don’t make any mistake. I’m not one of you, whatever that means. I’ve had some dealings with some of your gang. They were sent here to crack the bank and get hold of those papers. I was given the sign so that I might be able to recognize them when they appeared and gave it to me. You’re plainly in the employ of the same parties that those men were employed by. In that case, we have a mutual interest.”

“I reckoned it that way, and that’s why I changed my mind about soaking you and decided to talk with you. You played a fine trick on me in Eaton, and I was hot over it; but I didn’t get hurt much, and I’m willing to forget it.”

“Very kind! You came near shooting me, but, if you can be of any use to me, I’ll forget that.”

“Thanks! We’re getting on. I was paid plenty of money to come here and watch this youngster Merriwell, but I got into a little game and lost my roll. That’s why I tried to pinch the watch and money in Eaton.”

“Your explanation goes.”

“If I can get hold of those papers, it means a clean five thousand to me. If you help me get them in my hands, I’ll divvy with you.”

“You are too kind! But you’re still working on
the wrong trail. I'm not going to be employed by you. On the contrary, I'll employ you. If you can help me get hold of those papers, I'll pay you ten thousand dollars."

Plainly the ruffian thought the boy joking.

"Don't try any funny business with me!" he growled.

"There's no funny business about this. Do you know who wants those papers, man? Well, it is my father. You heard me tell those Eaton chaps that my father is D. Roscoe Arlington, the great railroad magnate?"

"Yes."

"Well, he is also the president of the Consolidated Mining Association of America, the trust that is fighting Frank Merriwell for the Queen Mystery and San Pablo mines. It is an agent of this association that has engaged you to watch Dick Merriwell and get possession of the papers. You are not doing business first hand, but with an agent. I am far nearer the head of the concern than the agent. If I get hold of the papers I can make my mother pay any price for them. She is even more anxious to get them than is my father. So you begin to see that it will be greatly to your advantage to do business with me—or you ought to see it."

The ruffian could not hide his surprise.

"If what you say is true——" he began.
Eaton Ties the Score.

Chester snapped his fingers.

"Believe it or not, as you like," he said. "Help me get the papers and I'll pay you well. I need a man like you—one who will stop at nothing in this business."

"If I had proof——"

"Proof? Here's fifty dollars. Take it. Is that proof enough? Ask any one you like if D. Roscoe Arlington is not the president of the C. M. A. of A."

Chester handed out a fifty-dollar bill with the air of a gentleman giving a penny to a newsboy.

The man clutched it eagerly, seemed to doubt if it was genuine, and then seemed suddenly satisfied.

"By heavens! boy, I'm yours to command!" he exclaimed. "Tell me what you want me to do."

"Watch Dick Merriwell. Do your best to get your hands on the papers. Be ready to board a train for the West at any moment. You can keep your eyes on him better than I, for he knows me, and he does not know you. I'll see you again after this game. Call at the Fardale House and we'll come to a complete understanding in this matter."

"I'll do it," agreed the man, "or my name's not Sam Wardick!"

At this moment there came a wild roar from the baseball grounds, followed by the Eaton cheer in mighty volume. Immediately Arlington's excitement was intense.
“Something doing!” he cried. “Call for me about nine o’clock this evening.”

Then he turned and ran back through the gate.

When Chester reached the side of Marsh, after fiercely crowding through the mass of people, much to their discomfort and anger, he eagerly asked:

“What is it? What has happened?”

“Eaton has tied the game!” exultantly answered Hector. “The score is two and two.”

“How was it done? How was it done? Did they fall on Merriwell and pound him?”

“No. It wasn’t Merriwell’s fault. It was all through errors.”

“And that’s an Eaton man on third?”

“Yes.”

“How many out?”

“Only one.”

“Then they’ll score again!” panted Chester, in great joy. “They are going to win, after all! That’s the stuff!”

Indeed, the Eaton crowd was wild with joy. With the score tied, a fine hitter up, only one out and a runner on third, their prospects seemed very bright.

Dick Merriwell was perfectly cool. He spoke quietly to his men to steady them, and then pitched.

The batter was foxy, crouching to let Dick’s jump ball pass above his shoulders.
Eaton Ties the Score.

Then came the combination ball, but the umpire misjudged it and called it a ball.

Dick was compelled to put one over. By good luck, more than anything else, the batter hit it fairly, sending out a screamer on a line.

The runner on third made a jump for home.

Smart shot up and caught the liner as it seemed to go sizzling over his head. The runner saw this amazing catch and tried to get back to third. Quick as a flash the little short-stop snapped the ball to third for a double play. Then Fardale had her chance to cheer, and she improved it.
CHAPTER XXIX.

THE SENSATIONAL NINTH.

The game was now one of feverish intensity. With the score tied, each team worked hard to get in the winning run, for it was generally believed that another run would settle everything. Peters was cool as a cucumber, and he held the cadets down handsomely.

It seemed that never before had a crowd of spectators been worked up to such a keen pitch of excitement on Fardale field. The professors were out to witness the game. Barnaby Gooch, once sour and crabbed in regard to athletic sports, but now a “crank” of the worst sort, forgot himself several times and yelled until he was black in the face.

“What’s the matter with you, you old stiff!” he shouted in the ear of Professor Gunn, at the same time giving the head professor a severe poke in the ribs. “Didn’t you see that catch? Wasn’t it a jim peach? Are you in a trance? Wake up!”

“Barnaby,” said Professor Gunn, who was pale as a ghost and doing his best to keep from trembling with excitement, “I’m ashamed of you! You’re acting like a lunatic!”

“Why, you old ice-cake!” exclaimed Gooch. “I thought you liked the game. You’re the one who
The Sensational Ninth.

got me into watching these games. And now you sit through one like a wooden man. Oh, ginger! Wasn't that a screaming hit!"

The real truth was that Gunn was fully as much excited as Gooch, but he took pleasure in concealing it, thinking thereby to make Barnaby appear ridiculous.

Doris Templeton grew pale and flushed by turns. "Oh, girls!" she breathed; "I don't believe I can stand it to watch this game through! My heart is beating right up in my throat!"

"Isn't it fun!" laughed Zona Desmond.

"It's very painful fun," declared Doris. "What if Fardale should lose now!"

"Oh, well, it would be a good game anyhow," said Zona.

"It would be awful—positively awful!" Doris exclaimed.

"Fardale won't lose!" whispered Felicia. "Dick won't let them lose!"

"Dick can't play the whole game," said Zona, with perfect truth. "He's doing his part."

"He's doing more than his part!" asserted Felicia. "What can we tell Frank when we see him if Fardale is beaten to-day!"

"Tell Frank?" said Zona. "Why, are you going West with Dick? I hear he starts next Monday."

"Yes, I am going with him."
"You're lucky," said Doris enviously. "Now if Dick was my cousin—— But he isn't!"

The ninth inning of the game proved to be the most sensational of all. Hoey opened with a scratch hit, and Waller sacrificed him to second. With Captain Grover at the bat, the Eaton crowd cheered wildly, following it with a blood-stirring song.

Grover struck hard in an effort to place a hit in right field, but the ball glanced from the under side of the bat. It struck the ground three feet ahead of the plate and rolled backward toward the rubber.

Buckhart leaped for it, but caught his spikes on the edge of the rubber plate and lost his footing. Before he could recover Grover was too near first to risk a throw, while Hoey made third safely.

"Here's where we do it!" roared an Eaton chap, springing up and waving his arms wildly. "We've got 'em! We've got 'em!"

Clack walked out to the plate, and Dick worked the jump ball and the combination, quickly getting two strikes on Clack.

Then Buckhart called for an out-drop. Dick hesitated, tempted to shake his head; but Brad had excellent judgment in most cases, so he decided to give him what he wanted in this instance.

Clack reached for the ball and got it on the end of the bat. It was a weak one, rolling along the line toward first base.
Singleton went for the ball, which rolled out of line. Big Bob saw it had rolled onto foul ground, so he did not strain himself in making haste about picking it up, thinking Hoey, who had raced home, would have to go back to third.

Then the ball seemed to take a sudden freak, for it sheared from its course and rolled back onto fair ground.

When it was too late, Singleton saw what a blunder he had made by his slowness. The ball had stopped on fair ground, and it was a hit. Clack had reached first on it, but, worse than everything else, Hoey had scored.

No wonder the Eaton crowd seemed to go suddenly mad! No wonder Dick gave big Bob a reproachful look! No wonder Brad Buckhart flung his cap onto the ground and jumped on it!

Singleton looked sick as he picked up the ball.

"I'll hire two good strong men to kick me after the game!" he muttered.

It was some time before things quieted down. Then, with a grim look on his face, Dick literally scorched the air with his speed. His curves were wonderful, and they caused Dobson and Brisk to "hammer the air" in a most bewildered manner. Both of these batters struck out, but the damage was done, and Eaton had a lead of one run.

"I started it!" growled Brad Buckhart, as he was
picking out his bat. "I did, I know! Between Singleton and myself we've thrown the game away."

"Enough of that!" said Dick, with unusual sternness. "A game is never lost until it's over. Get in here now and win out!"

Brad walked out to the plate, picked out a good one, and lifted it far into center field. The fielder had to sprint, but he caught the ball while on the dead run—and held it.

The face of the Texan wore a deep expression of settled gloom as he walked back to the bench.

"Dern my picter!" said Obediah Tubbs. "I gotter do it! I jest gotter do it!"

But Obed was not equal to the occasion. He put up a high foul back of third and was out.

"All over!" shouted the Eaton boys. "All over!"

Ted Smart laughed joyously as he picked out a bat. "How I do enjoy this!" he chirped. "The pleasure is all mine, thank you! I'm due for a home run, but I won't take it. I'll strike out! I'm tired, anyhow. What's the use of dragging the game out! Let's get it over!"

"Ted!" said Dick sharply.

"Eh?" said Smart, looking at him.

Their eyes met, and Dick firmly said:

"You will get a safe single."

It seemed to be a command, yet it was spoken as if Dick was entirely confident that Smart would obey.
The little short-stop walked out to the plate and missed the first one, which fooled him. The next was a ball. Then one came over.

Ted hit it just hard enough to drop it beyond the infielders and inside the outfielders.

“What a horrible accident!” he squealed, as he dashed down to first.

As Dick Merriwell picked up his bat and walked out to the plate the great mass of cadets arose to their feet and cheered wildly, ending with his name. Dick did not seem to hear them. His face was grim and his jaws set.

Peters was afraid of Dick and started to give him four balls, preferring to face Gardner.

But it happened that the third ball was within reach. Dick hit it and it went out on a line.

“A two-bagger!” was the cry.

Smart ran as if his life depended on it. As he came up the line from second to third he saw Buckhart wildly waving his arms. Ted thought Brad was giving him the signal to go home, and he kept right on over third. Too late he discovered that the Texan had been signaling for him to stop.

The ball was lined to the plate, and Smart was caught between the bases.

The time of excitement that followed as they tried to run Smart down was simply hair-raising. The little fellow was wonderfully nimble on his feet, and
he dodged back and forth for some minutes, with the crowd howling madly. At last he managed to duck past one of the men in line and flung himself forward in a slide for the home plate. The ball was thrown there, but Smart was safe.

Then the man at the plate hastened to throw to third to catch Dick, who had darted for that bag as he saw Smart plunge for the plate.

The throw was made in such haste that it went high and wide. The baseman jumped and reached for it, but failed to touch it.

Right on toward the plate went the captain of the Fardale team, while the spectators shrieked like a lot of wild Indians.

The ball was recovered as quickly as possible and thrown home, but Dick also slid in and was safe.

That was the winning run, the score being 4 to 3 in Fardale’s favor.

The Eaton crowd seemed dazed, as if unable to believe that what they had seen was true. Only a few moments before they had confidently believed the game won by their team; but now it was ended, and Fardale was victorious.

Certainly it was a glorious end of the season for Fardale. No season there had ever wound up in such a sensational manner. The cadets poured down from the seats, dashed at Dick and lifted him to their shoul-
ders, bearing him around the field, shouting, and singing, and cheering.

The blow of defeat fell with fearful heaviness on Chester Arlington, whose rejoicing was suddenly turned to dismay and rage.

“Well, it’s over!” said Hector Marsh, in his ear. “It’s the same old story, you see.”

The millionaire’s son stood still, apparently not hearing what his companion had said. He was watching the crowd of joyous lads who were bearing Dick Merriwell about the field and thinking that he, not Merriwell, should be receiving all that homage.

“See the fools go wild over him!” he suddenly snarled, in a burst of rage. “It makes me sick!”

Then he turned and hurried from the field, followed by Marsh.
CHAPTER XXX.

A DESPERATE TRICK.

Obediah Tubbs was literally quivering as the train pulled into Pecos, Texas. Brad Buckhart was also excited. He gave Dick a slap on the shoulder, crying:

"Here we are, pard! We'll be at the Bar Z Ranch in four hours, and the governor will give us a royal reception, you bet your boots!"

Felicia, who was sitting beside Dick, smiled and said:

"I shall be glad of that, for I must confess that I'm tired. It has been a long journey, and the only thing that prevented it from being tiresome was the pleasant company."

At this moment a man arose from one of the comfortable chairs at the front end of the car, seemed to shake himself together, and carelessly looked around. His eyes noted that the three boys and the girl at the rear of the car were making preparations to get off. Dick observed this, although he seemed to be looking in another direction.

"I was right, Brad," he said, in a low tone, as the man turned away. "He's following us. He'll leave the train here."

Obediah was gathering up the luggage.
“Dern my picter!” he exclaimed. “There’s old Jim on the platform.”

The train came to a stop, and the quartet left the car, Dick carrying an alligator-skin bag.

On the platform was a tall, thin, bronzed cowboy, who uttered a shout of satisfaction when he caught sight of Brad and his companions.

“Hello, Jim,” cried Brad, springing down from the steps and giving the cowboy his hand. “Did you come alone to meet us?”

“None whatever,” was the answer. “I has a pair o’ gents with me out behind the station, together with a wagon an’ hosses. Say, boy, your pa will sure be a whole lot glad to clap his optics on ye. An’ yere’s Mr. Merriwell, too! An’ this is Obediah! Wa-al! wa-al! Thar’ll be doin’s at the Bar Z when vou all gits thar. Miss, your servant!”

With his wide-brimmed hat in hand, Bar Z Jim bowed profoundly before Felicia, who smiled and offered her hand, the cowboy touching her gloved fingers as though afraid he might crush them.

“We’ve just had a feed in the dining-car,” explained Brad; “so we’re plenty ready to get out of Pecos and hike for the ranch.”

At this moment, Dick thrust his alligator-skin bag into Obediah’s hand, saying in a low tone:

“Hold onto that for your life! I’m going to see where that man goes.”
The same rough man who had attracted his attention several times during the journey had left the car and was walking down the long platform. Dick sauntered in the same direction. The man left the platform and walked around behind the freight-house, never looking back.

Buckhart and Felicia went forward, accompanied by Bar Z Jim, to look after the trunks.

Obediah stood where Dick had left him, clinging to the bag, for he knew it contained the precious papers relating to the Queen Mystery and San Pablo mines. Suddenly the fat boy gave a great start, for before him had appeared a boy in a brown traveling-suit, who said:

"Why, hello, Tubbs! This is a surprise."

Obed backed off a step, his eyes popping.

"Dern my picter!" he squeaked. "Chet Arlington, ur I'm a lobster!"

"You're that anyhow, Tubbs," insolently returned the boy who had stepped down from one of the ordinary passenger-coaches of the train. "It's not your fault; you can't help it."

"You git out!" cried the fat boy. "You keep erway frum me! I don't want nothin' to do with ye!"

"You're not at all sociable and friendly for an old schoolmate," said Chester. "What's that in your bag?"
"None of your dern business!" squawked Tubbs, swinging the bag around behind him.

In doing this he made it very convenient for a squat, thick-shouldered ruffian who had come out of the waiting-room of the station and was right at the fat boy's back. Chester made a sign, and this fellow snatched the bag from Obed's hands, at the same time striking the fat boy behind the ear with a malletlike fist.

Down went the stricken boy, like an ox before the butcher. Arlington leaped forward and caught the bag from the ruffian's hand.

"Through here!" said the man, jerking his thumb toward the waiting-room door.

Like a flash, Chester darted into the station, ran through to the opposite side and passed out by another door. From the rear of the freight-house came the man Dick had followed, mounted on a horse, and leading another animal that was saddled and ready for use.

Chester ran toward this man, the alligator-skin bag in his hand.

Dick Merriwell saw him, having started back toward the station when he saw the man he had followed receive two horses from a chap who was waiting with them in the rear of the freight-house.

Instantly Dick recognized his bag.

A wild yell of alarm rang out, coming from the
lips of Obediah Tubbs, who had just recovered from the shock of the blow that had stunned him and rendered him dumb for some moments. The fat boy staggered through the waiting-room and reeled out by the back door, flinging up his arms in despair when he saw Arlington rush up to the led horse and spring for the saddle.

The horse was alarmed by Chester’s dash at it, and shied to one side, preventing Arlington from reaching the saddle at once.

Dick Merriwell, his face white and savage, came leaping straight at Chester. Arlington saw Merriwell coming. He snatched the line from the hands of Sam Wardick, the ruffian with the horses, and again tried to reach the saddle.

Once more the horse sprang aside, snorting with alarm, and Chester was nearly upset.

“Got you!” came fiercely from Dick’s lips, as he hurled himself at his bitterest enemy.

Chester saw Dick would seize him before he could mount and get away. Was his daring effort to capture the papers to be foiled just when it seemed wholly successful?

“Catch it!” shouted Chester, giving the bag a toss toward Wardick, twenty feet away.

The ruffian did as commanded, just as Arlington received a fearful blow from Dick and went down beneath the feet of the prancing horse.
Merriwell had grasped the bit of the animal with one hand as he struck Chester with the other. He saw his enemy beneath the hoofs of the animal. Arlington screamed with pain or terror.

"Brought it on yourself, you dog!" grated Dick, without an atom of pity in his heart at that moment. Wardick, having caught the bag containing the papers, gave his animal a slash and went tearing madly along the street.

The other horse tried to break from Dick, but the boy held him with an iron hand, and managed to reach the saddle with a magnificent leap.

Then he turned the head of the horse and hit him a blow that cracked like a pistol-shot.

He was off in pursuit of Wardick, and through his clenched teeth he muttered:

"I'll recover those papers—or die!"
CHAPTER XXXI.

DICK KEEPS HIS WORD.

Not until Obediah Tubbs recovered sufficiently to utter those shrill yells was Brad Buckhart aware that anything unusual had happened. In a twinkling the Texan knew something was wrong, and he wheeled and ran back along the platform, seeing Tubbs stagger into the waiting-room.

Brad followed him through and out of the opposite door. He was just in time to see Dick strike Chet Arlington down, swing into the saddle, and go dashing away in pursuit of the ruffian with the precious bag.

Obediah was staggering round and round in a circle, flinging up his arms and uttering shrill laments.

"Dern my picter!" he wailed. "I am a lobster! I'm a chump! I oughter be shot!"

Bar Z Jim had followed Brad and was on hand to ask questions.

"Galoot got away with valuables!" panted Buckhart. "Dick's after him!. We got to get into the game, Jim!"

"Come on!" shouted the foreman of the Bar Z.

Brad raced after the long-legged cowboy, who was a poor runner, and they came quickly to the end of
the building, where several men were stationed with a covered wagon and some horses. These were Jim's men from the ranch.

"My hoss, Poke!" roared Jim. "An' your best crit-ter fer Brad! Lively, now!"

"What's doin', Jim?" questioned Poke eagerly. "Anything we kin git inter?"

"Foller us hot-foot!" ordered the foreman, mounting his horse. "Mebbe some gun play."

"That's sartin whar I'm handy!" said Poke, as he lost no time in getting ready to take part in the pursuit.

Jim and Brad were not much ahead of three cowboys who came thundering after them along the street of Pecos.

Far ahead were two clouds of dust and two horsemen, making for the open country.

Dick was anxious, for he feared his horse might not prove as fast as that of the ruffian, but as they cleared the town he was satisfied that he was holding his own, if not gaining.

"It may come to a matter of endurance," he muttered. "If it does, I fancy I have the best horse."

The Texas sun shone down pitilessly from the western sky, and it was not long before the horses began to show the severe strain put upon them. Dust arose and covered them and their riders.
But Dick was gaining. Looking back, Sam Wardick made this disagreeable discovery.

"Double dern him!" snarled the desperado. "He'll get it good and plenty when he comes near enough."

Then he drew a revolver and ascertained that it was in working order. Another backward look showed Wardick other horsemen far behind Dick, who likewise seemed to be pursuers.

"But this horse is fresh," he thought, "and I could get away from them. That boy has a fresh horse, too, so he's the only one."

Dick was gaining steadily now. He was getting quite near, but not a word came from his lips, which were tightly pressed together.

"Got to knock him out of the saddle!" snarled Wardick, as he turned and lifted the revolver.

There was a puff of white smoke, a report, and Dick heard the bullet go ringing past.

The boy's expression became sterner.

"Missed!" exclaimed Wardick. "I'll get him next time."

He took greater pains.

Crack!

But once more Dick was not touched. The bullet, nevertheless, came uncomfortably near.

"I hate to do it!" muttered the boy; "but I can't afford to let him use me for a target without lifting a finger. I don't want to shoot him, either."
He pulled his own revolver.

For the third time Wardick fired and missed. Then Dick took a hand in the shooting.

Away behind them the eager cowboys growled their disgust over being at such a distance that they could not get into the "gun play."

Dick's second bullet was billeted. It struck one of the horse's legs, and down went the poor animal, hurling Wardick over its head.

The desperado struck the ground and flopped over, lying still, apparently finished.

Far, far away the cowboys saw this and uttered shrill yells of satisfaction and applause.

Dick pulled up his mount as quickly as possible, although he shot past the fallen man and horse. He turned back and stopped his heavily breathing animal close to the motionless body of Wardick, leaping from the saddle to the ground.

With one hand Wardick still clutched the strap of the alligator-skin bag.

Holding his horse with his right hand, Dick stooped and grasped the strap, seeking to twist it from the fingers of the man. To his amazement, Wardick suddenly arose to his knees, and threw up his revolver for a shot.

He had been jarred by the fall, but had pretended unconsciousness.

"Your turn!" he panted.
But just an instant before the weapon spoke it was struck by the toe of Dick's boot and sent whirling into the air.

"You're slow about some things," declared the boy, again producing his own revolver; "but you want to be lively about holding up your hands, or I'll furnish a subject for a funeral in Pecos."

There was something in the lad's manner that told Wardick the game was played out, and he immediately lifted his hands.

"I cave!" he cried. "You take the pot, younker! You're the nerviest player I ever stacked the cards against, and you win."

When Brad came tearing up at the head of the cowboys he found Dick holding the ruffian "covered." Bar Z Jim started the yell that shrilled from the lips of the delighted cattlemen, and it was Jim who cried:

"An' this yere is the Dick Merriwell Brad has writ so much about to his pa? Well, say! permit me to asseverate that he's the goods a whole plenty! Hey, boys!"

"You bet!" shouted the admiring cowboys.

Dick recovered his precious bag, and Sam Wardick found himself a prisoner in the hands of the cowboys, who handled him with anything but gentleness.

"Gents," said the foreman. "I allows it won't be none of consequence outer our way back to town if we rides over yander to the railroad. Thar are some
Dick Keeps His Word.

right fine telegraft poles along the line o' the rail-
road.”

Wardick understood, and his face paled. Immedi-
ately he turned to Dick.

“Don't let them lynch me!” he begged. “You won't
let them do that, will you?”

“Why, blame your cowardly haslet!” roared Jim.
“Has you the nerve to ask anything o' him after what
ye've done? You stole his property, and then ye done
your level best to shoot him full o' holes, so I don't
opine he's goin' to have any mercy on you.”

“He's my prisoner, isn't he?” asked Dick quietly.

“Sure he is, boy.”

“Then we'll take him into town and turn him over
to the authorities there.”

Jim gave Dick a look of amazement.

“Younker, you sartin can't mean it?” he said doubt-

ingly.

“On the contrary, I mean just that.”

“An' arter him a-tryin' to shoot you up?”

“Yes.”

“It's onnatural!” averred Jim. “But I s'pose we'll
hev to do as you says.”

So Wardick was taken back into Pecos, where he
was handed over to the sheriff and locked up.

It was found that Chester Arlington had been taken
to a hotel, apparently suffering from severe injuries
received beneath the feet of the horse after he was knocked down by Dick.

Shame-faced and guilty-looking, Obediah Tubbs met Dick.

"Dern my picter!" he said. "I jest oughter be kicked till I couldn't set down fer a week! I s'pose arter this you won't never want nothin' more to do with me, an' I don't blame ye."

"Tell me how it happened, Obed," invited Dick.

Tubbs did so. When he had finished, Dick said, in a kindly way:

"You were not so much to blame, Obediah. You didn't see the man who was behind you."

"Never saw nothin' ov him!" eagerly declared the fat boy. "Fust thing I felt him, an' it seemed like an injine had butted me in the neck."

"Perhaps I was to blame for letting the bag get out of my hands," said Dick. "It's plain Arlington planned this piece of business, and it worked out well. He must have wired ahead, giving accurate instructions to accomplices here. But I have got the papers back, and once more Arlington has been beaten at his own game."

THE END.
YEARS IN ADVANCE OF ALL OTHERS!

THE

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