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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Author</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>150—Frank Merriwell's School Days....</td>
<td>By Burt L. Standish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>167—Frank Merriwell's Chums ..........</td>
<td>By Burt L. Standish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>228—Frank Merriwell's Foes ...........</td>
<td>By Burt L. Standish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>274—Frank Merriwell's Trip West......</td>
<td>By Burt L. Standish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>293—Frank Merriwell's Down South.....</td>
<td>By Burt L. Standish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>312—Frank Merriwell's Bravery .......</td>
<td>By Burt L. Standish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>337—Frank Merriwell's Hunting Tour...</td>
<td>By Burt L. Standish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>201—Frank Merriwell in Europe.........</td>
<td>By Burt L. Standish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>205—Frank Merriwell at Yale...........</td>
<td>By Burt L. Standish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>309—Frank Merriwell's Sports Afield...</td>
<td>By Burt L. Standish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>213—Frank Merriwell's Races ..........</td>
<td>By Burt L. Standish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>217—Frank Merriwell's Bicycle Tour...</td>
<td>By Burt L. Standish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>225—Frank Merriwell's Courage .......</td>
<td>By Burt L. Standish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>229—Frank Merriwell's Daring .........</td>
<td>By Burt L. Standish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>233—Frank Merriwell's Athletes .......</td>
<td>By Burt L. Standish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>237—Frank Merriwell's Skill ..........</td>
<td>By Burt L. Standish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>240—Frank Merriwell's Champions .......</td>
<td>By Burt L. Standish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>244—Frank Merriwell's Return to Yale.</td>
<td>By Burt L. Standish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>247—Frank Merriwell's Secret .........</td>
<td>By Burt L. Standish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>251—Frank Merriwell's Danger .........</td>
<td>By Burt L. Standish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>254—Frank Merriwell's Loyalty .......</td>
<td>By Burt L. Standish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>258—Frank Merriwell in Camp ..........</td>
<td>By Burt L. Standish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>262—Frank Merriwell's Vacation .......</td>
<td>By Burt L. Standish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>267—Frank Merriwell's Cruise .........</td>
<td>By Burt L. Standish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>271—Frank Merriwell's Chase ..........</td>
<td>By Burt L. Standish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>276—Frank Merriwell in Maine ..........</td>
<td>By Burt L. Standish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>280—Frank Merriwell's Struggle .......</td>
<td>By Burt L. Standish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>284—Frank Merriwell's First Job ......</td>
<td>By Burt L. Standish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>288—Frank Merriwell's Opportunity ...</td>
<td>By Burt L. Standish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>292—Frank Merriwell's Hard Luck .....</td>
<td>By Burt L. Standish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>296—Frank Merriwell's Protégé .......</td>
<td>By Burt L. Standish</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
THE S. & S. NOVELS

300—Frank Merriwell On the Road........By Burt L. Standish
304—Frank Merriwell's Own Company.....By Burt L. Standish
308—Frank Merriwell's Fame .............By Burt L. Standish
312—Frank Merriwell's College Chums...By Burt L. Standish
316—Frank Merriwell's Problem..........By Burt L. Standish
320—Frank Merriwell's Fortune ..........By Burt L. Standish
324—Frank Merriwell's New Comedian ...By Burt L. Standish
328—Frank Merriwell's Prosperity .......By Burt L. Standish
332—Frank Merriwell's Stage Hit ........By Burt L. Standish
336—Frank Merriwell's Great Scheme....By Burt L. Standish
340—Frank Merriwell in England .........By Burt L. Standish
344—Frank Merriwell On the Boulevards..By Burt L. Standish
348—Frank Merriwell's Duel .............By Burt L. Standish
352—Frank Merriwell's Double Shot.....By Burt L. Standish
356—Frank Merriwell's Baseball Victories. By Burt L. Standish
359—Frank Merriwell's Confidence ......By Burt L. Standish
362—Frank Merriwell's Auto .............By Burt L. Standish
365—Frank Merriwell's Fun ..............By Burt L. Standish
368—Frank Merriwell's Generosity ......By Burt L. Standish
371—Frank Merriwell's Tricks ..........By Burt L. Standish
374—Frank Merriwell's Temptations .....By Burt L. Standish
376—The Rockspur Eleven ...............By Burt L. Standish
377—Frank Merriwell on Top .............By Burt L. Standish
379—The Young Railroader's Wreck ......By Stanley Norris
380—Frank Merriwell's Luck .............By Burt L. Standish
381—Chums of the Prairie ...............By St. George Rathborne
382—The Yankee Middy ...................By Oliver Optic
383—Frank Merriwell's Mascot ..........By Burt L. Standish
384—Saved by the Enemy .................By Ensign Clark Fitch, U. S. N.
385—The Young Railroader's Victory ....By Stanley Norris
386—Frank Merriwell's Reward ..........By Burt L. Standish
387—Brave Old Salt ......................By Oliver Optic
388—Jack Harkaway's Struggles ..........By Bracebridge Hemyng
389—Frank Merriwell's Phantom .. .......By Burt L. Standish
390—Frank's Campaign ...................By Horatio Alger, Jr.
391—The Rockspur Rivals .................By Burt L. Standish
392—Frank Merriwell's Faith ............By Burt L. Standish
393—The Starry Flag ........……………...By Oliver Optic
394—The Young Railroader's Long Run ..By Stanley Norris
395—Frank Merriwell's Victories .......By Burt L. Standish
396—Jack Brown, the Hero ...............By Herbert Strang
397—Breaking Away ......................By Oliver Optic
398—Frank Merriwell's Iron Nerve .....By Burt L. Standish
399—Jack Lightfoot, the Athlete .......By Maxwell Stevens
400—Tom Temple's Career ...............By Horatio Alger, Jr.
401—Frank Merriwell in Kentucky .....By Burt L. Standish
402—The Young Railroader's Comrade ..By Stanley Norris
403—Jack Harkaway Among the Brigands ..By Bracebridge Hemyng
404—Frank Merriwell's Power ...........By Burt L. Standish
405—Seek and Find .......................By Oliver Optic
406—Dan, the Newsboy ...................By Horatio Alger, Jr.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Author</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>407</td>
<td>Frank Merriwell's Shrewdness</td>
<td>By Burt L. Standish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>408</td>
<td>Young Tom Burnaby</td>
<td>By Herbert Strang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>409</td>
<td>The Young Railroader's Promotion</td>
<td>By Stanley Norris</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>410</td>
<td>Frank Merriwell's Setback</td>
<td>By Burt L. Standish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>411</td>
<td>Jack Lightfoot's Crack Nine</td>
<td>By Maxwell Stevens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>412</td>
<td>Freaks of Fortune</td>
<td>By Oliver Optic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>413</td>
<td>Frank Merriwell's Search</td>
<td>By Burt L. Standish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>414</td>
<td>The Train-boy</td>
<td>By Horatio Alger, Jr.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>415</td>
<td>Jack Harkaway's Return</td>
<td>By Bracebridge Hemyng</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>416</td>
<td>Frank Merriwell's Club</td>
<td>By Burt L. Standish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>417</td>
<td>The Young Railroader's Chance</td>
<td>By Stanley Norris</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>418</td>
<td>Make or Break</td>
<td>By Oliver Optic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>419</td>
<td>Frank Merriwell's Trust</td>
<td>By Burt L. Standish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>420</td>
<td>Jack Lightfoot Trapped</td>
<td>By Maxwell Stevens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>421</td>
<td>The Errand-boy</td>
<td>By Horatio Alger, Jr.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>422</td>
<td>Frank Merriwell's False Friend</td>
<td>By Burt L. Standish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>423</td>
<td>The Young Railroader's Luck</td>
<td>By Stanley Norris</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>424</td>
<td>Down the River</td>
<td>By Oliver Optic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>425</td>
<td>Frank Merriwell's Strong Arm</td>
<td>By Burt L. Standish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>426</td>
<td>Jack Lightfoot's Rival</td>
<td>By Maxwell Stevens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>427</td>
<td>The Rockspur Nine</td>
<td>By Burt L. Standish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>428</td>
<td>Frank Merriwell as Coach</td>
<td>By Burt L. Standish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>429</td>
<td>Paul Prescott's Charge</td>
<td>By Horatio Alger, Jr.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>430</td>
<td>Through by Daylight</td>
<td>By Oliver Optic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>431</td>
<td>Frank Merriwell's Brother</td>
<td>By Burt L. Standish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>432</td>
<td>The Young Railroader's Challenge</td>
<td>By Stanley Norris</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>433</td>
<td>The Young Inventor</td>
<td>By G. Manville Fenn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>434</td>
<td>Frank Merriwell's Marvel</td>
<td>By Burt L. Standish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>435</td>
<td>Lightning Express</td>
<td>By Oliver Optic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>436</td>
<td>The Telegraph Boy</td>
<td>By Horatio Alger, Jr.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>437</td>
<td>Frank Merriwell's Support</td>
<td>By Burt L. Standish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>438</td>
<td>Jack Lightfoot in Camp</td>
<td>By Maxwell Stevens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>439</td>
<td>The Young Railroader's Hard Task</td>
<td>By Stanley Norris</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>440</td>
<td>Dick Merriwell at Fardale</td>
<td>By Burt L. Standish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>441</td>
<td>On Time</td>
<td>By Oliver Optic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>442</td>
<td>The Young Miner</td>
<td>By Horatio Alger, Jr.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>443</td>
<td>Dick Merriwell's Glory</td>
<td>By Burt L. Standish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>444</td>
<td>Jack Lightfoot's Canoe Trip</td>
<td>By Maxwell Stevens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>445</td>
<td>The Young Railroader's Sealed Orders</td>
<td>By Stanley Norris</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>446</td>
<td>Dick Merriwell's Promise</td>
<td>By Burt L. Standish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>447</td>
<td>Switch Off</td>
<td>By Oliver Optic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>448</td>
<td>Tom Thatcher's Fortune</td>
<td>By Horatio Alger, Jr.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>449</td>
<td>Dick Merriwell's Rescue</td>
<td>By Burt L. Standish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>450</td>
<td>Jack Lightfoot's Iron Arm</td>
<td>By Maxwell Stevens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>451</td>
<td>The Young Railroader's Ally</td>
<td>By Stanley Norris</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>452</td>
<td>Dick Merriwell's Narrow Escape</td>
<td>By Burt L. Standish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>453</td>
<td>Brake Up</td>
<td>By Oliver Optic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>454</td>
<td>Tom Turner's Legacy</td>
<td>By Horatio Alger, Jr.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>455</td>
<td>Dick Merriwell's Racket</td>
<td>By Burt L. Standish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>456</td>
<td>Jack Lightfoot's Hoodoo</td>
<td>By Maxwell Stevens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>457</td>
<td>The Go-ahead Boys</td>
<td>By Gale Richards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Page</td>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Author</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>458</td>
<td>Dick Merriwell's Revenge</td>
<td>Burt L. Standish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>459</td>
<td>The Young Railroader's Mascot</td>
<td>Stanley Norris</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>460</td>
<td>Bear and Forbear</td>
<td>Oliver Optic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>461</td>
<td>Dick Merriwell's Ruse</td>
<td>Burt L. Standish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>462</td>
<td>Ben Bruce</td>
<td>Horatio Alger, Jr.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>463</td>
<td>Jack Lightfoot's Decision</td>
<td>Maxwell Stevens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>464</td>
<td>Dick Merriwell's Delivery</td>
<td>Burt L. Standish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>465</td>
<td>The Young Railroader's Contest</td>
<td>Stanley Norris</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>466</td>
<td>The Go-ahead Boys' Legacy</td>
<td>Gale Richards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>467</td>
<td>Dick Merriwell's Wonders</td>
<td>Burt L. Standish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>468</td>
<td>Bernard Brook's Adventures</td>
<td>Horatio Alger, Jr.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>469</td>
<td>Jack Lightfoot's Gun Club</td>
<td>Maxwell Stevens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>470</td>
<td>Frank Merriwell's Honor</td>
<td>Burt L. Standish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>471</td>
<td>Gascoyne, the Sandal Wood Trader</td>
<td>R. M. Ballantyne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>472</td>
<td>Paul Hassard's Peril</td>
<td>Matt Royal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>473</td>
<td>Dick Merriwell's Diamond</td>
<td>Burt L. Standish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>474</td>
<td>Phil, the Showman</td>
<td>Stanley Norris</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>475</td>
<td>A Debt of Honor</td>
<td>Horatio Alger, Jr.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>476</td>
<td>Frank Merriwell's Winners</td>
<td>Burt L. Standish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>477</td>
<td>Jack Lightfoot's Blind</td>
<td>Maxwell Stevens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>478</td>
<td>Marooned</td>
<td>W. Clark Russell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>479</td>
<td>Dick Merriwell's Dash</td>
<td>Burt L. Standish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>480</td>
<td>Phil's Rivals</td>
<td>Stanley Norris</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>481</td>
<td>Mark Manning's Mission</td>
<td>Horatio Alger, Jr.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>482</td>
<td>Dick Merriwell's Ability</td>
<td>Burt L. Standish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>483</td>
<td>Jack Lightfoot's Capture</td>
<td>Maxwell Stevens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>484</td>
<td>A Captain at Fifteen</td>
<td>Jules Verne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>485</td>
<td>Dick Merriwell's Trap</td>
<td>Burt L. Standish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>486</td>
<td>Phil's Pluck</td>
<td>Stanley Norris</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>487</td>
<td>The Wreck of the Grosvenor</td>
<td>W. Clark Russell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>488</td>
<td>Dick Merriwell's Defense</td>
<td>Burt L. Standish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>489</td>
<td>Charlie Codman's Cruise</td>
<td>Horatio Alger, Jr.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>490</td>
<td>Jack Lightfoot's Head Work</td>
<td>Maxwell Stevens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>491</td>
<td>Dick Merriwell's Model</td>
<td>Burt L. Standish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>492</td>
<td>Phil's Triumph</td>
<td>Jules Verne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>493</td>
<td>A Two Years' Vacation</td>
<td>Stanley Norris</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>494</td>
<td>Dick Merriwell's Mystery</td>
<td>Burt L. Standish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>495</td>
<td>The Young Explorer</td>
<td>Horatio Alger, Jr.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>496</td>
<td>Jack Lightfoot's Wisdom</td>
<td>Maxwell Stevens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>497</td>
<td>Frank Merriwell's Backers</td>
<td>Burt L. Standish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>498</td>
<td>Ted Strong, Cowboy</td>
<td>Edward C. Taylor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>499</td>
<td>From Circus to Fortune</td>
<td>Stanley Norris</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>500</td>
<td>Dick Merriwell's Back-stop</td>
<td>Burt L. Standish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>501</td>
<td>Sink or Swim</td>
<td>Horatio Alger, Jr.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>502</td>
<td>For the Right</td>
<td>Roy Franklin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>503</td>
<td>Dick Merriwell's Western Mission</td>
<td>Burt L. Standish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>504</td>
<td>Among the Cattlemen</td>
<td>Edward C. Taylor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>505</td>
<td>A Legacy of Peril</td>
<td>William Murray Graydon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>506</td>
<td>Frank Merriwell's Rescue</td>
<td>Burt L. Standish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>507</td>
<td>The Young Musician</td>
<td>Horatio Alger, Jr.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>508</td>
<td>&quot;A Gentleman Born&quot;</td>
<td>Stanley Norris</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Author</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frank Merriwell's Encounter</td>
<td>Burt L. Standish</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Mountain Ranch</td>
<td>Edward C. Taylor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Boy Conjurer</td>
<td>Victor St. Clair</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dick Merriwell's Marked Money</td>
<td>Burt L. Standish</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work and Win</td>
<td>Horatio Alger, Jr.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fighting for Fortune</td>
<td>Roy Franklin</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frank Merriwell's Nomads</td>
<td>Burt L. Standish</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With Rifle and Lasso</td>
<td>Edward C. Taylor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For His Friend's Honor</td>
<td>Stanley Norris</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dick Merriwell on the Gridiron</td>
<td>Burt L. Standish</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Backwoods Boy</td>
<td>Horatio Alger, Jr.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Young Range Riders</td>
<td>St. George Rathborne</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dick Merriwell's Disguise</td>
<td>Burt L. Standish</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lost in the Desert</td>
<td>Edward C. Taylor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building Himself Up</td>
<td>Oliver Optic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dick Merriwell's Test</td>
<td>Burt L. Standish</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adrift in Midair</td>
<td>Stanley Norris</td>
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<tr>
<td>True to His Trust</td>
<td>Ensign Clarke Fitch</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frank Merriwell's Trump Card</td>
<td>Burt L. Standish</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lyon Hart's Heroism</td>
<td>Oliver Optic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fighting the Rustlers</td>
<td>Edward C. Taylor</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Frank Merriwell's Strategy</td>
<td>Burt L. Standish</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digging for Gold</td>
<td>Horatio Alger, Jr.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wyoming</td>
<td>Edward S. Ellis</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frank Merriwell's Triumph</td>
<td>Burt L. Standish</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louis Chiswick's Mission</td>
<td>Oliver Optic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facing the Music</td>
<td>Stanley Norris</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dick Merriwell's Grit</td>
<td>Burt L. Standish</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steaming the Tide</td>
<td>Roy Franklin</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adrift in the City</td>
<td>Horatio Alger, Jr.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dick Merriwell's Assurance</td>
<td>Burt L. Standish</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Royal Tarr's Pluck</td>
<td>Oliver Optic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holding the Fort</td>
<td>Ensign Clarke Fitch</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dick Merriwell's Long Slide</td>
<td>Burt L. Standish</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two Ways of Becoming a Hunter</td>
<td>Harry Castlemon</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Rival Miners</td>
<td>Edward C. Taylor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frank Merriwell's Rough Deal</td>
<td>Burt L. Standish</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Professor's Son</td>
<td>Oliver Optic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frank Hunter's Peril</td>
<td>Horatio Alger, Jr.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dick Merriwell's Threat</td>
<td>Burt L. Standish</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fin and Feather</td>
<td>Wallace Kincaid</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Storm Mountain</td>
<td>Edward S. Ellis</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dick Merriwell's Persistence</td>
<td>Burt L. Standish</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Striving for His Own</td>
<td>Oliver Optic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winning by Courage</td>
<td>Roy Franklin</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dick Merriwell's Day</td>
<td>Burt L. Standish</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert Coverdale's Struggle</td>
<td>Horatio Alger, Jr.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The West Point Boys</td>
<td>Col. J. Thomas Weldon</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frank Merriwell's Peril</td>
<td>Burt L. Standish</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Last of the Herd</td>
<td>Edward C. Taylor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making a Man of Himself</td>
<td>Oliver Optic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
THE S. & S. NOVELS

560—Dick Merriwell’s Downfall ..........By Burt L. Standish
561—Winning Against Odds......................By Roy Franklin
562—The Camp in the Foothills ................By Harry Castlemon
563—Frank Merriwell’s Pursuit ..............By Burt L. Standish
564—The Naval Academy Boys. Commander Luther G. Brownell
565—Every Inch a Boy ........................By Oliver Optic
566—Dick Merriwell Abroad .................By Burt L. Standish
567—On a Mountain Trail .....................By Edward C. Taylor
568—The Plebes’ Challenge .................By Col. J. Thomas Weldon
569—Frank Merriwell in the Rockies ........By Burt L. Standish
570—Lester’s Luck ..................................By Horatio Alger, Jr.
571—His Own Helper ................................By Oliver Optic
572—Dick Merriwell’s Pranks ..............By Burt L. Standish
573—Bound to Get There ......................By Roy Franklin
574—An Annapolis Tangle. By Commander Luther G. Brownell
575—Frank Merriwell’s Pride ................By Burt L. Standish
576—Across the Prairie .......................By Edward C. Taylor
577—Honest Kit Dunstable .....................By Oliver Optic
578—Frank Merriwell’s Challengers ..........By Burt L. Standish

To Be Published During August.

579—The Runaway Cadet .......................By Col. J. Thomas Weldon
580—Jack Harkaway Around the World. ..Bracebridge Hemyng
581—Frank Merriwell’s Endurance ..........By Burt L. Standish
582—Out for Big Game .........................By Edward C. Taylor
583—The Young Pilot ............................By Oliver Optic

To Be Published During September.

584—Dick Merriwell’s Cleverness ..........By Burt L. Standish
585—Oscar in Africa ............................By Harry Castlemon
586—Rupert’s Ambition .........................By Horatio Alger, Jr.
587—Frank Merriwell’s Marriage ..........By Burt L. Standish

To Be Published During October.

588—The Pride of Annapolis ..........By Com. Luther G. Brownell
589—The Cruise of the “Dandy” ............By Oliver Optic
590—Dick Merriwell, the Wizard ..........By Burt L. Standish
591—Captain Nemo’s Challenge ............By Edward C. Taylor

To Be Published During November.

592—The Cabin in the Clearing ..........By Edward S. Ellis
593—Dick Merriwell’s Stroke ...............By Burt L. Standish
594—Frank and Fearless ......................By Horatio Alger, Jr.
595—Three Young Silver Kings ..........By Oliver Optic
596—Dick Merriwell’s Return ..............By Burt L. Standish

To Be Published During December.

597—His Own Master ............................By Roy Franklin
598—An Annapolis Adventure ..............By Com. Luther G. Brownell
599—Dick Merriwell’s Resource ..........By Burt L. Standish
600—Ted Strong’s Close Call ..............By Edward C. Taylor

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Author</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>The Boat Club</td>
<td>By Oliver Optic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Cadet Kit Carey</td>
<td>By Lieut. Lionel Lounsberry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>All Aboard</td>
<td>By Oliver Optic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Lieutenant Carey's Luck</td>
<td>By Lieut. Lionel Lounsberry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Now or Never</td>
<td>By Oliver Optic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Captain Carey of the Gallant Seventh</td>
<td>By Lieut. Lionel Lounsberry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Chased Through Norway</td>
<td>By James Otis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Kit Carey's Protégée</td>
<td>By Lieut. Lionel Lounsberry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Try Again</td>
<td>By Oliver Optic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Don Kirk, the Boy Cattle King</td>
<td>By Gilbert Patten</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>From Tent to White House</td>
<td>By Edward S. Ellis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Don Kirk's Mine</td>
<td>By Gilbert Patten</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Up the Ladder</td>
<td>By Lieut. Murray</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>The Young Colonists</td>
<td>By G. A. Henty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Midshipman Merrill</td>
<td>By Lieut. Lionel Lounsberry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>The White King of Africa</td>
<td>By William Murray Graydon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Ensign Merrill</td>
<td>By Lieut. Lionel Lounsberry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>The Silver Ship</td>
<td>By Leon Lewis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Jack Archer</td>
<td>By G. A. Henty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Wheeling for Fortune</td>
<td>By James Otis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Won at West Point</td>
<td>By Lieut. Lionel Lounsberry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>From Lake to Wilderness</td>
<td>By William Murray Graydon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>The Dragon and the Raven</td>
<td>By G. A. Henty</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
THE S. & S. NOVELS

24—The Boy From the West..............................By Gilbert Patten
25—Through the Fray.......................................By G. A. Henty
26—The Cryptogram........................................By William Murray Graydon
27—Centre Board Jim........................................By Lieut. Lionel Lounsberry
28—The Boy Boomers........................................By Gilbert Patten
29—True to the Old Flag...................................By G. A. Henty
30—Peter Simple.............................................By Captain Marryat
31—The Cruise of the Snow Bird..........................By Gordon Stables
32—The Curse of Carnes' Hold...............................By G. A. Henty
33—Jud and Joe, Printers and Publishers.................By Gilbert Patten
34—The Adventures of Mr. Verdant Green,.................By Cuthbert Bede, B. A.

35—in the Reign of Terror.................................By G. A. Henty
36—in Barracks and Wigwam.................................By William Murray Graydon
37—Commodore Junk........................................By George Manville Fenn
38—Gay Dashleigh's Academy Days.........................By Arthur Sewall
39—with Boer and Britisher in the Transvaal,...........By William Murray Graydon

40—Canoe and Camp Fire....................................By St. George Rathborne
41—Check 2134................................................By Edward S. Ellis
42—The Young Acrobat.....................................By Horatio Alger, Jr.
43—in Southern Seas........................................By Frank H. Converse
44—The Golden Magnet......................................By George Manville Fenn
45—Jack Wheeler, a Western Story.........................By Capt. David Southwick
46—Poor and Proud...........................................By Oliver Optic
47—Eric Dane................................................By Matthew White, Jr.
48—Luke Bennett's Hide-out, By Capt. C. B. Ashley, U. S. Scout
49—The Mystery of a Diamond..............................By Frank H. Converse
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54—Joe Nichols; or, Difficulties Overcome, By Alfred Oldfellow
55—a Voyage to the Gold Coast............................By Frank H. Converse
56—Nature's Young Noblemen..............................By Brooks McCormick
57—the Gold of Flat Top Mountain........................By Frank H. Converse
58—Gilbert, the Trapper....................................By Capt. C. B. Ashley
59—the Rajah's Fortress....................................By William Murray Graydon
60—the Mountain Cave......................................By George H. Coomer
61—the Erie Train Boy.....................................By Horatio Alger, Jr.
62—How He Won..............................................By Brooks McCormick
63—in the Sunk Lands......................................By Walter F. Bruns
64—the Tour of a Private Car..............................By Matthew White, Jr.
65—that Treasure............................................By Frank H. Converse
66—a Young Vagabond......................................By Z. R. Bennett
67—Tom Brown's School Days...............................By Thomas Hughes
68—Smuggler's Cave........................................By Annie Ashmore
69—Pirate Island.............................................By Harry Collingwood
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75—The Boys in the Forecastle. By George H. Coomer
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78—Both Sides of the Continent. By Horatio Alger, Jr.
79—The Rival Battalions. By Brooks McCormick
80—Afloat in the Forest. By Capt. Mayne Reid
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82—The Young Editor. By Matthew White, Jr.
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84—The Butcher of Cawnpore. By William Murray Graydon
85—Facing Death. By G. A. Henty
86—Catmur's Cave. By Richard Dowling
87—The Five Hundred Dollar Check. By Horatio Alger, Jr.
88—My Mysterious Fortune. By Matthew White, Jr.
89—Clinton; or, Boy Life in the Country. By Walter Aimwell
90—Out on the Pampas. By G. A. Henty
91—The Crusoes of Guiana. By Louis Bousenard
92—Spectre Gold. By Headon Hill
93—A New York Boy. By Horatio Alger, Jr.
94—Oscar; or, The Boy Who Had His Own Way. By Walter Aimwell
95—By Sheer Pluck. By G. A. Henty
96—An Unprovoked Mutiny. By James Otis
97—The Giant Islanders. By Brooks McCormick
98—The Grand Chaco. By George Manville Fenn
99—The Cruise of the Restless; or, On Inland Waterways. By James Otis
100—Maori and Settler. By George A. Henty
101—The Lone Ranch. By Capt. Mayne Reid
102—Clearing His Name. By Matthew White, Jr.
103—The Adventures of Rex Staunton. By Mary A. Denison
104—Heir to a Million. By Frank H. Converse
105—The Young Actor. By Gayle Winterton
106—The Boy Knight. By George A. Henty
107—Van; or, In Search of an Unknown Race. By Frank H. Converse
108—Texar's Revenge. By Jules Verne
109—A Dash to the Pole. By Herbert D. Ward
110—Around the World in Eighty Days. By Jules Verne
111—The Midshipman, Marmaduke Merry. By W. H. G. Kingston
112—20,000 Leagues Under the Sea. By Jules Verne
113—The Bravest of the Brave. By G. A. Henty
114—The Old Man of the Mountains. By George H. Coomer
115—Adventures of a Young Athlete. By Matthew White, Jr.
116—Happy-Go-Lucky Jack........................By Frank H. Converse
117—James Braithwaite, the Supercargo. .By W. H. G. Kingston
118—Ned Newton......................................By Horatio Alger, Jr.
119—A Final Reckoning..............................By G. A. Henty
120—in the Wilds of New Mexico........By G. Manville Fenn
121—Peter Trawl........................................By W. H. G. Kingston
122—Tom Brace.............................................By Horatio Alger, Jr.
123—The Giraffe Hunters..............................By Capt. Mayne Reid
124—St. George for England..............................By G. A. Henty
125—The Plant Hunters..............................By Capt. Mayne Reid
126—From Powder Monkey to Admiral......By W. H. G. Kingston
127—The Forest Exiles..............................By Capt. Mayne Reid
128—For Name and Fame.............................By G. A. Henty
129—Ran Away to Sea..............................By Capt. Mayne Reid
130—From Canal Boy to President........By Horatio Alger, Jr.
131—The Boy Slaves......................................By Capt. Mayne Reid
132—The Adventures of Rob Roy.....................By James Grant
133—The Young Yagers..............................By Capt. Mayne Reid
134—Orange and Green.............................By G. A. Henty
135—Dick Cheveley....................................By W. H. G. Kingston
136—From Pole to Pole..........................By Gordon Stables
137—The Bush Boys........................................By Capt. Mayne Reid
138—Striving for Fortune.......................By Horatio Alger, Jr.
139—Shore and Ocean..............................By W. H. G. Kingston
140—The Young Buglers..............................By G. A. Henty
141—The Ocean Waifs..............................By Capt. Mayne Reid
142—Stanley Grahame's Adventures...............By Gordon Stables
143—Hendricks, the Hunter.......................By W. H. G. Kingston
144—The Boy Tar..........................................By Capt. Mayne Reid
145—Friends Though Divided......................By G. A. Henty
146—Uncle Nat.............................................By A. Oldfellow
147—The Cliff Climbers.............................By Capt. Mayne Reid
148—The Deerslayer.................................By J. F. Cooper
149—With Wolfe in Canada.............................By G. A. Henty
150—The Flag of Distress............................By Capt. Mayne Reid
151—The Last of the Mohicans.....................By J. Fenimore Cooper
152—Bonnie Prince Charlie........................By G. A. Henty
153—Paul, the Peddler...............................By Horatio Alger, Jr.
154—The Young Voyagers............................By Capt. Mayne Reid
155—The Pathfinder.................................By J. F. Cooper
156—Randy, the Pilot.................................By Lieut. Lionel Lounsberry
157—with Lee in Virginia...........................By G. A. Henty
158—Phil, the Fiddler.................................By Horatio Alger, Jr.
159—Little by Little...............................By Oliver Optic
160—Reuben Green's Adventures at Yale........By James Otis
161—The Pioneers.................................By J. F. Cooper
162—Slow and Sure.................................By Horatio Alger, Jr.
163—The Cornet of Horse.............................By G. A. Henty
164—The Secret Chart...............................By Lieut. James K. Orton
165—Try and Trust.................................By Horatio Alger, Jr.
166—Among Malay Pirates..........................By G. A. Henty
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Author</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>169</td>
<td>Peter, the Whaler</td>
<td>By W. H. G. Kingston</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>170</td>
<td>Strong and Steady</td>
<td>By Horatio Alger, Jr.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>171</td>
<td>Erling the Bold</td>
<td>By R. M. Ballantyne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>172</td>
<td>The Young Midshipman</td>
<td>By G. A. Henty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>173</td>
<td>Life at Sea</td>
<td>By Gordon Stables</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>174</td>
<td>Haste and Waste</td>
<td>By Oliver Optic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>175</td>
<td>Strive and Succeed</td>
<td>By Horatio Alger, Jr.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>176</td>
<td>By England's Aid</td>
<td>By G. A. Henty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>177</td>
<td>The White Elephant</td>
<td>By William Dalton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>179</td>
<td>Hope and Have</td>
<td>By Oliver Optic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>180</td>
<td>One of the 28th</td>
<td>By G. A. Henty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>181</td>
<td>Brave and Bold</td>
<td>By Horatio Alger, Jr.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>182</td>
<td>The Camp in the Snow</td>
<td>By William Murray Graydon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>183</td>
<td>The Diamond Hunters</td>
<td>By James Grant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>185</td>
<td>For the Temple</td>
<td>By G. A. Henty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>186</td>
<td>On the Trail of Geronimo</td>
<td>By Edward S. Ellis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>187</td>
<td>Bound to Rise</td>
<td>By Horatio Alger, Jr.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>188</td>
<td>From Street to Mansion</td>
<td>By Frank H. Stauffer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>190</td>
<td>The Cat of Bubastes</td>
<td>By G. A. Henty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>191</td>
<td>The Rivals of the Diamond</td>
<td>By Russell Williams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>192</td>
<td>Tom, the Bootblack</td>
<td>By Horatio Alger, Jr.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>193</td>
<td>The White Mustang</td>
<td>By Edward S. Ellis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>195</td>
<td>The Lion of the North</td>
<td>By G. A. Henty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>196</td>
<td>Zip, the Acrobat</td>
<td>By Victor St. Clair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>198</td>
<td>Only an Irish Boy</td>
<td>By Horatio Alger, Jr.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>199</td>
<td>The Golden Cañon</td>
<td>By G. A. Henty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>200</td>
<td>The Fight for a Pennant</td>
<td>By Frank Merriwell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>202</td>
<td>Risen From the Ranks</td>
<td>By Horatio Alger, Jr.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>203</td>
<td>Last Chance Mine</td>
<td>By Lieut. James K. Orton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>204</td>
<td>Under Drake’s Flag</td>
<td>By G. A. Henty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>206</td>
<td>Jungles and Traitors</td>
<td>By Wm. Murray Graydon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>207</td>
<td>Shifting Winds</td>
<td>By St. George Rathborne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>208</td>
<td>The Treasure of the Golden Crater</td>
<td>By Lieut. Lionel Lounsberry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>210</td>
<td>Sturdy and Strong</td>
<td>By G. A. Henty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>211</td>
<td>Buck Badger’s Ranch</td>
<td>By Russell Williams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>212</td>
<td>Julius, the Street Boy</td>
<td>By Horatio Alger, Jr.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>214</td>
<td>On Guard</td>
<td>By Lieut. Frederick Garrison, U. S. A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>215</td>
<td>With Clive in India</td>
<td>By G. A. Henty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>216</td>
<td>Campaigning With Braddock</td>
<td>By Wm. Murray Graydon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>218</td>
<td>Tom Truxton’s School Days</td>
<td>By Lieut. Lounsberry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>219</td>
<td>Tom Truxton’s Ocean Trip</td>
<td>By Lieut. Lounsberry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>220</td>
<td>The Gulf Cruisers</td>
<td>By St. George Rathborne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>221</td>
<td>The Young Outlaw</td>
<td>By Horatio Alger, Jr.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>222</td>
<td>A West Point Treasure</td>
<td>By Lieut. Frederick Garrison, U. S. A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>223</td>
<td>In Fort and Prison</td>
<td>By William Murray Graydon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>224</td>
<td>Yankee Boys in Japan</td>
<td>By Henry Harrison Lewis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>226</td>
<td>Tom Havens With the White Squadron</td>
<td>By Lieut. James K. Orton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>227</td>
<td>In Freedom’s Cause</td>
<td>By G. A. Henty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>228</td>
<td>The Cash Boy</td>
<td>By Horatio Alger, Jr.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
THE S. & S. NOVELS

230—Off for West Point....By Lieut. Fred'k Garrison, U. S. A.
231—Paddling Under Palmettos....By St. George Rathborne
232—The Valley of Mystery.....By Henry Harrison Lewis
234—The Store Boy.......................By Horatio Alger, Jr.
235—The Young Carthaginian........By G. A. Henty
236—Rob Ranger's Mine................By Lieut. Lounsberry
238—A Cadet's Honor........By Lieut. Fred'k Garrison, U. S. A.
239—The Two Admirals................By J. Fenimore Cooper
240—The Tour of the Zero Club....By Capt. R. Bonehill
241—The Rival Canoe Boys.........By St. George Rathborne
242—Adrift in New York........By Horatio Alger, Jr.
243—The Red Rover................By J. Fenimore Cooper
244—Rob Ranger's Cowboy Days...By Lieut. Lionel Lounsberry
245—The West Point Rivals........By Capt. Ralph Bonehill
246—The Young Bridge Tender..By Arthur M. Winfield
247—Neka, the Boy Conjurer.....By Capt. Ralph Bonehill
248—The Two Admirals........By J. Fenimore Cooper
249—Luke Walton........................By Walter Aimwell
250—The Water Witch................By J. Fenimore Cooper
251—The Young Ranchman........By Lieut. Frederick' Garrison, U. S. A.
252—Mr. Midshipman Easy........By Captain Marryat
253—Captain Bayley's Heir........By G. A. Henty
254—The Young Ranchman........By Lieut. Lounsberry
255—Mr. Midshipman Easy........By Captain Marryat
256—The Young Ranchman........By Horatio Alger, Jr.
257—Jerry...........................By Walter Aimwell
258—The Young Ranchman........By J. Fenimore Cooper
259—Sword and Pen.................By Henry Harrison Lewis
260—Driven From Home........By Horatio Alger, Jr.
261—The Pilot.........................By J. Fenimore Cooper
262—Mr. Midshipman Easy........By Captain Marryat
263—Hector's Inheritance.........By Horatio Alger, Jr.
264—The Lion of St. Mark........By G. A. Henty
265—The Young Castaways.........By Leon Lewis
266—The Young Castaways.........By Horatio Alger, Jr.
267—Jacob Faithful................By Capt. Marryat
268—Beach Boy Joe.................By Lieut. James K. Orton
269—The King of the Island......By Henry Harrison Lewis
270—Wing and Wing...............By Horatio Alger, Jr.
271—The Young Castaways.........By G. A. Henty
272—Wing and Wing...............By Horatio Alger, Jr.
273—In Times of Peril.............By G. A. Henty
274—Mark Dale's Stage Venture..By Arthur M. Winfield
275—Rattlin, the Reefer........By Capt. Marryat
276—Herbert Carter's Legacy......By Horatio Alger, Jr.
277—Wild Adventures Around the Pole....By Gordon Stables
278—The King of the Island......By Henry Harrison Lewis
279—In a New World.................By Horatio Alger, Jr.
280—Jack Darcy, the All-around Athlete...By Edward S. Ellis
281—The King of the Island......By Horatio Alger, Jr.
282—Kit Carson's Last Trail.....By Leon Lewis
283—The Pirate and the Three Cutters...By Capt. Marryat
284—Shifting for Himself........By Horatio Alger, Jr.
285—By Pike and Dyke...............By G. A. Henty
286—My Plucky Boy Tom.........By Edward S. Ellis
287—Sam's Chance................By Horatio Alger, Jr.
288—Cris Rock........................By Capt. Mayne Reid
289—Newton Forster................By Capt. Marryat
Frank Merriwell's Duel

OR

FOR RIGHT AND HONOR

BY

BURT L. STANDISH

AUTHOR OF

"The Merriwell Stories"

STREET & SMITH, PUBLISHERS

79-89 SEVENTH AVE., NEW YORK CITY
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79-81 SEVENTH AVENUE, NEW YORK CITY
FRANK MERRIWELL'S DUEL.

CHAPTER I.

NEWS FROM ENGLAND.

"FRANK MERRIWELL, Esq.,

"Hotel Splendide,

"Rue de la Paix, Paris:

"Look out for us. We are coming, Miss Bellwood, Juliet, 'The Dragon', and myself. DOLPH."

Such was the telegram delivered to Frank early one morning. He read it, and then whistled softly.

"You look surprised," grunted Bruce Browning, who, half dressed, was lounging on a comfortable couch, while he indulged in the reprehensible practise of a smoke before breakfast.

"What's broken loose?" asked Rattleton, who had just entered from the bath-room, rosy from a cold dip and a "good rub."

Diamond gazed at Frank inquiringly, but said nothing.

"What do you think?" asked Merry, laughing.

"I never think," said Browning. "Too much work."

"Don't guess us keeping—I mean don't keep us guessing!" cried Harry. "Tell us about it."
"Reynolds is coming."
"No?"
"Here?"
"Jupiter!"
Frank's three friends uttered the exclamations. The word "here" came from Diamond's lips, and the Virginian showed excitement.
"Why is he coming here?" he asked.
"He's after you; he's after you!" sang Rattleton. "You're in for it, Jack! You should have known better than to make violent love to an English girl right before her big brother. You might have kept back and given me a chance. I was rather stuck on Juliet myself."
Diamond flushed, muttering something about Harry trying to "be funny."
"Somebody is coming with him," smiled Frank, in a teasing manner.
"You don't mean—-" began Diamond, and then he stopped short, staring at Frank, something like a look of apprehension on his face.
"Yes," nodded Merry, "the telegram says Elsie Bellwood is coming with him."
"Oh!" murmured Diamond, and he looked both relieved and disappointed.
"Nobody else?" questioned Rattleton, and the Virginian was quick to see that Harry also showed disappointment.
"What is it to you?" thought Jack, with a strange pang in his heart.
"I didn't say so," came teasingly from Merriwell.
“Eh?” gasped the Virginian. “It can’t be that——”
“How do you know?” asked Frank. “Yes, it is a
fact that somebody else is coming. He says that ‘The
Dragon’ will accompany them.”
“The Dragon!”
“Only her?”
“His aunt!”

Diamond had uttered the words “only her,” which
Merry observed. Frank was fully enjoying working up
to the climax.
“I did not say she was the only one besides Elsie and
Dolph,” he observed.

Jack caught his breath. Now he knew what was
coming, but he would not be satisfied till he had heard.
Browning grinned in a lazy manner.
“We all know what that means,” he grunted, still
puffing away at the pipe. “There is only one other to
come, and that is——”

“Juliet,” nodded Frank. “She will be with them.”

Jack Diamond sat down, and the look on his face was
rather hard and stern.

“She is coming!” his heart cried, leaping joyously.

“She is coming!” his head told him, like a warning of
danger.

“Well, say!” cried Rattleton; “that will be great! I’m glad he’s bringing Juliet. She’s a stunning girl, and
I’d try to win her myself if Diamond hadn’t the inside
track. I don’t suppose he’ll give anybody else a show.”

Somehow, those words irritated Jack beyond measure,
and, before he thought what he was going to say, he exclaimed:

"Don't you worry about me. It's not likely I shall give her much attention, and you are welcome to her if you can win her."

A moment after he spoke he was sorry, but it was too late to take anything back.

"All right!" cried Rattleton, seeming to accept it like a challenge. "If I down you, old man, in the race for the fair Juliet, you want to hold your pucker. I never did cut much ice with the girls, but I think I'll see what I can do with Juliet. She's just my style."

"Rivals to the bitter end!" grunted Browning, still pulling at his pipe, although it had gone out. "This may end in a duel, gentlemen."

Little did he dream how true were his words.

"One thing is mighty lucky," said Harry. "Merriwell is no longer under the ban of the Black Brothers. It is nearly a fortnight since he received the sign informing him he had been condemned to death by that band of assassins because of his interest in the Dreyfus case, and the ten days of life which were allotted to him have passed, and he still lives."

"I suppose I am the first one to escape death after receiving the red star," said Frank gravely. "But the spell is broken now."

"So is the band of assassins," came triumphantly from Diamond.

"Thanks to the work of the man you declared insane,
Mr. Noname. He was the chief instrument in bringing about the disruption of the Brotherhood."

"And of the Anti-Dreyfus League, I rather think," said Browning. "That old chap is a wonder. He must have money to burn, for he could not hire a score of allies and spies to work for him if he hadn’t barrels of lucre."

"But you were near to death, Frank," said Diamond. "You were suspected of being one of the most earnest workers for Dreyfus, and so you were doomed."

"But the woman who was chosen to put me out of the way is dead, having perished by her own hand. She’ll never tell the secrets of the Black Brothers."

"Let’s not talk about it!" cried Harry, shrugging his shoulders after the manner of the French, a habit he had acquired since coming to Paris. "It makes me feel creepy. It’s all over now, and we have nothing to worry us. Dolph and the girls are coming, and our final days in Paris will be jolly days. There is no reason why a cloud should rise to mar our pleasure."

Frank glanced at Diamond, and saw there was a cloud on the face of the Virginian already. No one besides Merriwell so fully understood the feelings of the Southerner. To Frank, Jack had opened his heart. Naturally secretive, he had chosen to trust Merry, and he felt the better for it. Frank remembered the story of the unfortunate first marriage of Diamond’s mother, and he knew why the headstrong Virginian wished to avoid Juliet, who attracted him like a powerful magnet.
Rattleton grew jolly over the prospect of pleasant times to come in Paris. He started to sing:

"My girl is a high-born lady,
She is shack but not too blady——
(I mean, she is black but not too shady).
She am not colored, she was born that way,
This high-born gal of mine——
(No, this high-born gal of mine)."

“Oh, dry up!” growled Browning. “You get tangled up so when you try to sing that you give me a cramp! Quit that noise!"

“Say, fellows,” called Harry quickly, “did any of you hear a fearful noise in Browning’s room just at daybreak?”

“Yes,” nodded Frank. “What was that noise?”

“It was nothing but Bruce falling asleep for his morning nap,” chuckled Rattleton.

“Oh, that was funny!” rumbled the big fellow. “You forget you are in France. If you get too funny, I shall challenge you to a duel.”

“A duel!” whooped Harry. “Oh, wow! I don’t believe you ever fired a pistol in your life. Now, honest, did you ever smell powder?”

“Yes.”

“Where?”

“On a Vassar girl.”

Frank laughed heartily.

“The best thing I ever heard you say, Browning!” he declared. “You must be waking up since you came to Paris.”
“Perhaps so,” said Rattleton; “but he’ll have to live here ten or twenty years before he gets fully awake.”

“Oh, I don’t know!” grunted Bruce.

Diamond seemed to pay no attention to this chaffing. He had gone to the window and was gazing out upon the street, his back turned toward the others. After awhile, both Rattleton and Browning went into another room, and Frank improved the opportunity to speak to Jack.

“What’s the matter, old man?” he asked, coming up and placing his hand on the Virginian’s shoulder.

“You know,” said Diamond quickly. “I suppose I am a fool, but I’m not feeling just right over this thing. You know the condition I was in before I left England. I was making a howling idiot of myself, and I suppose I’ll repeat it!”

If any one else had made such an observation about Diamond he would have “gone into the air” at once; but we can say things about ourselves that we would resent instantly from others.

“Oh, I don’t know that you were making such an idiot of yourself,” said Frank, with an attempt to soothe the hot-blooded fellow.

“Yes, you do!” insisted Diamond. “You know it as well as I do! That girl turned my head, and still I know she’s no fit mate for me, even if I could win her—which I doubt. We are too much alike, and we’d never be happy together. But I lose my head when she is near. It’s astounding how she affects me.”

“You should be master of yourself, Jack.”
"That's all right to talk, but I'd like to see the man with a heart in him that is master of himself when he really gets mashed on a girl. With all your fine qualities, Frank Merriwell, you can get twisted over a girl, for you confessed that you were jealous of Elsie while we were at Thorncroft."

Frank flushed a bit, and then laughed.

"I do not pretend to be perfect," he confessed, "but it was a surprise to me when I became rather unreasonably jealous. Oh, I understand you, old man, and I think you are right in saying Juliet Reynolds is not the girl for you."

At this, Diamond didn't seem to know whether to be pleased or otherwise. Somehow, it did not give him a feeling of satisfaction. If Frank had insisted that Jack was wrong in his belief, the Virginian would have put up an argument, but, somehow, he did not like to be told what he actually believed.

"One thing," added Merry, "Mr. Felix Peyton will not be along."

"You are not certain."

"Dolph did not say anything about him."

"No; but he may follow her."

"I hardly think so."

"Why not?"

"Because you proved yourself more than a match for him when you got right down to business and paid attention to her. You thought he had the best of it, but you knocked him out."
“And then——”

“And then you dropped her in a hurry and got as far away as possible.”

“Yes,” nodded the Virginian fiercely; “that was my revenge. She played fast and loose with me, and I got even with her. When I had taken her away from Peyton and he was sulking, I threw up everything and skipped. It was tit for tat. She had toyed with me till I was ready to shoot somebody!”

Frank could not help smiling.

“I gave you some advice about the proper manner to handle girls, but you carried it to the extreme.”

“Oh. I do not wish to see her again, Merriwell! My heart wants to see her, but my head tells me it is not best. How can I escape it?”

“Well, it won’t be easy.”

“I think I’ll take a run into Italy.”

“Better not.”

“Why?”

“It will be plain to everybody that you ran away.”

“What do I care?”

“You do care.”

“Why should I?”

“You do not wish to be regarded as a coward.”

Jack flushed.

“No,” he admitted; “you are right about that.”

“Well, how will it look if you run away now?”

“I hadn’t thought of it that way.”
"Think it over. You will see that it is bound to look bad."

The Virginian was gloomy enough now.

"All right," he said. "I'll stay, and I hope I'll not make a fool of myself."
Dolph Reynolds and his party arrived. They took apartments in the Hotel Splendide.

"By Jawve! it's warm in Paris, don't 'y 'now" was Dolph's first remark, as he shook hands with Merry.

Elsie greeted Frank in a manner that gave him a rather queer sensation. She shook hands with him, declaring she was glad to see him, but he fancied she spoke as she might have spoken to any other very good friend.

Jack and Juliet met. To his astonishment, she was quite as cool as he. He thought her face was rather pale, but he could not see his own, which was white. They did not shake hands. Rattleton was delighted. He shook hands all round twice, and kissed "The Dragon." It is hard to say which received the greater shock, Harry or The Dragon.

All this occurred in Frank's apartments. Mr. Maybe, Frank's tutor, came hurrying in, an open book in his hands, his spectacles perilously clinging to his snub nose, and his dressing-gown flopping about the trodden-down heels of his slippers.

"Mr. Merriwell," he chirped, without looking up from his book, "I have run onto——"

Then he collided with Aunt Hetty, The Dragon, who weighed two hundred and thirty pounds. Mr. Maybe weighed just ninety-eight and a half!
“Don’t run onto me, sir!” exclaimed Aunt Hetty, giving him a push.

Mr. Maybe staggered backward and fell over a chair, gasping with astonishment. He sat up on the floor, murmuring hastily:

“I beg your pardon! I hope I didn’t hurt you?”

“Oh, aunt!” exclaimed Juliet.

“The familiarity of these men is something shocking!” declared Aunt Hetty, fluttering her fan, with her head in the air. “Next thing I know they’ll all be trying to kiss me! And I was never kissed before in all my life!”

“She should wear a mask,” muttered Browning. “She is so ravishingly beautiful that she’s in constant danger of being kissed to death—I don’t think!”

Mr. Maybe picked himself up.

“Excuse me, madam,” he said. “I was not aware there was any one present except Mr. Merriwell. It was very careless on my part to collide with you.”

“I agree with you, sir,” said Aunt Hetty, in her stiffest manner. “But, then, what else could be expected of a man!”

It became plain to Wellington Maybe that the lady did not have a very good opinion of men. Mr. Maybe was a very mild-mannered person, who had taken great pains all his life to avoid women as far as possible. He was afraid of them. He pretended to dislike them, but Frank had fancied that in the secret depths of the tutor’s heart there was a longing to associate with them.

“I am rather near-sighted, madam,” said Mr. Maybe,
backing away. "If it was not for that, I assure you I'd never gotten so near you."

Now, Aunt Hetty didn't like that. She was not certain what he meant by it.

"Oh, I am sure nobody wants you near them!" she haughtily said. "I advise you to get a new pair of spectacles."

Mr. Maybe rubbed his bald head.

"Madam," he chirped, "if I thought there was danger that I might get too near you again, I'd take your advice; but I rather think I'll be able to see you with these, hereafter."

"I hope so!"

"So do I."

Wellington Maybe was at the door. He reached round behind him, got hold of the knob, still with his face to the foe, and drew the door open.

"Mr. Merriwell," he said, "I'll endeavor to see you when you are not occupied. If you will come to my room, I shall appreciate it."

It was useless to urge him to remain. He backed out of the room and fled, as if from deadly danger.

"Aunt Hetty," said Juliet, "you nearly scared the poor man to death. He didn't mean to run against you."

"It was very careless of him," declared The Dragon. "He's nothing but a little dried-up runt of a man, anyway. If a man is going to be a man, why doesn't he be one!"

"Then you like large men, Miss Hardingham?" said
Frank. "I presume you would choose a large man for a husband if you were going to——"

Aunt Hetty gave a scream and fluttered her fan faster than ever.

"Don't!" she exclaimed. "Don't talk to me about husbands! Don't talk to me about marrying! Why, I wouldn't marry the best man who ever wore trousers!"

"Not even if he were a very large man?" questioned Merry gently.

"Well, no, I don't think I would," she said, with a show of indecision that was rather amusing. "Of course, if I should meet my ideal, it would be—ah—er—different, you know. But I've never met my ideal," she finished, with something like a sigh.

This was all the more humorous to Dolph and Juliet, who knew that it was the one great regret of Aunt Hetty's life that she had never been able to find a man who had the courage to propose to her.

"And I don't suppose you'd have anything but a big man?" said Frank.

"No, sir," she answered. "He'd have to be big and handsome and strong."

"Then," said Merry, with a twinkle in his eyes, "permit me to present you to one who should be your ideal. Miss Hardingham, Mr. Bruce Browning."

"Good Lord!" gasped the big Yale man, and he looked as if he meant to take to his heels.

"Oh, my!" exclaimed The Dragon, in astonishment. "You—really—ah—you know Mr. Browning is—ah—much too young. I was speaking of a man."
“A—a man!” gurgled Bruce. “Wonder what she takes me for?”

“Oh, but you are young yourself, Miss Hardingham,” protested Frank. “There cannot be such a great difference between your age and that of Mr. Browning.”

“Do you really think so?” said The Dragon, flattered despite herself. “Oh, well, I suppose not. I didn’t mean that. Of course, I’m not exactly a girl.”

“I should say not!” muttered Rattleton.

“Yet you kissed her!” whispered Browning.

“A case of mental derangement caused by the excitement of the occasion,” declared Rattleton.

It took Aunt Hetty some time to cool down after the encounter with Mr. Maybe, and the mere mentioning of his name was enough to arouse her again. Frank sought an opportunity to have a chat with Elsie, but, somehow, she did not seem inclined to give him an opportunity all by himself. There was something peculiar in her manner, something Frank could not fathom. He had fancied he understood her, but he was beginning to believe he had made a mistake.

Diamond soon found an opportunity to get away. Already he realized that it would be quite as difficult as he had thought to keep away from Juliet, and he hated himself for his weakness. With her marvelous black eyes she attracted him like a magnet.

Juliet seemed to pay very little attention to Jack. She talked with others when he was present, and scarcely seemed to miss him when he was gone.

To the surprise of all, she seemed to take a strong
liking to Rattleton. And Harry was as much surprised as anybody. Never much of a fellow to get along with girls, he wondered at the way in which Juliet seemed to enjoy his company. When he thought of it he became rattled, and he twisted his words worse than ever before in all his life; but, to his unlimited relief, she did not seem to notice this at all.

Harry knew little of the ways of girls, and he fell to wondering if it were possible that Juliet was struck on him. Such a thing was ridiculous, he told himself, and yet how was it she seemed to prefer his company to that of anybody else? And straightway, to the surprise of all, Aunt Hetty pursued Bruce into a corner, where he could not escape, and attempted to talk him deaf, which was something quite unusual for her, as she was accustomed to avoid men.

Every one tried to appear happy, but, somehow, there was little of real happiness, although much had been expected.

Of course, the boys had to tell Dolph all about Frank's thrilling adventures since coming to Paris, and, of course, Reynolds thought they were "stringing" him. He could not believe that Merry had been doomed by the Anti-Dreyfus League and nearly put out of the way by the Black Brothers. He was puzzled when Diamond insisted that every word of the story was true, for he had sized the Virginian up as a person not given to practical joking.

Diamond was restless. His face wore a deep shadow constantly. At first he tried keeping away from Juliet,
but it must be confessed that he was nettled when she did not seem to miss him at all. And more than anything did Rattleton’s attentions to her stir his passions.

“What does that chump think he is doing?” he thought. “I really believe he fancies he has cut in ahead of me. It makes me want to wring his neck!”

To tell the truth, Frank Merriwell felt little better than did the Virginian, but he had better control of his emotions, and his face did not betray him. He appeared jolly enough, although it seemed certain that Elsie chose to avoid him. Frank knew the whims of girls, and he fancied Elsie would get over her queer “freak” after a little. He was determined not to show her that he cared. And Elsie laughed and chatted and seemed perfectly happy.

Thus the first day passed.

In the evening they went to the theater. Of course, they went in a body, with the exception of Diamond and Mr. Maybe. Both were invited, but Frank’s tutor declined, and Jack made an excuse that he had a headache. Somehow, Juliet and Rattleton sat together, while Browning found himself between The Dragon and Elsie. And Frank deliberately took pains to permit Dolph to sit on the side of Elsie opposite Bruce.

Everybody seemed to enjoy the evening, but appearances are often deceptive. Juliet was astounded when, after they had returned to the hotel and she was alone with Elsie, the American girl suddenly flung herself face downward on the bed in a most dejected attitude.
“What is the matter?” asked the English girl, coming to her friend at once.

“Oh, nothing!” answered Elsie, in a smothered voice.

But Juliet knew better. She could not be deceived by that word “nothing,” and she sat down on the side of the bed, putting an arm over Elsie.

“Tell me, please,” she breathed softly. “I know something is the matter, dear.”

Elsie was silent.

“You planned so much on the splendid time we would have when we arrived in Paris,” said the dark-eyed girl; “and you seemed to be enjoying yourself to-day and this evening.”

Still Elsie lay there face downward on the bed, without speaking.

“I thought you were having a lovely time,” said Juliet. “You were laughing and you seemed quite happy. Please tell me all about it dear. You know you can trust me. Haven’t you had a good time to-day, dear?”

“No!”

“Why not? What has happened to spoil your pleasure?”

“Everything!”

It was plain Elsie was holding herself in check as much as possible, but her overwrought soul was struggling within her.

“Tell me,” Juliet again urged.

“I can’t!”

“You will feel better if you do, dear—you know you
will. You have told me much about yourself and—and—and your hero."

"Don't!" entreated the girl with the golden hair, her voice quivering chokingly.

"I know something has gone wrong, and you have withstood it like the brave little girl you are."

Elsie sat up instantly.

"I am not brave!" she cried, her hands clenched and her sweet face drawn with pain.

"Oh, yes, you are!"

"No! no! no! I am a coward—a pitiful coward! If I were brave, I'd not feel like this to-night! I'd keep it to myself, and not even you would know!"

"Even the bravest have to unbosom themselves at times. I know you have a sorrow and you have told me all about your trouble. You were so happy when Dolph promised to come to Paris and bring us, for you were thinking you would be near your hero again."

"Oh, Juliet!" cried Elsie, catching hold of her friend.

"Stop! stop! He isn't my hero any more!"

"Why, what in the world do you mean?"

"Just that! It's all over! I feel it—I know it!"

"Are you crazy?"

"No; I'm just coming to my senses."

"Why, you told me all about meeting him and how you had grown to care so much for each other, and how Inza had—"

Almost fiercely Elsie clasped a hand over the mouth of her friend, actually hissing:

"I was a silly fool! I should have kept it to myself!"
Shadows.

Juliet drew back, with an injured expression.

"Why, Elsie!"

The golden-haired girl realized that she had hurt her friend, and she was sorry in a moment.

"Forgive me!" she exclaimed, flinging both arms round Juliet and burying her face on the bosom of the English girl. "I don't know what I am saying to-night, I am so miserable!"

"You should not be miserable. It is all wrong. Perhaps you are miserable over nothing."

"I am not—I know I am not! My heart has told me the truth at last! It is over! My dream is ended!"

"Your dream——"

"Yes, my dream of happiness. Oh, if I'd never come to England! If I'd never come to France! If I had remained in America!"

"What has that had to do with it?"

"Not much, perhaps; but I might have continued to dream on for awhile, and so been happy. I might have continued to think he really and truly loved me, and the end of the dream would not have come so soon."

"But what makes you think——"

"I do not think; I know! It was fate! If I'd never met him! Oh, how well I remember that night! I remember the terrible storm and my father's vessel driving on the rocks. I remember the crash when she struck! And there we clung, with the waves dashing over us and the wind howling, expecting every minute that the vessel would go to pieces. It was awful! There was a gleam of light on the shore. How we watched that
light! And then those daring boys came pulling out in a boat right through the terrible sea. And he was with them—he was their captain! I remember how he fought the sailors who would have taken the boat and rowed away, leaving us all to drown. I can see him as he struck men down with his fists, and he was nothing but a boy! I fell in love with him then, and I knew he was the hero of my life!"

She was sitting up straight now, her eyes shining and a flush of excitement on her lovely face. She seemed to paint the scene with her words, making it clear for Juliet. The English girl listened entranced.

“He was determined that I and my father, who had been injured, should be taken ashore in that boat. But he fought in vain, for the sea smashed the boat against the vessel. Then the only hope that was left lay in the life-line they had brought off from the shore. But, before the breeches buoy could be arranged, the line parted!”

Juliet’s breath was fluttering, and her bosom was heaving. Her imagination pictured the terrible scene. She could see the doomed ship, the struggling sailors, the black rocks, the hungry, roaring, swirling, white-toothed sea. And then the horror of the moment when the life-line parted and the last hope seemed gone.

“I thought it was over then,” continued Elsie. “Despair seized on every one. The sailors rushed about the deck, shrieking, cursing, praying. One of them, whom my father had been forced to discipline, sought
revenge on him. He struck father down and kicked him as he lay on the deck.”

The English girl gasped.

“"The next moment,” panted Elsie, “Frank Merriwell struck the brute senseless to the sea-beaten deck. Then he helped father to a place where the sea would not carry him overboard till the vessel went to pieces. I talked with Frank Merriwell then. Only a few words, for the wind tore the words from our lips, and it was hard to understand. It was enough! I worshiped him. Juliet—I worshiped him! I knew he was the prince of heroes.”

“How did you escape?” asked the thrilled English girl.

“The coast-guard came to our rescue. We saw them by the light of the fire. We saw them when they fired the gun that sent a line over the vessel. The life-line was drawn in. The breeches-buoy was rigged, and one by one every soul left that vessel save Frank Merriwell.”


“Not by the breeches-buoy. He took charge of everything, and he remained behind, although it seemed that the vessel must go to pieces any moment. He even sent the sailors off ahead. He remained till he thought the last one had gone. But one remained. It was the one he had knocked down, and they fought a terrible battle there on the deck. It ended when Frank was cast into
the sea, and the other entered the breeches-buoy and came riding safely through the waves to the shore, where he told us that Frank had been swept over by the sea."

"Mercy! What a thrilling story, Elsie!"

"Frank Merriwell was not dead," the American girl went on. "I was praying for him, praying, praying, praying! I could not believe the hero of my life had died like that! I would not believe it! And I was right. He had been cast over into the sea by the villain, but the very next wave flung him back onto the vessel, and the breeches-buoy brought him safe to shore! Oh, what excitement there was then! How his friends rushed into the sea and brought him, dripping, to land. How they cheered and cheered and cheered! And how I loved him—my hero! I heard their cheering, and I saw them bearing him in their arms, and then I swooned from joy."

"How thrilling! how romantic!" breathed Juliet. "No wonder you loved him!"

"But think what followed!" continued Elsie. "I was nothing but a girl, and I had given him all my heart. I knew then that never, never could I love another! It was not folly. The years since then have proved that. But, oh! think of what followed!"

"What followed, dear?"

"The village people took us to their homes. A dear, good girl put her arms around me and had us brought to her home. She did everything in her power for me. And she was handsome—oh, yes, she was handsome, like you! She had the same glorious black eyes, the
same red lips, the same proud mouth and face, while her hair was like night. I told her how brave and noble Frank Merriwell was, and she listened with her cheeks burning. Then she told me her secret. She loved him! She had known him first, and she loved him!

“But he——"

“She told me that he loved her!”

“Elsie!”

“Oh, think of my position! I wanted to hate her, but how could I? She was so good, so kind, so noble!”

“What did you do?”

“Shut my lips tight and kept my secret.”

“Brave Elsie!”

“Oh, it was hard, hard!” she moaned. “I had to do it, but he—he knew!”

“Did he?”

“Yes.”

“How?”

“Who can tell? I believe our hearts whispered the secret to each other.”

“What did you do?”

“Went away.”

“And left him?”

“And left them together! I resolved never again to see him.”

“Ah! you were brave!”

“But that was not to be, for fate refused to let us stay apart. I did my best. I fought against fate. I
made every sacrifice in my power for Inza Burrage! I nearly broke my heart for her! But now—now my heart is breaking for another reason!"

Then she flung herself down on the bed once more and began to sob.
CHAPTER III.

WORDS OF COMFORT.

Juliet had been much affected by Elsie's story. Again she sought to soothe her friend, but the tempest in Elsie Bellwood's heart was not to be calmed so easily. After a time, however, Elsie's sobbing grew less violent, and she lay there, her face buried in her tear-wet handkerchief.

"Yes," repeated Juliet, "you were brave, Elsie, and you did what was right."

"I did what I believed was for the best," muttered Elsie brokenly. "It was not my fault that we ever met again. It was not my fault that he has seemed to care more for me than for Inza. But it is over now! The end has come!"

"Why, have you ceased to care for him, Elsie?"

The golden-haired girl sat up in a moment.
"Care for him!" she exclaimed, and her voice was hoarse and strained. "I care for him more than ever!"

"Then what is the matter?"

"A shadow has come between us."

"A shadow?"

"Yes."

"Well, if it is nothing more than a shadow, the sunshine will come out and drive it away pretty soon."

Elsie sadly shook her head.
"You do not understand," she declared.
“I think I do,” persisted the English girl.
“But I am sure you do not.”
“Then tell me about it.”
“Oh, I can’t! What is the use? Perhaps I could not make it plain to you, but it is plain enough to me.”
Juliet persisted.
“You must trust me fully, Elsie,” she said kindly.
“You have made me your confidante so far, now tell me all the rest. What is the shadow? When did it come first?”
“I don’t know; but it seems that it came when my little fortune fell to me. There was a change then.”
“And you think Frank Merriwell thought more of you when you had no fortune? That is not the way with most fellows.”
“But he is not like most fellows. I should think you might see it!”
“I’m afraid you have made an idol of him, and it has been a mistake. You have set him too high.”
“Oh, no! no! no! You say that because you do not know him.”
“I know he is a handsome, manly, splendid fellow. Perhaps,” admitted Juliet, with a strange look in her eyes—“perhaps, if I did not know how matters stand between you, I might fall in love with him myself.
“You?”
“Yes.”
“But you—you do not care for a fellow like Frank.”
“No, but ——. Still, I do not wonder. I fail to see
how any girl can help falling in love with him. But you—I thought—Jack Diamond—"

"Who said so? I'm sure I never told you anything of the sort."

Now a cloud came to Juliet's face.

"Don't speak of him!" she exclaimed.

"But you have told me——"

"Like a goose! But don't you see what has happened?"

"Why, I see that you and he have not had any——"

"That's it! It's all over! I don't care! I'm not going to make a fuss about it, you may be sure. It was scarcely more than a summer flirtation, at best. He is handsome, and I did take a wonderful liking to him."

"I thought he liked you."

"I thought so once, but I've changed my mind. He does not."

"How do you know?"

"How do I know? Can't you see? Why, just look how he shuns me! I believe he has taken a positive dislike to me! But who cares! I'm sorry I ever let him see that I cared for him the least bit, but he hasn't much to tell."

"Oh, Juliet! I am sure you wrong him! I am sure he is not a fellow to talk about a girl."

"You don't know. They're all alike."

"You are wrong again. They are not all alike. Frank Merriwell is different from most fellows in one way, and Jack Diamond is different in another."

"Oh, well, let's not talk about him. You were telling
me about the fancied shadow between yourself and Frank. Do you really think your fortune brought that?"

"It seems that it had something to do with it. When I was poor I had never a doubt that he cared for me."

"Well, I must say this is the most remarkable case on record! And when you obtained your fortune he changed?"

"Not right away—not at once."

"How soon?"

"I will tell you the whole truth, Juliet. I believe I made a terrible mistake in coming to England after he did."

"How?"

"It seemed that I followed him, and I am sure he thought less of me for it."

"There might be something in that," admitted the English girl. "I don't believe any fellow cares so much for a girl who pursues him."

"That's it! that's it!" cried Elsie. "But I did not follow him! I didn't! I didn't! When I came across, I did not mean to see him at all! I wanted the voyage. Perhaps—perhaps I thought it would be good to be in the same country where he was!" she admitted, with the hot color rushing to her face. "I—I confess that it seemed I was far away with the ocean between us. But I did not expect to meet him! I did not mean to meet him! I thought it would be fine when he returned home to tell him I had been in England and he had known nothing about it. I planned how I would laugh at him. You see how all my plans went wrong."
"I see," said Juliet. "And you think he felt that you had pursued him?"

"He had no right to think it!" exclaimed Elsie, with a sudden outburst. "He should remember how I tried to avoid him when I thought I was coming between him and Inza! He should remember what I did! He should remember how I tried to make him believe I had tired of him and that I was false and fickle!"

"You did that?"

"Yes, I did that—for Inza's sake! Remember what she had done for me. I could not bear to think that I had destroyed her happiness. I tried to make Frank Merriwell believe me a mean, fickle, light-headed creature."

"What did he do?"

"He refused to believe, or, if he did believe, he refused to drop me till he had an explanation of my actions. He received no explanation from me till force of circumstances revealed the truth to him."

"That was a noble thing for you to do, Elsie. Not many girls would have done that for their best friend."

"Oh, it wasn't noble! I did it because my conscience was making me miserable, and I felt that I must do something."

"He did not turn back to Inza?"

"No."

"That was a test. It should satisfy you."

"It did then, but now there is a change. I felt it when we first met in England. You know I was with him in his own company, his theatrical company, in America.
I'm afraid he began to tire of me then. I did not see it, but for the first time we were much together. It was the test.

"If Frank Merriwell is all you have pictured him, he has not tired of you," proclaimed Juliet positively. "This is nothing more than a misunderstanding. Are you sure it is not mostly fancy on your part? Are you sure you have not exaggerated it?"

"Oh, I am sure! I know my heart! My heart tells me!"

"Sometimes the head is a better guide than the heart. Do not trust too fully to your heart, Elsie. What proof have you?"

"See how it has been since we arrived here!"

"How has it been?"

"Yes; don't you see? He does not care for me."

"What makes you so sure?"

"Hasn't he shown it?"

"How?"

"In every way. He has been different than he ever was before. Once he would not have treated me so."

"Now, tell me just what you mean. He has seemed very pleasant, and I have noticed nothing strange in his behavior."

"Because you have had other things to think about. You have had your own affairs."

"What has he done to make you so positive he has ceased to care for you?"

"He has been—happy!"

"Happy?" exclaimed Juliet, surprised.
“Yes, yes!” cried Elsie passionately. “He has joked and laughed and been happy!”

“And that now he has ceased to care for you? Well, Elsie, I do not understand you. He hasn’t appeared any different to me from what he always has been.”

“That’s it! That is the very thing!”

“What should he appear different?”

“Once he would. Once he would have been distressed.”

“What?”

“About—about the manner in which I—have—treated him.”

“All at once Juliet understood. She had observed that Elsie had given Frank very little attention, and now she fancied she saw the meaning of it all.

“Is that what you mean?” she said slowly. “And you have been treating him coolly?”

“I’ve tried to let him know I wasn’t chasing him.”

“I see.”

“I didn’t want him to think that. I didn’t want him to get tired of me because of it.”

“And all day you have pretended to be happy yourself.”

“But my heart was heavy—so heavy!”

“I haven’t a doubt of it, dear! But I believe you have made a great mistake. I believe you have brought all this trouble on yourself, dear.”

Elsie looked at her friend inquiringly.

“How?” she asked, with suppressed eagerness.
“By your folly.”

“Folly?”

“Yes, for it is nothing more. You told me how you treated him when he was jealous of you at Thorncroft. You refused to forgive him. You magnified his jealousy into something terrible. You seemed to think that he should be perfect, and you made him miserable by refusing to forgive him.”

“He had no right to be jealous of me!”

“Hadn’t he?”

“You know he hadn’t!” cried Elsie resentfully. “I gave him no reason to be jealous.”

“Perhaps not!”

“You say that as if you thought I did! Don’t you believe me? I never gave him the slightest cause for jealousy. What right had he to fancy that I would even think of another?”

“Elsie, you are unreasonable. I don’t say I might not be if I were in your place, but, looking at it as I do, I can see where you have made a mistake. And I want to tell you something now: I wouldn’t give a snap for a fellow who couldn’t be jealous. He would have water in his body, instead of blood, and I prefer the one with blood. I admire the man who can be jealous in earnest—the one who becomes aroused to the killing pitch. Then I know he has good warm blood in his veins! Then I know he can love! Give me the man who will fight for the one he loves!”

“Ah! you are different, Juliet, you are different! I
cannot bear to be unjustly suspected. It hurts me—here!” She pressed her hands over her throbbing heart.

Juliet was keeping cool. She was thinking of the right words to say.

“Perhaps, Elsie,” she said, “Frank Merriwell is more hurt than you know.”

“How?”

“Perhaps he has kept it to himself. Perhaps he has been hurt by your treatment of him, and he has resolved that no one, not even you, should know.”

“Oh, I cannot believe that!”

“Yet it may be true. He may have pretended to be happy.”

“When he was not?”

“That is what I mean.”

“No, no! His happiness was too natural.”

“You say he has been an actor?”

“Yes.”

“A good one?”

“He was simply wonderful!”

“How do you know he is not acting now?”

“If I could think so!”

“Time will tell, for, if he is acting, he cannot wear the mask forever.”

“I am not certain about that. He never does anything by halves.”

“Still, some circumstance will reveal the truth. Take my advice, cease avoiding him. Perhaps you have brought punishment on yourself. Be yourself to-morrow, and the clouds may pass.”
“Oh, if I could think so!” sighed Elsie.

“But you will try to do as I say, dear? You will be your own sweet self, and await developments?”

“I’ll try, Juliet—I’ll try.”

“That is all. I feel sure this will come out right in the end, and you’ll look back on it all and wonder at your foolishness. All will end well.”

“You have given me strength and hope, dear Juliet. How kind you have been to me!”

Elsie threw her arms about the neck of her friend and kissed her repeatedly.

Juliet laughed, and she soon had the American girl in better spirits.

“I believe I shall sleep to-night, after all,” said Elsie, laughing herself. “And I have you to thank for it. But for you, I should have passed a wretched night.”

“What’s the use of being wretched over a fellow?” cried Juliet, with forced gaiety. “Think I’d make myself miserable over anybody? I think not! Why, if I was that kind, I could be in a bad way over Jack Diamond.” She snapped her pretty fingers. “I just let him see that I don’t care a pinch of snuff if he chooses to avoid me. There are others, as I have heard you say. Mr. Rattleton is amusing, and he is making it very pleasant for me, if he will keep it up.”

“Now, Juliet,” laughed Elsie, “don’t you need a little advice yourself?”

“Not a bit.”

“Are you sure?”

“Yes.”
Then I shall not try to give you any."

"I'm glad. I did think Jack Diamond would be a fellow to fight for a girl for whom he cared, but I believe I made a mistake."

"He has a fiery temper."

"Oh, he has a temper, but I think he is given to sulking, and I don't believe he'll fight."

"Perhaps you misjudge him more than I did Frank Merriwell—or more than you seem to think I did."

"Oh, well, I don't care for a fellow who will sit back and let another chap get ahead of him. Really, I am not sure but Harry Rattleton would fight quicker than Mr. Diamond."

"But you do not care for Rattleton?"

"Oh, no!" laughed the dark-eyed English girl. "That is, I care for him only as a pleasant friend. He amuses me. He gets so excited and tangles his words up so fearfully. But he is gallant. I don't believe he ever had a girl in all his life."

"I do not know. I am sure. He is one of Frank's college chums, and I have not known him very long."

"Well, he's all right, and I'm glad he's here, so that I have somebody to amuse me."

"Juliet, do you really care anything for Jack Diamond?"

"What an idea! Why should I? He's almost a stranger to me. Of course, he visited our home in London in company with Mr. Merriwell, and he was with us at Henley and at Thorncroft."

"And sometimes I thought you enjoyed his society."
“Oh, he is cultivated, he is handsome, and he can talk pleasantly. He has one of the most musical voices I ever heard. Those things are attractions, you know.”

Juliet had never unbosomed herself fully to Elsie, and she did not propose to do so now. Elsie’s heart had overflown, and Juliet had given her sage advice. Thinking of this now, a suspicion came to her that some of that advice might apply to her own case. She was not going to give the American girl a chance to turn the tables on her.

“You made a handsome couple on the floor at Thorncroft the night of the dance,” said Elsie.

“Did we?” flushed Juliet.

“Yes. Everybody noticed you. You were in bad spirits till he came and asked you for a dance.”

“I don’t remember about that,” declared Juliet, rather untruthfully. “As I remember it now, I had a delightful time that evening. And you danced with Frank Merriwell.”

“Yes.”

“And the next day you saved his life when that horrid fellow tried to crush his head by throwing a huge rock down on him. He ought not to forget that.”

“That was nothing,” declared Elsie. “All I did was scream a warning that caused him to spring aside.”

“Just in time to avoid the descending stone.”

“It was nothing,” persisted Elsie.

“Whatever you did, he owes you his life.”

“And still I am a hundred times in his debt. He has saved me repeatedly from fearful dangers. Only a few
days before that he rescued me from that ruffian Harris, when Harris tried to carry me off."

"He came near finishing Harris then."

Elsie shuddered.

"Yes," she murmured. "I can never forget that! He ran Harris down and they fought on the broken bridge. I had never before seen Frank like that. I had thought of him always as one who could not give way thus to his passions. He was terrible! He meant to kill Harris then and there."

"That shows he is a fellow who can fight for a girl. I thought that would make you admire him all the more!"

"You didn't see him then. I turn cold when I think how he looked. Harris saw Frank was determined to kill him, and he was filled with terror. A score of times Frank had spared him, but then there was no mercy in Frank's heart. Oh, it was a fearful thing to watch them fighting there on the bridge."

"It must have been thrilling."

"And when Frank fastened his hands on the throat of Harris it was horrible. He threw the ruffian down and held him helpless while he sought to choke the life from his body. I saw Harris' tongue protrude, and his eyes bulge from his head. His face was growing black when I found strength to try to tear Frank's hands away. But I could not do it. I was in despair. My strength failed me, and I fell into the stream."

"Which saved the life of Harris for the time, as Frank sprang in to rescue you."
“I thought he had killed Harris. I cannot forget how I felt.”

“He’d been justified if he had killed him. Elsie, Frank Merriwell is a fellow who will fight for the girl he loves. I do not wonder that you care so much for him. Oh, if Jack Diamond were like him!”

“Then you really and truly do care for him?”

“I didn’t say so.”

“But I believe you do.”

“Believe what you like. I’m going to bed. I’ll not lose any sleep over Mr. Diamond to-night, you may be sure.”
CHAPTER IV.

HIDDEN VOICES.

While the two girls were talking thus, Frank and Jack were having a conversation of similar import. They were together in their room, preparing for bed. Diamond was looking glum enough when Frank came up, placed both hands on his shoulders, and said:

"Forget it! forget it! It may not be true!"

"That's slang," muttered the Virginian, "and it doesn't fit the case at all."

"Sure of it?"

"Yes."

"You look as if something had bitten you."

"Perhaps something has."

"You're blue over that girl."

"I'm blue because I can't get away from her. I tell you, Merriwell, I believe I shall receive a message tomorrow calling me home at once."

"Just so you can run away. Is that courageous?"

"No; but I'm beginning to believe I'm a coward as far as Juliet Reynolds is concerned, and I don't care much."

"You are getting in a bad way when you don't care whether you are a coward or not—you, the hot-blooded Southerner, always ready to fight at the drop of the handkerchief. It's not like you. You should take some
spring bitters, a liver regulator, or something of the sort."

"My liver is all right."

"Then you need a heart regulator."

"Don't joke about it, Merriwell!"

Frank laughed, causing Jack to flush with resentment.

"If you knew what a doleful picture you make just now!" he cried. "Oh, it will all come out in the wash! You've done first-rate to-day. I'll wager that she thinks you don't care a rap for her."

"Yes, but what has it cost me?" hissed Jack. "I've seen her, and I've seen Rattleton bobbing around her. Confound the fellow! He's made me bolder."

"Oh, you ought to be glad that he's helping you out by entertaining her."

"Helping me out?"

"Yes. You don't want the job, and somebody must make it pleasant for her."

"But I'll wager a hundred dollars that he thinks he is cutting ice there!"

"Now you are using some slang yourself, old man."

"You know that is what he thinks," persisted Jack.

"What of it?"

"Hang it! He thinks he's getting the best of me! I don't like that."

"Oh, never mind! She'll snap him over pretty soon, and it will take the wind out of him. It will be your turn to grin then."
“But he makes me so hot that I want to wring his neck! I believe she knows how I feel, and she’s trying to have sport with me. I can’t stand it!”

“You are my friend, Jack, and I am yours. I am also Rattleton’s friend. We have roomed together at Yale, Harry and I, and he was a good roommate in the old days when we were freshies. He is a whole-souled fellow, and he knows very little about girls. He’s flattered because Juliet has jollied him along to-day. He’ll get over it when she drops him. Don’t get hot with Rattleton, old man. It’s not worth the while.”

“It’s all right to tell me not to get hot, but you know I get hot just the same. I have told you everything about this girl, and you understand her influence over me. If I stay here, I’m afraid I shall harm Rattleton.”

“You’ll do nothing of the sort. I’ll look out for that. All of us have our troubles.”

“But your troubles are not of this kind. The girl you like best is struck on you, and you are well matched. There are no clouds between you.”

“No clouds!” said Frank, smiling, while there was a strange twisting at his heart-strings.

“You’re a lucky devil, Merriwell! You always were, and you always will be.”

“Yes, I am lucky,” nodded Frank.

And he, like Juliet, kept the truth to himself. Diamond did not know that Frank scarcely closed his eyes in sleep that long night. He did not know that Frank
lay thinking, thinking, thinking, trying to understand what the change in Elsie really meant.

It was a game of cross-purposes, at which several were playing. Two were taking care not to expose their hands.
CHAPTER V.

THE DRAGON IS OFFENDED.

On the following morning there was little to tell what had passed the night before. With the exception of Diamond, all seemed in the best of spirits. Never was Frank in jollier mood, and the omnibus-ride that followed a late breakfast was made a merry affair by him. He even induced Wellington Maybe to come along, although the shy little tutor found a seat as far from The Dragon as possible.

The Champs Elysees, the Rond Point de l'Etoire, the Trocadero, and other places of interest were seen from the roof of the omnibus. Then the wonderful Eiffel Tower was visited, and they returned to the hotel for lunch.

Aunt Hetty thawed despite herself. Frank had a way of melting the crust off old maids, and, before half the day was gone, The Dragon confidentially informed Juliet that had she met a man like Merry a few years earlier in life she would have captured him by hook or crook. But the maiden lady continued to frown on Mr. Maybe, who dodged every time she looked at him, as if he expected things to come his way.

Diamond had been dragged along by Frank, and he was made doubly miserable by Rattleton's attentions to Juliet and Browning's thinly veiled chaffing. By the time the hotel was reached on the return the Virginian
was "holding on with both hands" to keep his temper in check and prevent the others from seeing how annoyed and angry he really was.

Elsie was waiting for Frank to come to her and be like himself again, but she was disappointed. Browning found a seat beside her and gave her considerable attention, although he sometimes wondered at her absent-mindedness, for often she did not seem to hear a word he spoke when he was addressing his conversation to her.

At lunch, it happened that Aunt Hetty sat at one little table where she was squarely facing Mr. Maybe, who sat at another. With The Dragon at the same table were Juliet, Rattleton, and Frank. After awhile the maiden lady began to get red in the face and look indignant.

"What is the matter, aunt?" asked Juliet, noticing this nervousness.

"Matter! matter!" exclaimed Miss Hardingham, in a strained tone of voice. "Matter enough! I never was so insulted in all my life! It is too much for me to endure!"

"Insulted, aunt?"

"Yes, insulted! That is just what I said! Oh, the insinuating little wretch!"

"Insulted?" said Frank Merriwell, with a tragic gesture. "Is it possible a lady has been insulted while in my company?"

"I've been insulted since I sat down here at this table!"

"Gand of loodness—I mean land of goodness!"
claimed Harry. "Who has dared? Tell me, Miss Hardingham, who has dared do such a thing, and I pledge you my troth—whatever that is—that the ignoble monster shall feel my dusty ragger—no, my trusty dagger."

"It's that little, dried-up, bald-headed apology for a man at the table over there!"

"Is it possible you mean Mr. Wellington Maybe?" asked Frank.

"It may be," murmured Rattleton.

"The same," nodded Aunt Hetty.

"What has he dared to do?" demanded Frank. "Tell me—tell me, and I'll call him down, even though I have to send him up-stairs to do it."

"There must be a mistake," put in Harry gravely. "It cannot be that he would dare insult a lady who was in my company, for he knows his life would not be worth a sinch of puff—I mean a pinch of snuff."

"I tell you he has insulted me," insisted Aunt Hetty. "He—he—oh, how can I tell it! It makes me blush!"

She made a desperate attempt to seem painfully embarrassed.

"Speak!" palpitated Rattleton. "Speak out and fear not, for I am with you!"

"He—he winked at me!" declared Aunt Hetty, with sudden hardness. "He did it, the little monkey! I saw him!"

"There must be a mistake, aunt," said Juliet, finding it difficult to repress her laughter.

"I tell you I saw him just as plain as I can see his bald head this minute!"
“Then his last hour has come!” shouted Rattleton. “Say but the word, Miss Hardingham, and I will slay him where he sits!”

“Hold, Rattles!” exclaimed Frank, grasping Harry by the arm. “Be not so hasty! Remember—remember he is my tutor!”

“Your tutor!” came with high disdain from Rattleton. “What care I for that? Pass me the carving-knife, and I will dissect him limb from limb!”

Aunt Hetty looked at them sharply, rather uncertain as to their sincerity, but there was not the ghost of a smile on the face of either Frank or Harry.

“Land!” she said. “I wouldn’t have you do anything like that. But somebody ought to talk to him. I’d like to give him a piece of my mind.”

“You shall,” assured Frank. “I’ll see to that. Immediately after lunch you shall have that satisfaction.”

Jack, Bruce, and Dolph were given the tip that something was going to happen. Only poor little Maybe was left in ignorance of the coming storm. But he seemed to feel that something was wrong, and his appetite suddenly left him, whereupon he excused himself and hastened from the dining-room. Aunt Hetty glared after him as he departed.

“Go!” she said. “You have felt the scorn of an insulted woman’s eyes. Mr. Merriwell, I don’t see how you ever happened to choose such an insignificant two-legged man for your tutor. Why, he hasn’t a bit of hair on the top of his head.”

“A misfortune over which he is very sensitive,” de-
clared Frank. "If he had such beautiful hair as you, Miss Hardingham, he would be the proudest man in the world."

Aunt Hetty looked confused and flattered, while Juliet smiled down at her plate.

"Do you really like my hair, Mr. Merriwell?" asked The Dragon.

"Indeed I do! And I do not believe there is a single spear of gray in it. Why, I have known persons who were not more than twenty to have gray in their hair."

"And I am twenty-eight," said The Dragon.

Juliet turned a laugh into a cough, holding her napkin over her mouth. It was absolutely certain that Aunt Hetty never would see thirty-eight again. She was somewhere in the forties.

"Twenty-eight!" exclaimed Frank. "I wouldn't believe it!"

"Nor I," put in Harry.

"I suppose not," said Aunt Hetty. "Goodness knows I have had trouble enough to turn my hair gray, and it's a wonder I have a dark hair in my head."

When lunch was over, without warning, Frank led Aunt Hetty and the entire party directly to Mr. Maybe's room. The door was not locked, and so Merry was able to hustle them all into the room before Mr. Maybe realized what was happening.

They found the little tutor before a glass, industriously rubbing his shining pate with some sort of stuff, which he was taking from a bottle marked, "Neverfizzle Hair Regenerator; Warranted to Make Hair Grow on
Bald Heads.” And on the stand near the mirror sat bottles, on the various labels of which were printed: “Egyptian Hair Tonic,” “Phool’s Hair Vigor,” “Doolinger’s Hair Sprouter,” “Sure Cure for Baldness,” “Samson’s Hair Strengthener,” and many others.

Mr. Maybe was so busy that he did not notice them till they had entered the room. Then he dropped the bottle of “Neverfizzle Hair Regenerator,” and made a grab at a towel, which he flung over his head.

“That’s right!” said Aunt Hetty, disdainfully. “I don’t wonder you want to cover that thing! If I had it on me, I’d become a hermit!”

“Er—ah—oh—I beg your pardon!” fluttered the little man. “Did’t know you were coming!”

“I presume not,” said The Dragon. “You didn’t dare remain in the dining-room till lunch was over after what happened, and so you ran away. You’re a bald-headed apology for a man, sir.”

You’re another!” said a queer, squawky voice.

Aunt Hetty gasped for breath.

“Who said that?” she demanded. “It is another insult. I have been insulted again by some infamous creature!”

“You’re another!” repeated the voice.

The Dragon grew crimson as she glared around.

“Who is it?” she gasped. “There must be some horrid, mean man hidden in this room! I call on you, gentlemen, to protect me from his insults!”

“Come off your perch!” gravely said the strange voice.
Aunt Hetty looked ready to faint, while Mr. Maybe looked greatly agitated and confused.

"I demand an explanation!" cried Aunt Hetty. "Where is the creature who is making the insulting remarks? He ought to be horsewhipped!"

"Lay her to! lay her to!" croaked the voice. "She's taking too much wind!"

"The idea!" shrieked the maiden lady. "It's terrible that anybody should dare say such scandalous things about me!"

"Avast, you lubber! Let go the sheet!"

"Now I know it is a man under the bed!" cried The Dragon triumphantly. "He said something about the sheet."

"Bring her up into the wind and hold her there!" rasped the mysterious voice.

"Well, if anybody dares try to hold me in the wind I'll make it warm for him!" gasped Aunt Hetty.

"Put her hard down!" once more came the voice.

"Don't anybody try to put me down!" defied the angry maiden lady.

"Shake out a reef and let her go!"

"I know!" cried Aunt Hetty suddenly. "The wretch is there behind that screen! I demand that he come forth!"

She pointed an accusing finger at a screen in one corner of the room.

"Madam," said the shaking Mr. Maybe, still with the towel over his head. "I assure you it is not a man."
"I wouldn't take your word for it, you hairless, withered-up, knock-kneed accident!"

The Dragon was aroused, and she did not pause to weigh her words.

"Don't aunt!" entreated Juliet, while Harry Rattleton nearly exploded with laughter, and Bruce Browning grinned in lazy appreciation of the comedy of the whole affair. Frank pretended to be very serious.

"Mr. Maybe," he said, "I am surprised and pained. I have been informed that you were very indiscreet at the table, and I brought Miss Hardingham here that you might apologize to her. I hadn't the least idea that you would add to your insults by having a person concealed here in the room for the purpose of abusing the lady in this scandalous manner."

"But there is no person concealed here, Mr. Merrifield," writhed the distressed little tutor.

Then the rasping, croaking voice sang:

"I'm a jolly old liar myself, my boys,
I'm a jolly old liar myself;
I can spin you a tale
That will make you turn pale,
For I'm a jolly old liar myself."

"Oh, this is perfectly awful!" cried The Dragon. "The man must be intoxicated. I believe he's been drinking rum!

"Rum it is a bad thing—
Put it down!
Put it down! -
Life it is a sad thing—
Whoop 'er up!
Whoop 'er up!"
"I'm sure he's intoxicated!" shouted Aunt Hetty. "Gentlemen, I command you to go behind that screen and drag the wretch forth!"

"I go!" declaimed Rattleton, striking a pose. "I go, even though it be to my death!"

Then he made a dive behind the screen. A moment later, he reappeared, bearing a cage, in which a large green parrot sat clinging to a perch!

"Here he is!" came triumphantly from Rattleton's lips, as he held up the cage so all could see the parrot.

"Is it possible?" gasped Aunt Hetty. "I was sure it must be a man."

"You see you were mistaken, madam," said Mr. Maybe, with relief. "It is nothing but a harmless bird."

"Harmless! harmless!" squawked the maiden lady. "Why, I never heard such language in all my life!"

"You're another!" observed the parrot, with a queer wink of its left eye.

"The—the—insolence of it!" gurgled The Dragon, groping for words to express her feelings, and failing to find any.

"You see," hastily put in Mr. Maybe, in his mild, squeaky voice, "I have been wanting a parrot for some time, and I bought this one yesterday from an American sailor who was dead broke and wanted some money. I am not responsible for the language the poor bird uses, but I assure you he has been exceedingly mild in his remarks since you came in."

"You're another!" said the parrot, clasping his beak
with one claw and standing in an attitude suggestive of a small boy with his thumb to his nose. "Roll out! It's your watch on deck, you lubber!"

"Why, if I had that bird, I'd wring its neck in double-quick time!" declared Aunt Hetty.

"She's a slow old tub with barnacles!" squawked the parrot, derisively.

Aunt Hetty nearly collapsed.

"That's some of her nautical talk!" the shivering Mr. Maybe hastened to explain. "Polly must have heard somebody say that about a vessel."

"It's more likely you trained her to say that, you wretch, for the express purpose of insulting me!" screeched The Dragon, glaring at the little man.

"On my word, I assure you that is not true, madam!"

"Which is the same thing as calling me a fabricator! Oh, you wretch! Give me that bird! I'll fix it!"

"You shall not touch it, madam!" declared the tutor, with sudden defiance.

"Who says so?"

"I do!"

"You?"

"Yes, I!"

They glared at each other.

"Let her rip!" rasped the parrot. "Hold her steady and let her rip!"

"Do you hear it—do you hear it, sir?" screamed Aunt Hetty.

"Yes, I hear it."

"Adding insult to insult!"
“If you do not wish to hear it, you can leave this room. I did not invite you here.”

“I came here to demand an apology from you.”

“For what?”

“Your scandalous behavior at the table.”

“Mr. Maybe,” said Frank, “Miss Hardingham said you deliberately winked at her during lunch.”

“Then she’s a—er—mistaken! Winked at her! Winked at that woman? Why, I’d as quick wink at a bob-tailed cat—and I hate cats!”

“Hear! hear! hear!” burst from the maiden lady. “He compared me to a bob-tailed cat! In vain I have sought redress! I shall not endure it! First I’ll begin on that heathen parrot, and then I’ll attend to him!”

She made a pounce at the parrot-cage, but Mr. Maybe caught it up and swung it behind him.

“You shall not!” he defied.

“Hooray!” came from the parrot. “Knock ’em down! Lay ’em out! Wade in and give ’em fits!”

“I’ll give you fits when I get hold of you!” shrieked the furious woman.

“Aunt Hetty, don’t!” entreated Juliet, becoming aware that the joke was going too far.

“Aw! Better drop it, aunt, don’t y’ now,” put in Dolph, who had seemed to enjoy the affair up to this point.

“Not till I have destroyed that insulting bird!” came from The Dragon, as she caught hold of Wellington Maybe. “Give it to me!”

“Never!”
Then there was a squabble for the cage, which was dropped to the floor. The door flew open, and out flopped the parrot, squawking wildly. Round and round the room the bird flew, while Aunt Hetty and Wellington Maybe continued to quarrel, despite all efforts to calm them.

"You are a miserable insult to manhood!" The Dragon cried.

"You are a—a—a—a lady!" sneered the tutor.

"Don't you dare call me a lady, you bald-headed wretch!"

Then the parrot deliberately settled over her head and alighted. She gave a shriek and made a stroke at it. The parrot gave a shriek and flew again.

But its claws had become entangled in Aunt Hetty's hair, and when it flew there was a transformation. The parrot took the hair right along in its claws, for the whole business proved to be a wig, and round the room Polly circled, shrieking derisively and triumphantly. Aunt Hetty clapped her hands to her almost hairless head, a look of unutterable horror coming to her face.

Wellington Maybe gave a shout of astonishment, and then, pointing at her, screamed with laughter.

With the exception of The Dragon herself every one present shouted, even the parrot joining in the uproar of laughter.

And Aunt Hetty, uttering a shriek of dismay, fled from the room.
CHAPTER VI.

HOT BLOOD.

Jack Diamond had not accompanied the others to Mr. Moybe’s room. He went directly to his own room, where he paced up and down, a scowl on his fine-cut face. Jack felt ugly.

“I’m sorry I ever came abroad with Merriwell!” he muttered. “It was a bad thing for me. If I hadn’t, I’d not met that girl. She sets me crazy! I’m a fool! I know it!”

After a little silence, he went on:

“But it was to be—it was fate! Nothing could have prevented it. We were to meet, and I could not avoid her. I wonder how it will end?”

Thus he remained, thinking it over and growing more and more bitter as he thought. He had been unable to keep from observing Rattleton at lunch, and the jolliness of the light-hearted fellow had irritated him beyond measure.

“I shall end by hating him!” he muttered. “He must have seen that I care for Juliet, but that makes no difference to him. I believe he thinks he’s cut in ahead of me! Oh, I’d like to give him what he deserves, and he may get it yet!”

With Jack in this mood, it happened that Rattleton came in and found him there alone.

“Oh, say, where were you?” cried Harry, laughing
heartily. "You should have been with us. We've had the greatest racket! Most fun I've struck since coming here."

Jack was sitting on a chair, his elbows on his knees and his eyes fastened on the floor. He did not speak or look up.

"We went to old Maybe's room," Harry rattled on. "The Dragon declared he winked at her at the table, and we went in a body to see that he apologized. Well, there was a hot time! You should have heard old Maybe's parrot take part in the conversation. The parrot was behind a screen, and Aunt Hetty thought it was a man. She became furious. When she found out what it was, she started in to obliterate the parrot. Polly got out of the cage and took her head for a perch. Got his claws tangled in her hair and tore off her wig. She's balder than Maybe! Ha! ha! ha! How she did root out of that scoom—I mean scoot out of that room! Oh, ha! ha! ha!"

Still Diamond did not look up. Harry stopped, and looked at him steadily.

"Sick?" he asked.

"No!" shortly.

"Blue?"

"No matter!"

Rattleton whistled softly.

"Come out of it!" he exclaimed. "You've got 'em again! Why don't you take something for your liver?"

There was a slight, impatient motion of Diamond's body, but that was all.
“You’re getting slow, old man,” said Harry. “Get into the game! Come on to Merriwell’s room where the others are. They are having a good time, all save Juliet, and she’s gone to Miss Hardingham’s room to pacify the old lady.”

“You speak very respectfully of Miss Hardingham!” sneered Jack, with curling lips. “Miss Reynolds would be pleased to hear you, I am sure!”

“Oh, I suppose I’ve caught it of Dolph. But you know how peculiar Aunt Hetty is.”

“You talk about her as if she were a relative. She is no aunt of yours.”

“Not now,” laughed Harry. “But who knows what may happen?”

Diamond straightened up, and stared coldly and scornfully at his companion.

“You make me sick!” he said.

Harry fell back a step, some of the laughter going out of his face.

“Now, what do you mean by that?” he asked.

“Just what I said.”

“What ails you, anyway? I know you have fits, but what have I done that you jump on me? Are you sore because Juliet Reynolds has given you the cold shoulder?”

The Virginian came to his feet, his face turning pale.

“Rattleton,” he said harshly, “you had better slow up a little! I won’t take much from you!”

“Oh, going to get mad, are you? Why, old fellow, you can’t stand anything? I didn’t suppose you cared
for her, anyway. As long as she doesn't care for you, you're not going to be the fellow to get daffy about it.”

In his blundering way, Rattleton was adding fuel to the flames. He did not mean to aggravate Diamond, but nothing he could have said would have irritated Jack more.

The Virginian strode forward and faced Rattleton.

“I may as well say a few things to you now and here,” he said, his voice harsh and unmusical. “You have an idea that you are making a hit with that girl, and I suppose you think you have cut me out. Stop! I’m not done! You may have her, if she’ll have you; but, if I wanted her, by the gods! I’d take her away from you if I had to kill you!”

“Well, you are crazy!” gasped Harry. “You ought to wake a talk—I mean take a walk and cool down. I didn’t know you had any claim in particular on her more than anybody else, and I don’t believe she knows it. It’s all in your mind.”

“I have no claim on her—I want no claim on her!” panted Jack. “But I do want you to know that I’d get her if I wanted her!”

“Perhaps!”

“I would!”

“She might have something to say about that. And I don’t know that I’d retire now. She’s mighty pleasant company. She seems to enjoy my society, and——”

“She enjoys seeing you make a chump of yourself. What does that girl care about you? Bah! She can marry a lord, if she likes, and what are you?”
"I'm as much as you, Mr. Diamond, that's certain!"

"You—you? Why, you're nobody in particular! Who were your ancestors? You can't go back of your grandfather, and your father runs a grocery store!"

Now Rattleton was touched to the quick.

"Yes," he said, with a show of pride, "my father does run a grocery store, and he has made money honestly at the business. I fail to see that it is anything of which I should be ashamed. I do not make any big blow about my ancestors, because I am not a snob."

"Do you mean to insinuate that I am a snob, sir?" flashed the hot-blooded Southerner.

"I do not insinuate. If I had anything to say to you, I should say it, be sure of that; but I prefer not to say anything to you, Mr. Diamond."

Never before in all his life had Harry Rattleton seemed so manly. He did not quail in the least before Diamond. Jack was quivering with passion. There was a deadly light in his black eyes.

"Do you mean by that that you consider yourself too good to speak to me?" he asked, in an unnatural tone of voice.

"At present I do not wish to speak to you. When you come to your senses, and apologize for your insulting words, I'll be ready to accept you as my friend, the same as ever."

"Apologize—I apologize to you! Ha! ha! ha! When I do that the sun will fall!"

"Very well. As you choose."

Rattleton turned to walk away, but Jack sprang for-
ward like a tiger, grasped his arm, and whirled him about.

“You called me a snob!” he hissed. “I won’t take it from you or anybody! You spoke of an apology! I’ll give you cause!”

He lifted his hand to strike Rattleton, but a ringing command turned him to stone.

“Stop, Jack Diamond!”

Frank Merriwell stepped into the room.

Jack did not strike.

“Merriwell!” he muttered.

With a spring, Frank was between them.

“What does this mean?” he cried, in amazement.

“Have you both gone crazy?”

They were silent.

“Diamond, were you in earnest?”

“Yes!”

“And you really meant to strike Rattleton?”

“Yes!”

“It must be you are crazy! Why, you are comrades and friends!”

“We were,” muttered Harry huskily; “but now——”

“We are not,” finished Jack quickly.

“That’s it,” nodded Harry.

“We are enemies now and forever after!” panted the Virginian.

“Enemies?” cried Frank. “What are you talking about? This is nonsense!”

“He has given it to you straight,” said Harry grimly.

“But it is folly! You cannot be enemies!”
“Is that so?” exclaimed Harry scornfully.

“We are enemies!” put in Jack. “I am done with him!”

“And I with him!”

“I demand an explanation,” came sharply from Frank. “Tell me how this came about.”

“He called me a snob!” answered Jack.

“He sneered at my family!” retorted Rattleton.

“Harry,” cried Frank, “I didn’t think it of you!”

“Did you think me chump enough to let him wipe his feet on me without a murmur? If that is what you thought of me, Frank Merriwell, you made a mistake!”

Harry was thoroughly aroused, and Frank saw it would not be easy to calm him. Always a peaceable fellow, Rattleton had never before shown indications that he could become so intensely angry.

Merry realized that the situation was serious, and that he was in a difficult position as a peacemaker. It would require great diplomacy to bring about an understanding between the two passion-swayed youths. Neither Diamond nor Rattleton showed shame at being detected in the midst of such a quarrel, which told Frank how serious it really was.

“How could this start?” exclaimed Merry.

“He started it!” panted Harry. “I wasn’t looking for trouble with him.”

“If he wishes to say I started it, I’ll not dispute him,” came from Jack; “but he might have kept away from me.”
"I'll guarantee that you are both to blame to some extent, and you will see it so to-morrow."

"What of that?" said Jack, snapping his fingers. "If I knew I were to blame this minute, it would make no difference!"

"Jack, are you willing to put yourself in that light?"

"I do not admit I am to blame. If he'd kept away, it might have been all right."

"You were in a bad mood, old man, and——"

"You don't have to tell me! But I didn't go after him looking for this. He came to me."

"You were ready enough to pick a quarrel," accused Harry. "You were waiting for the opportunity."

"No, I was not! I did not consider you worth quarreling with. Who and what are you, anyhow?"

"I am as good as you, and you know it! Because you came from Virginia, you seem to think yourself better than——"

"Stop, Harry!" commanded Frank. "Stop, both of you! This must go no further!"

"Then let him keep his insinuations to himself!" muttered Rattleton. "I won't stand it!"

"Oh, I haven't said half the things I might!" declared Jack.

"I presume not. You have been dirty enough, but you might go beyond the limit you have set. And you call yourself a gentleman!"

"By the living gods! I'll drive your words——"
caught him by the collar and held him off with superb strength.

"Let go!" panted Jack. "Let me go, Frank Merriwell! You can't stop this!"

"I can and will!" asserted Merry. "Of all crazy fellows, you are the worst! Stop it, both of you! No more of that sort of talk! Why, you are Yale men and classmates!"

"I'm not proud of it!" came from Harry.

"And I'm ashamed of it!" panted Jack.

"And I have brought you abroad to have you become enemies! Look here, Jack Diamond and Harry Rattleton, do you think this is using me right?"

"It can't be helped now," said Harry.

"It's gone too far!" asserted Jack.

"It can be helped—it must be helped! Think what this means to me! I shall feel that I am to blame for it all."

"You needn't."

"No reason why you should think so."

"But I shall. See where you are placing me. I believe I know the real cause of this. Don't be foolish fellows—don't go crazy over a girl who may not care two snaps for either of you."

"I didn't bring her into the quarrel," protested Rattleton. "He was the one."

"He came here and tried to taunt me," said Jack.

"Hadn't a thought of doing anything of the sort," declared Rattleton.

"You know better!"
"That is calling me a liar!"

"Have it so!"

"I won't take that from you or anybody else!"

Now Rattleton made a lunge at the Virginian, and Diamond seemed eager to meet him. Frank gave Harry a thrust that sent him backward.

"Look here," he exclaimed, his eyes flashing, "if you don't let up, by the everlasting heavens, I'll sail into this affair and give you both the worst thrashing you ever received!"

He was in earnest, and just then he felt capable of keeping his word. They knew him, and they knew he meant what he said. If they pressed the matter too far, he would begin, and that meant a hot time.

"It's not your quarrel, Merriwell," declared Diamond.

"It is my quarrel! You are my friends, and, to a certain extent, I am responsible for what you do. If you will not listen to reason, I shall use force."

Jack and Harry glared at each other, but the position Frank had taken kept them apart.

"When he apologizes and swallows his mean insinuations I'll be ready to drop it," said Harry.

"When I do, you'll be a thousand years old!" shot back the Southerner.

Frank Merriwell seemed about to take off his coat.

"If you will have it, go ahead!" he said.

That held them down for the time.

"Now, see here, fellows," urged Merry, "look at the folly of all this. You have been friends for years."
“Not because we had any great love for each other,” declared Harry.

“I accepted Rattleton as a friend because you regarded him as such,” was Diamond’s assertion.

“Think of the jolly times we have had together,” urged Merriwell. “Think of the bicycle trip across the continent, think of our outing in Maine and at Fardale. You were good friends then. Think what it means if you become enemies now. It means the disruption of the old set at Yale. All through the months of my struggles to win my way in the world and get back to college, one magnet drew me to Old Eli stronger than all things else. It was my little band of bosom friends back there. This quarrel means the disruption of that set. If you do not think of yourselves, you should think of me.”

“I’m sorry, Merriwell,” said Rattleton; “but you can’t blame me.”

“You are to blame, and Jack is to blame. I am going back to Yale in the fall, and you will be there. If you are enemies, the fellows will ask how it came about. The story will be told. It will come out that you quarreled while on this trip with me. I—I will be the one who made you enemies! Think of that!”

Frank was using all the diplomacy at his command. He hoped his words would be effective. Rattleton seemed cast down, but Diamond was grim and defiant.

“You say that, Frank, but it will not be so,” he declared.

“Why not?”

“Because I, myself, will declare that you did every-
thing in your power to heal the breach. If necessary, I will take all the blame on my own shoulders, but never again will I be the friend of that fellow Rattleton."

Frank understood the obstinate nature of the Virginian, and he began to despair of winning, although he would not show it.

"You'll regret this, Diamond!" he cried.

"Never!"

"You do not know. I am sure you will."

"So be it, then."

"Once more I appeal to you both, for your own sake, for my sake, drop it. To-morrow it will be known you have quarreled. Elsie will know it. Dolph will know it. Juliet will know it!"

In a moment he realized he had made a mistake by speaking her name. The deadly light in the eyes of the Virginian deepened.

"Let them know!" he said. "Let her know! Perhaps she may be satisfied!"

"You do not care? Your pride does not appeal to you?"

"My pride!" cried Jack. "The pride of a Virginian shall not let him bow to an enemy! There is one way to settle this!"

"How?"

"I'll meet Mr. Rattleton on the field of honor—I'll fight him man to man!"

"A duel?"

"Yes."

"You are mad! Such a thing is impossible!"
“Yes, it is impossible,” sneered Diamond, “for Mr. Rattleton will not fight. He is one of your cold-blooded Northerners, and he has not enough heart in his body to fight like a man!”

Merry was astounded.

“I thought you had gotten over your foolish notions about dueling,” said Frank.

“We are in France now—the land of duels.”

“And you know what French duels are—they are ridiculed by the rest of the world. Don’t try to make yourself ridiculous, Diamond.”

“There would be nothing ridiculous about this duel, I assure you. It would be for blood!”

“It shall never take place, even though Rattleton were fool enough to participate. Harry, I must talk with you alone. Come, Jack, I will see you later. If given a little time, you may come to your senses.”

Frank led Rattleton from the room.
CHAPTER VII.
STUBBORN YOUTH.

Frank sought a place where they would be alone, and then he asked Rattleton all about it—asked to know how it had come about. Harry was depressed now, although he still remained furious toward Diamond. He told the story fairly enough, without coloring it on his side. He asserted again and again that he had not sought a quarrel with Jack, but had tried to avoid it.

Frank listened with growing perplexity.

"It was a mighty bad thing when Juliet Reynolds came to Paris," he said. "If she could know the trouble she has caused!"

"Don't blame her," protested Harry. "She is all right. You know Diamond has sulked."

Frank knew it, but he wished to defend Jack. He was placed in a trying position. For an hour he talked to Rattleton. He could not induce Harry to promise to go to Jack and try to heal the breach, although Harry said he was awfully sorry about what had happened.

"It is for your sake, and not Diamond's, that I am sorry," he said. "No one but you, Frank, could induce me to say that I'd ever have anything to do with him on any condition."

Having satisfied himself that he could bring Rattleton round without trouble, Frank went back to see Jack. He was astounded to find Diamond packing his trunk!
"What in the world are you doing, old man?" he asked.

"Packing up," answered Diamond grimly.

"What for?"

"Going to get out."

"Leave?"

"Yes."

It came near taking Frank's breath away.

"Diamond," he said, at last, "I believe you have gone crazy! Is there a daffy streak in your family?"

"Don't try to joke about it, Merriwell!" the Virginian snarled.

"But I'm not joking. I can't conceive that you are in your right mind."

"You have turned against me, too!" cried Jack, with a fresh burst of anger. "I felt it—I knew it!"

"Jack, you have no right to say anything of the sort! You know better! You know I have not turned against you."

"You talk that way."

"Nothing of the sort. You must realize the place in which I am thrown by this wretched quarrel. You are my friend, and Rattleton is my friend. As a peacemaker, I am liable to make you both my enemies."

"Then do not try to be a peacemaker. It will do no good."

"And you mean to say you are willing to have this miserable piece of misunderstanding make you foes forever?"
Stubborn Youth.

"It is too late to talk about that. What is done is done. He came here to my room and brought it about."

"He came here without the least suspicion that anything of the sort would happen or could happen."

"He told you so, but I swear he began to nag at me as soon as he got into the room."

"I know you are a poor person to stand jollying, Jack, but you should know Harry better than to take him in earnest."

"I haven't a doubt but he has made you believe I was entirely to blame. Well, think so, if you like! I can't help it."

"He has not tried to make me believe anything. I think he has been fair in his story. He admitted that he said some things he would not have dreamed of saying if he had suspected how you felt."

"He did?"

"Yes."

"Well, what more?"

"He is bitter toward you, of course, but still he is willing to try to forgive and forget, for old times and for me."

"That shows the kind of stuff he's made of! It's just what I thought of him! Merriwell, he's mush! He has let a certain person fool him into thinking she cares for him, and it's turned his head. You know she doesn't care for him. But he actually has an idea that he has done me up there! That's what galls me! Oh, you can't patch it up between us, Merriwell! It's too late! I am
done with him for all time, and I'm going to get out of this hotel right away."

"You have mighty little consideration for me, Diamond!"

"Don't put it that way, Frank! You know I'm ready to fight for you any time—you know it. You have roomed with Rattleton. Perhaps it is natural you should side with him."

"I haven't sided with him. I have talked to him till he is ready to swallow his pride."

"That's because he's a Northerner. Southerners do not swallow their pride so easily."

"Won't you listen to reason, and—"

"Don't! It's a waste of breath, old man. Think I could stay here where I'd see him so much! Think I could stay here and see him with her! You know I couldn't. I must go."

Frank began to realize that it was useless to attempt to turn Jack then.

"Where are you going?" he asked.

"I am going to another hotel now."

"And then—what?"

"I shall leave Paris in a day or two."

"And this is the end of our jolly trip which we planned! Well, it is the first time anything of the sort planned by me ever failed to turn out right!"

"I am sorry, Frank! I give you my word that I am! If I could do anything—"

"You can."

"Stubborn Youth."
Jack flung up his hand.

"No!" he declared. "Don't go over it again."

"What shall I tell the others?"

"Anything—I don't care what! Put all the blame on me, if you like! I can bear it! I'll remain your friend, Frank! I'll fight for you any time and anywhere. But let Harry Rattleton keep out of my way!"

And so Diamond left.

Two days passed.

It was evening, and the café chantants of the Champs Elysees were in full blast. In one of the most famous of these popular summer-time theaters of Paris a famous singer was to appear, and the theater was packed.

The swells of Paris were there, and a great crowd of foreigners, Englishmen, Americans, and others, had gathered to see Duclerc. Beneath the trees were little tables where men and women were drinking cooling drinks and chatting.

It was not yet time for Duclerc to come on, and the audience was enjoying itself, occasionally applauding the performers heartily, no matter though they were of a very ordinary sort. A French audience seems determined to be pleased, and is unsparing of applause.

Back at one side, and yet at a table that commanded a fair view of the stage, sat several young men who seemed like students or artists. All of them seemed able to talk either French or English, and the conversation was carried on first in one language and then in the other. At least two or three of them were Frenchmen.

They were attired in evening dress, and seemed deter-
mind to have a good time, for they were ordering drinks freely and becoming rather “gay.” One of this party is known to the readers, for it was Jack Diamond, of Virginia.

Where Diamond picked up his companions it is impossible to tell, but there he was with the party of roisterers, and he was drinking as often as anybody. Diamond had sought excitement after leaving the Hotel Splendide, for he was making a desperate effort to drown his conscience, which seemed constantly rising before him, with an accusing finger pointing at him.

While the party was sitting there, two more young men came in and found a place at a table near. As they sat down, one of them saw Diamond and gave a start. Jack and Harry were face to face!

Diamond was pale in a moment, for all of what he had drunk. His eyes glared like those of a wild beast, and a strange tremor ran over him.

“Bruce,” said Harry, after a moment, speaking to his big companion, “I’m sorry we have taken a seat here.”

“Why?” grunted Browning. “Can’t we see the stage? We must see the stage, you know, for you dragged me off here to get a look at Duclerc, when I might have been resting at the hotel.”

“I had to do something!” exclaimed Harry. “It was lonesome at the hotel.”

“Yes, it has been rather lonesome for you, I fancy, since Diamond left. Queer how that girl threw you down and stepped on you the moment she found he was gone. Never can tell what these girls will do. She was
hitting him over your back, and, when he went, she had no further use for you."

"That's the size of it," admitted Harry sourly; "but don't talk so loud about it. Can't we move to another table?"

"What for?"

"Diamond sits not more than fifteen feet away," Harry half whispered.

"The devil!" grunted Bruce.

Just as Browning looked for Jack, the latter rose to his feet, speaking to his companions.

"Gentlemen," he said distinctly, and yet not loudly, "there is near us a creature whom I have privately branded as a coward. I wish to do it in public now."

With a few quick steps, he was at the table where Harry and Bruce were sitting. In his hand he carried a glass of wine, and, with a quick movement, he dashed the entire contents into Rattleton's face.

"Thus I publicly brand you as a miserable coward!" he proclaimed.

Barely had he spoken the words when Rattleton shot up and struck across the table, lunging forward with his whole body. He reached Diamond's face, but the blow was not heavy enough to knock Jack down, although it made him stagger. Instantly Diamond was grasped by his friends, while Browning had hold of Rattleton. There was no commotion, but the excitement was intense.

"That blow is his answer!" panted the Virginian
swiftly. "Now I give him an answer to his blow. I challenge him to meet me to-morrow at sunrise!"

"I accept!" came like a bullet from Harry's lips. He scarcely knew that he said it, but it was out like a flash.

"Good!" exulted Diamond. "Choose your second. Mine is Monsieur Lourmel here. Let them decide on the place, but I beg you to call the time not later than sunrise the coming morning."

In a helpless way, Harry turned to Bruce.

"Will you——" he began; but the big fellow cut him short.

"Not on your life! And you won't, either! You are not going to fight him!"

"I am—I must!"

"Not much!"

"Quick!" shouted Diamond. "If Mr. Browning will not act as your second, permit me to present Monsieur Reaumur, a thorough gentleman, who has served in such a capacity before, and who, I think, will serve you."

"I accept Monsieur Reaumur as my second," said Rattleton.

"Then let the gentlemen make the arrangements!" cried Diamond. "We will retire from the theater without delay. Come."

"Boy, are you crazy?" gasped Browning, shaking Harry.

"No, not crazy," was the answer; "only mad!"
CHAPTER VIII.

WHAT THE DUEL BROUGHT.

The flush of coming dawn was in the sky, and birds were twittering among the trees of a beautiful park on the outskirts of Paris. There a party of five persons had gathered. Two of them were Jack Diamond and Harry Rattleton. The others were the two chosen seconds and a gray-bearded surgeon.

Arrangements had been made for the duel that was to take place, and already the surgeon had opened his case, that he might be ready for any emergency. Diamond and Rattleton were standing in their shirt-sleeves, while the seconds were making some final arrangements.

Harry looked round at the beautiful scene. The soft pink in the eastern sky was turning to gold, and soon the sun would appear above the horizon. A cool breath rustled the leaves of the trees and fanned his hot brow. The roofs and spires of Paris lay in a sea of blue haze, looking like a fairy dream. Never had the world seemed more beautiful. Harry Rattleton realized how beautiful it really was. Then came the thought that soon he might leave it. Diamond, he knew, was a skilful swordsman, and it seemed certain that the Southerner would carry the affair to a finish.

The golden light in the east grew stronger. The sun would appear in a moment. The seconds separated. From a case, two handsome swords were produced, and
Rattleton was given first choice. He took one without looking at it. Diamond fiercely snatched the other, trembling with the passions of the moment. His eyes were bloodshot, and his appearance was that of one under a great strain.

Positions were assumed, and then, just as the edge of the sun appeared, the swords in the hands of two American lads, who had been friends, clashed together. From the very start the duel was fierce and exciting. Diamond fought like a whirlwind, and it was more by luck than skill that Harry held him off.

Out of the blue haze that swam over Paris came a galloping horseman. The beat of the animal’s hoofs sounded clear and rhythmic on the morning air. Nearer, nearer, nearer came the horse and rider.

Clash! clash! clash!

Rattleton was beginning to give out. He was defending himself in a blind way.

Straight on came the horseman.

No one paid the slightest attention to the approaching man till the horse was reined on its haunches close at hand, and from its back leaped Frank Merriwell! Without pausing to think of any danger, Frank fairly flung himself between the combatants.

This occurred just as Diamond made a thrust that Rattleton could not check. The shining blade did not reach Harry, but a cry of horror came from all as Frank Merriwell staggered back and fell to the ground, wounded and bleeding!

The duel was ended!
They brought him back to the Hotel Splendide, his wound having been dressed by the surgeon before he left the field. It was in his thigh, and the surgeon pronounced it as not at all dangerous.

Perhaps the most repentant person in all Paris was Jack Diamond. Jack returned to the hotel with Frank, who made light of the wound.

"It all came through me, Merry!" muttered the Virginian. "I am ready to stand any punishment! Denounce me! Have me arrested!"

"Now you are talking foolish, old man," smiled Frank. "This little scratch is nothing. I'd taken one far more serious could I have been assured an hour before that I would reach you in time to stop that foolish duel. Browning brought me word before midnight, but he did not know where you were to fight, and, as Rattleton did not return to the hotel, I had to make a hustle to get on the track of this business. Bruce knew where the arrangements were made, and, by the rarest chance, I finally found an old waiter who had heard enough to put me onto the right place. It was morning then, but I got a horse and rode like a thousand furies to try to stop the business. I was in time and I'm satisfied."

"I don't suppose you'll ever forgive me, Merriwell?"

"On one condition."

"What's that?" asked Diamond hoarsely, although he knew full well what it would be.

"You must shake hands with Rattleton, and call the past buried."

Diamond bowed his head, his face pale as death. It
was a terrible blow to his pride, but he realized that Frank had a right to demand this of him.

"Come, Jack," urged Merry. "Why shouldn't you? Harry has been miserable enough. Juliet dropped him like something red-hot the moment she found you had left the hotel."

"Did she?" cried Jack.

"Sure thing! He told me you were right in saying she was making a fool of him, or something of the sort."

"He said that?"

"Yes."

"Where is he?"

"Will you take his hand?"

"Bring him here, and see!"

"All right."

Frank rang, and then sent out for Harry.

While they were waiting, Merry said:

"No one need ever know what happened to me, old man. I'll claim that I was doing something with a knife, and it slipped and cut me there on the hip. That will be a white lie, you know. In this case, a white lie is pardonable."

Jack's pale face flushed a bit.

"You mean to keep it a secret?" he muttered. "You do not mean to let people know how you were hurt?"

"That's just it."

"Why should you do that for me?"

"Because it is best. But you must promise to come back to the hotel."
“How can it be kept a secret? Rattleton knows.”
“Never fear. He will not tell.”
“Browning knows.”
“I silenced him before I started to hunt for you, and I’ll keep him silent.”
“Frank, I believe I am just beginning to realize what your friendship really means!”

There was a step at the door, which swung open. Harry Rattleton came in and stood facing Jack Diamond across the bed on which Frank lay.

“Harry,” smiled Merry, “are you ready to bury the hatchet, smoke the pipe of peace, and retire from the war-path?”

Rattleton hesitated and looked at Diamond. Of a sudden all the better nature of the Virginian assumed control of him. His evil passions were subdued and crushed. With a quick movement, he stretched his hand across the bed.

“Won’t you take it, Harry?” he cried appealingly. “I apologize! I was all wrong! Won’t you take it?”
“You let your hire—I mean you bet your life!” cried Rattleton, as he grasped the outstretched hand.

“Talk about your Peace Congress!” exclaimed Frank. “What’s the matter with this?”

Arm in arm, the two friends left the room, and Frank lay still on his couch. Suddenly the door opened and Elsie Bellwood entered. Her face was pale, and she paused in agitation just within the door. Frank started up on the couch.

“Elsie!”
The name trembled on his lips.

"Frank!"

It was a cry of mingled gladness and pain, for she saw the old love light in his eyes. She sprang toward the couch, beside which she dropped on her knees.

His hand caught hers, and he kissed her.

"Frank," she cried, "you are hurt! They did not tell me till just now. Then—then I came."

"I asked them to tell you."

"Then you are badly hurt? Oh, how did such a terrible thing happen? Tell me, tell me!"

"Don't get excited, Elsie. The injury is not serious. I instructed them to tell you so."

"I know, but that frightened me all the more."

"It must have been in the manner they told you."

"Oh, I thought all sorts of terrible things! Tell me—tell me all the truth!"

"It's a mere scratch—a slight cut here on the hip. The doctor says I'll be all right in a few days."

"Honestly?"

"Honestly."

"I am so glad!"

In her sweet, impulsive way, she flung her arms about his neck, and then, just as she seemed about to kiss him, she paused, a great flush crimsoning her pretty face. He saw it, and, a moment later, he kissed her.

"Now you are like my little sweetheart again!" he murmured.

"And you—you," she breathed, "are like my hero!"

There was a moment of silence. He looked into her
eyes, and she hid her blushing face on his breast. Of a sudden, she straightened up.

"You have not told me all!" she hastened to say. "You have not told me how it happened! How were you injured?"

"It was an accident, Elsie."

"An accident? How could such a terrible thing happen?"

"You are making it far worse than it really is, little girl. I told you the truth when I said it was a mere scratch. If it were serious, I'd be in bed. The surgeon said I must keep still to-day and to-morrow."

"The surgeon? Was it necessary to have a surgeon?"

"Well, there happened to be one on the spot."

"Happened to be one on the spot?" she repeated, puzzled. "Why, Frank, it can't be that you—that you——"

"What?" he laughed.

"That you fought a duel?"

"No, I did not fight."

The manner in which he said this conveyed a meaning not expressed by the words.

"You did not? Then—then it was somebody else? But how did you happen to be wounded?"

"Don't ask too many questions about it, Elsie, please. I can't tell. You'll forgive me if I do not tell. It's all over now, and the end of the duel was happy enough, even though I did get scratched."

Before his eyes rose a vision of Jack Diamond and Harry Rattleton fighting like tigers with gleaming swords in the first rays of the rising sun. Then he saw
another vision, that of Jack and Harry clasping hands over the bed on which he lay, after being wounded by the sword in Diamond's hands as he rushed between them. Yes, the end of the duel was "happy enough!"

"What if you had been killed, Frank?" came excitedly from Elsie's lips. "What if you had died without—without—"

"Without what, sweetheart?"

"Oh, I can't say it!" she cried, her eyes drooping, and the hot tide swelling back to her face again.

"Elsie," said Frank, "something tells me there has been a misunderstanding between us. I have thought that—"

He paused, hesitated, and felt reluctant to go on.

"And I have thought, too," she said. "You have given me reasons to think many things, Frank."

"Are you sure of that? Were not your reasons mere fancies, little sweetheart?"

She shook her head.

"Oh, no! You were changed."

"So were you, Elsie. You were not like the little girl I used to know. I first saw the change when we were in England, and it was plain enough when you came here. It caused me to wonder much, though I said nothing. I know I was unjustly jealous of you when we were at Thorncroft, but I humbly asked forgiveness, and, knowing you as I did, or as I fancied I did, I could not believe you would treasure that up against me. Tell me it was not that, Elsie."

"It was not."
"I felt sure. Yet what could it be? I asked myself that question a hundred times. When you were poor you seemed entirely different; but you had come into a fortune, and you were no longer poor. You were independent, and that brought the change."

She started back a little and looked at him reproachfully.

"Can it be you thought that of me, Frank?" she asked.

"Thought what?"

"That a little money would make a change in my feelings toward you. Oh, I do not wish to believe you thought that of me! I do not wish to believe you could think me so mean!"

"I didn't like to think so, Elsie; but how else was I to explain the change that had taken place in you? I was groping in the dark."

"And all the while there was a change in you. I could not understand that. It made me think that—that—perhaps——"

It was her turn to hesitate and be at a loss for words.

"Just what did it make you think, Elsie? Tell me all, so that we may come to an understanding now."

"Well, it made me think that, perhaps, you had grown tired of me," she desperately confessed. "I thought I had made a mistake in coming across the ocean, though I did not mean to see you at all when I left New York. It was accident that I came on you almost as soon as I arrived in London. I regretted that accident more than I can tell."
"And you thought I had tired of you?" exclaimed Merry, in reproach.

"How could I think otherwise when you were so strange?"

"You were the one who was strange. After coming to Paris, you greeted me chillingly, and then gave me no attention at all."

"And you did not seem to mind it!"

"Because I would not let the others see that there was anything wrong."

"Was that the reason why you laughed and joked and seemed perfectly happy?"

"Yes."

"And I fancied it was because you did not care!"

"I cannot tell you how hard you struck me by your coldness."

"And I cannot tell how much I have been pained by your failure to come to me and claim my company."

"Elsie," said Frank seriously, "we have been playing at cross-purposes, but we understand each other now, and I am glad!"

"Glad!" she sobbed, although her face was radiant. "It seems that I never was so happy before!"
CHAPTER IX.

COOLNESS.

Juliet Reynolds was waiting for Elsie when she came from Frank's room. The English girl was so excited that, for the time, she did not observe the happiness on Elsie's face.

"How is Mr. Merriwell?" Juliet asked.
"He is hurt some."
"Dangerously?"
"Not at all."
"You are sure?"
"Yes."
"I am glad of that! How did it happen?"
"He would not tell."

Juliet drew Elsie into a room where they were quite alone.

"Haven't you an idea how it happened?" she breathlessly asked.
"Yes, I have an idea," confessed the golden-haired girl.
"He was in a duel!" panted Juliet. "I am sure of it!"
"What makes you sure?"
"I heard Dolph talking to Mr. Browning."
"What did they say?"
"I did not catch much of it, but they were talking about a duel. I thought perhaps Mr. Merriwell would tell you all about it."
“He did not,” declared Elsie, greatly to Juliet’s disappointment.

“Did you ask him?”

“Yes.”

“And what did he say?”

“That he was not in the duel himself, and then he forbade me to ask further questions.”

“That he was not in the duel himself? Then who—who could have been in it? and how did it happen that Frank Merriwell was wounded?”

“How do you expect I can tell when he did not tell me?”

“There is something mysterious about this, Elsie. Do you know that—that—”

“What?”

“Mr. Diamond has returned?”

“No.”

“It is true. He’s come back to the hotel.”

“How do you know?”

“I saw him a little while ago.”

“He must have heard of Frank’s injury. That was what brought him here.”

“He has come to stay.”

“Do you know that?”

“Yes.”

“How?”

“I heard him tell Mr. Browning.”

“Well, I don’t know that it is strange. He has returned because Frank is hurt, and has decided not to go away again.”
"I am sure that is not the explanation."
"Then what is the explanation?"
"Something—something I do not yet know," she excitedly exclaimed. "But I will know! I will solve the mystery of this affair!"
"When you do, I presume you will tell me all about it?"
"Of course. But I don't know! I'm not certain you have told me everything you know."
"I have told you everything I know."
"But not all you suspect?"
"You say that."
"I believe it. I am sure you suspect more than you have told. I half suspect lots of things. It would seem strange if they proved to be true."
"Would you be happy if they were true?"
"Happy? I don't know. I have not thought about that." A cloud gathered on the handsome face of the English girl.

Elsie was watching her friend. She reached out a hand and dropped it on Juliet's arm.

"I am afraid you would not be happy if you found out," she said. "Better not try to learn the truth."

"Oh, but I shall!" the dark-eyed girl exclaimed. "If they fought over—— I am going to find out about it! Somebody must tell me! I'll find Dolph!"

She hastened from the room to the one which served for common parlor for all the little party, taking Elsie along. There they found Rattleton and Browning tall
ing earnestly, while Diamond stood looking out of a window.

As they approached Rattleton and the big Yale man, the former was heard to quickly say:

“Here she is! Keep corked up, and wake a talk—I mean take a walk as soon as you can.”

“I’m glad we’ve found you!” exclaimed Juliet, as they came up. “We are on an investigating tour. We are seeking information. Do you know anything?”

“Very little,” said Browning, with a lazy grin.

“And you?” she asked of Rattleton.

“Since meeting you,” said Harry, with great coolness, “I have come to the conclusion that I do not know anything at all.”

There was a certain significance in his words, which she did not fail to detect, and the faintest bit of added color crept into her cheeks.

“Oh, you men are so stupid!” exclaimed Juliet, petulantly. “That is, you are stupid when you want to be. Then you never do know anything!”

“Thank you,” drawled Bruce.

“But I know some of you can give us the information we seek,” Juliet went on. “We want to know how Frank Merriwell was injured. Will you tell us, Mr. Browning?”

“Miss Reynolds, I was not present when it happened.”

“But you know——”

“Nothing.”

Impatiently, half angrily, she turned to Rattleton. “What can you tell about it?” she demanded.
"I just informed you, Miss Reynolds, that I have lately arrived at the conclusion that I know nothing at all. You cannot expect to obtain information from one who knows nothing."

Juliet uttered an impatient exclamation.
"Oh, you are very stupid, aren't you?" she laughed.
"Are you going with us on the Bois to-day?"
"I have decided to spend the day otherwise."
"But we shall miss you."
"I hardly think it will be of consequence to any one."
"Oh, but it will be—to me. I want you to go, Mr. Rattleton."

She said this in her most enticing manner. The blood rushed to Harry's face, but she could not deceive him again. He knew Jack Diamond was in the room as well as she knew it, and they both knew that Diamond could hear every word they spoke.
"You will have to excuse me, Miss Reynolds, for I have made arrangements to go elsewhere."
"But for me you will break the engagement and accompany us to the Bois?" she urged, a luring light in her glorious eyes.
"I never break engagements, especially when they are made with very dear friends."
"Then this engagement is with very dear friends?"
"No; with a very dear friend—only one. We have decided to spend the day together."
She tossed her head.
"Oh, very well!" she exclaimed. "I don't suppose your loss will break up the party. We may be able to
find somebody who will take your place. Now, here is Mr. Diamond!"

She hastened over to the window by which Jack was standing. He turned to meet her, without a smile on his dark face. She shivered a bit as she saw his look, for it was like the shadow of tragedy. But she put on a brave front, saying:

"I am so glad you are here, Mr. Diamond! You must make up the party. I hear Mr. Merriwell is not seriously injured, and I do not suppose the accident will interfere with our excursion."

Jack was silent, looking straight at her, seeming to look through her.

"I presume you have seen Mr. Merriwell since he was injured?"

The Virginian bowed.

"Then it must be that you know——"

"Like Mr. Rattleton, since meeting you, I have decided that I know very little."

His voice was even more chilling than his look.

"Oh, such men!" she cried, with a pretense of despair. "Well, never mind if you do know very little, you must come with us to the Bois. We'll have a lovely time. I wish you to come, and I'll take particular pains to see that you enjoy the trip."

He stood there, something like satisfaction and triumph coming to his face.

"Miss Reynolds," he said slowly and distinctly, "I beg you to accept my thanks, but I cannot accept your
invitation. I have an engagement with my very dear friend, Mr. Rattleton. I pray you to excuse me.”

Then, with great politeness, he bowed himself away, joined Harry, and the two left the room arm in arm, turning to bow once more as they reached the door.

Juliet Reynolds was not in the best humor imaginable when she returned to her room, Elsie Bellwood accompanying her.

“I know as much as I did when I started out!” she cried, her eyes gleaming and her cheeks flushed. “They would not tell me anything.”

“Perhaps it is just as well for your peace of mind that they did not,” said the golden-haired girl.

Juliet caught hold of her, almost fiercely.

“What do you mean, Elsie?” she demanded. “Tell me what you mean! I believe you know more than you have told me!”

“No; I know no more than I have told you.”

“Then you suspect.”

“Do you suspect nothing yourself?”

“Yes, but still I am in the dark. They are friends, and a little while ago——”

“Of whom are you speaking?”

Juliet hesitated, showing confusion, and then quickly said:

“Mr. Rattleton and Mr. Diamond.”

“They have always been friends”

“Not always.”

“Always till very recently. If they became enemies, something must have happened after our arrival in Pari-
Coolness.

to make them that. Jack Diamond is a terrible fellow when aroused, and I should not like to have him for an enemy. I should not like to think that I had made him an enemy to anybody else."

"Oh, but it's all right now. They are friends again."

"At what cost? Do you know?"

"At the cost of my pride!" cried Juliet, with something like tears of anger bedewing her eyes. "Rattleton never was that way before! He's always been ready enough to go anywhere I wished him to go."

Elsie put her arms about her friend.

"Juliet," she said softly, "do you think you used Harry Rattleton just right?"

"What do you mean?"

"Did you not use him against Diamond? Did you not make him believe you cared too much for him just so that you might reach Jack Diamond?"

"Oh, it was nothing but a little harmless amusement!"

"Was it harmless?"

"Of course."

"I am not sure of that, are you?"

"How could it be anything but harmless?"

"Very easily with a fellow like Jack Diamond. He is quick and passionate. You had no right to make Harry believe you really cared for him if you did not, and I know you did not."

"How do you know?" asked Juliet defiantly.

"Because you have the same as told me that. Because you dropped Harry the very day Jack left the hotel."
Because you paid no heed to his misery after you dropped him, though it was apparent to everybody."

"Oh, how could I pay attention to him if he moped around?"

"Couldn't you? You could pay attention to him before that! You could break the bond of friendship between him and Jack Diamond! When it was broken, you did not seem to care. Oh, Juliet! I do not wish to think you did not care! I do not wish to think you would break the friendship of two young men and still be happy! Friendship is a jewel, something to be treasured, something to be coveted. If I thought I had ruined the friendship of two persons who had been constant and true till I came between them, I should be miserable."

Juliet tried to keep up her defiance.

"You and I are two different persons," she said. "I am not like you."

"How true! You are handsome, Juliet. You can sway men. I do not like to think you are cruel!"

"Why should you think so?"

"There are many things that make it seem so."

"What are they?"

"Things of which I have spoken. You were trying to pique Jack Diamond by giving attention to Harry Rattleton. It made no difference to you that Harry might take it seriously and fall deeply in love with you. You did not pause to think how much pain it would cost him when you flung him off. You did not seem to mind the pain he showed when that actually happened."

"Oh, you are making too much of a little flirting."
"Am I? You gave Harry no notice while Jack was away, but now, when Jack has returned, you again notice him—you ask him to accompany you on an excursion. Why do you do it? Simply because Jack Diamond is there and can hear you."

Juliet laughed wildly.

"And what satisfaction do I get!" she exclaimed. "Why, he simply tells me that he doesn't care to go with me! Oh, that was fine! What did you think of that?"

"I think that Harry Rattleton's eyes had been opened, and he was seeking revenge for your treatment of him."

"He got it!"

"And Jack Diamond——"

"He got it, too!" she exclaimed, again laughing. "They both hit me hard!"

"Do you not feel that you deserve it?"

"I don't know! I don't know that you have a right to tell me I deserve such treatment! You seem to think I've done something awful by playing one fellow against the other."

"I am glad nothing worse has come from it."

"Nothing worse?"

"Yes, for something worse might have come."

"Something worse than what? What are you talking about?"

"Frank Merriwell has been injured."

"Yes, but he was not in it."

"Still, I believe you are responsible for the injury he received, Juliet!"
Those words brought the English girl up standing, gasping for breath.

“How could I be responsible?” she panted, in wonder.

“Don’t you know? Can’t you guess, Juliet?”

“I have tried to guess, but I do not know. Tell me what you think, please.”

“You remember that Bruce Browning brought some word to Frank just after we returned from the theater last night?”

“Yes.”

“And Browning was very excited.”

“He seemed to be.”

“Frank excused himself and hurried away with Browning.”

“Yes.”

“Browning had been out with Rattleton.”

“I know.”

“But Rattleton did not return to the hotel with him.”

“No.”

“This morning Browning, Diamond, Rattleton, and Frank all arrived here, and Frank is injured. He has been cut on the hip. It seems to me that it cannot be hard to guess the truth. There was a duel. Frank has said he did not have any hand in it. Then it must have been between Jack Diamond and Harry Rattleton.”

Juliet’s bosom was heaving.

“Oh, such a thing is preposterous!” she exclaimed.

“Harry Rattleton would not fight!”

“You do not know. He is a person one might think would not fight, but you may have aroused the fighting
part of his nature. It may be that he and Jack Diamond stood face to face trying to take each other's lives, and Frank Merriwell may have received the wound in parting them."

"But they are friends now."

"Both love and respect Frank. What could make them friends again so quickly as for him to be injured by one of them in separating them?"

Juliet walked twice the length of the room, her hands clenched. Then she stopped and began to laugh. That laugh made Elsie shudder.

"And they fought over me!" she cried. "Well, that is thrilling and romantic enough! I didn't think Harry Rattleton had the blood in his body to do that! I shall think more of him after this. Both of them have humbled my pride, but I'll yet win attention from the one I want, and then——"

"And then—what?" questioned Elsie eagerly.

"I'll keep him—or cast him aside!" laughed Juliet, with apparent heartlessness.
CHAPTER X.

BART HODGE’S LETTER.

On the following day Frank received a letter from Bart Hodge. It happened that Browning, Rattleton, and Diamond were in the room when Merry tore open the envelope and read the letter. They saw his face light up with sudden eagerness, which increased as he progressed.

“Huah!” grunted Browning, who was smoking. “Must be rather interesting.”

“I should say so from Frank’s appearance,” nodded Harry. “He looks as if somebody had told him a distant relative had died and left him a pile of dough.”

“And he’s so interested that he doesn’t hear a word you are saying,” put in Diamond.

“Think he might read it to us,” said Bruce invitingly.

“I wouldn’t mind hearing it,” grinned Harry.

“Nor I,” admitted Jack.

Then they were silent, staring at Frank.

“Well, I don’t see anything the matter with that!” exulted Frank, as he finished reading.

“I’m another,” said Harry. “Perhaps I might if I knew what it was about, but under the present existing state of circumstances—”

“Avast!” rumbled Bruce. “Steer clear of those big words, or they’ll get you all tangled up, Rattles.”

“It’s from Hodge, fellows,” explained Frank.
“How’s his liver?” inquired the big Yale man cynically. “Has he been taking anything for it lately?” “What does he have to say?” asked the Virginian. “He proposes a scheme.” “Man proposes—and woman refuses,” muttered Harry. “After that she’s his sister.” “Sometimes she’s not worth being reckoned as a sister,” said Jack grimly. “Hodge wants us all to come home at once,” Frank announced. “He does?” “Do tell!” “Really!” “He’s struck a snap.” “Stepped into a bear-trap or something?” asked Harry. “You know he’s summering in New England, grinding to fit himself for readmission to college in the fall.” “Is he?” “I didn’t know.” “Thought he said that wasn’t possible.” “His father is dead, you know.” “Yes, you told us that when you had the other letter from him.” “And now he is no longer an outcast from his home.” “Which is lucky for him.” “You are right. Hodge had a hard time of it. His mother kept him on his feet when you gave him money to pay his gambling debts at college,” grunted Bruce. “A debt which he has notified me he will pay the moment we meet, as his mother knows all about it, and
is very grateful. Bart's father was well fixed, and Hodge will not have to worry about money now."

"That will be a relief for him. But what's this scheme you spoke of?"

"I'm coming to that. He took his mother down into New England for the summer, and they are stopping at a little town called Maplewood. There are a number of other summer resort towns in the vicinity, and baseball is beginning to seethe around there."

"Hodge should be strictly in it," observed Rattleton. "He wants to be."

"Then why doesn't he go in?"

"Says Maplewood, where he is, has no team."

"He ought to be able to get onto the other teams."

"He could, if he liked; but he has a scheme of his own. Listen."

Frank read the letter, which was as follows:

"Dear Old Partner: Was glad to receive your last letter, in which you said you were having some hot times in Paris. You did not say what sort of 'hot times,' but I know you have a way of making things warm wherever you go, and you can find almost anything you are looking for in Paris. I am cramming away, trying to get in shape to go back to Yale in the fall. Mother is dead anxious for me to get back all right, and I am ready to do anything I can for her. I ought to be, for she did not desert me when my father, God rest his soul, kicked me out of doors. I have a good mother, Frank, and sometimes I am positively wretched with shame when I think what an unworthy son I have been. I am bound to try, with all my strength, to do better in the future,
but, if I ever become anything worthy in this world, I shall owe it all to my mother—and you! Oh, I have not forgotten how you stood by me when the clouds were blackest, Frank Merriwell! Don’t think Bart Hodge is a fellow to forget! It was your hand that kept me from sinking to the depths from which I could not have struggled, and my mother knows all about it. You cannot conceive how anxious she is to see you. I have talked about you so much that she says she’ll never rest till she stands face to face with you and tells you all her gratitude and thankfulness for your kindness to me.”

Merry paused a moment to clear his throat, for, somehow, a sudden mist had risen to his eyes and his voice was husky.

“Well, hanged if I ever thought Bart Hodge had a particle of gratitude in his body!” exclaimed Rattleton.

“I thought him a chap to forget a favor pretty readily,” confessed Diamond.

“I never thought much about him anyway, save that he was a hot-headed, unreasoning creature,” admitted Bruce.

“And all of you misjudged him and wronged him,” declared Frank Merriwell. “Not one of you understood him. No person could have a deeper sense of gratitude than Bart Hodge.”

“From that letter, I’d say you were right,” said Jack.

“Go on reading,” urged Bruce and Harry.

Frank resumed:

“I’d like to be there with you, Merry, but it must be getting hot in Paris, and I prefer God’s world to
man's town in the summer. I never quite understood why so many people rush off to Europe every summer, and leave the most beautiful country on the face of the globe. They spend their winters in America, and then go to Europe to spend their summers and their money. No summer place can be prettier than Maplewood, where I am stopping. It is a small village, but it is on the coast, and there are mountains, forests, and lakes all around. The fishing here is great, and the bicycling is not so bad, for there's always a hill to coast down after one has been climbing. Mother was quite ill when we came here, but I can see that she improves every day.

"Now to get at what I wish most to write about. Close in this vicinity are three towns, Rockford, Seaslope, and Torrentown, which are connected by trolley railroads. The trolley-cars also run to Maplewood in the summer, although they are discontinued in the winter. Rockford started out with a semi-professional ball-team as an attraction for the summer visitors who go there. It was followed closely by Torrentown, which got up a better team, as it is almost a city and has more money to spend for players. Then Seaslope followed suit, and now they are forming a league. Poor little Maplewood is out in the cold, though car-loads of people go from here every day to see the other teams play. The regular league series will begin in a week, and I think there will be some red-hot ball-playing around here. Seaslope has a team made up almost entirely of college players, men who are not supposed to play professional ball. They board at the best hotel in the town, and, although the college men have not signed contracts, I rather think they are well paid for their playing. Now, that is what I call a great snap! They spend the summer at a fashionable resort, play ball, live at a swell hotel, and jingle dollars in their pockets. Torrentown has a different sort of a
team. It is made up of men who aim to become professionals, with but two college players in the lot. They are fighters and bullies, and they mean to win by bluff and bluster when they cannot do so on their merits. Thus far they have shown themselves superior to both Rockford and Seaslope, but Rockford is picking up a gang of fighters, and there is bound to be a racket.

"Now to get at my scheme: Maplewood wants a ball-team, but doesn't see any way of getting what it wants. The other places do not consider Maplewood in it at all. They sneer at it. This sneering has warmed me up. I've had a wild idea of organizing a team here troubling me for some time, but I don't want to go into this thing unless I can get together an aggregation that is capable of holding its own with the other places. I hardly think I am the man to organize such a team, anyhow. If you were only here, Frank, you could do it. And you could handle the team, too. I know I would not be suitable for a manager. You are cool and long-headed, and you'd be just the man. I have talked with several of the rich men here, and they say they'd support a team in the best manner if we could get one that would cut any frost with the others. They are eager to have me go ahead. It will take a week for this letter to reach you, but in another week you can be in this country. Won't you come, Merry? Won't you come here and put a ball-team in the field? Bring Diamond, Rattleton, and Browning. They can all play, with a little practise. Browning used to be a slugger with the stick, and Rattleton is not slow when he keeps his head, while Diamond might have been on the team at college. I have gotten track of Barney Mulloy, and you know he is a dandy. Ephraim Gallup has surprised people lots of times by his remarkable playing, and I can get him. We shall want ten men, so there will be two or three more to get
hold of, but there is one good man here. He is a Princeton man. His father has money to burn.

"Don't you think this would be a great scheme, Frank? Think of the good times we could have! And, with you to handle the team, you'd whip it into shape so it could play ball with the other nines. Do come, Frank. Cable me word that you will start at once, and I'll have enough men on hand to make up the team with yourself, Diamond, Rattleton, and Browning. We'll get into gear without delay, and I'll bet a hundred dollars we make the other nines hustle. I shall be awfully disappointed if you do not come.

"Do not forget me to the boys and to Elsie. And do not do a thing but make a bee-line for Maplewood.

"Yours as ever,"
"Hodge."

That was the letter Frank read, and it created something of a stir.

"Well, did you ever like the hears of it—I mean, hear the likes of it?" cried Rattleton.

"It's a wild scheme," declared Diamond.

"The fellow is crazy as a bedbug!" grunted Bruce.

"Why, I can't play baseball!" laughed Harry.

"And I am out of the game," asserted Jack.

"And I'd have to train off forty pounds," growled Browning. "Oh, no, excuse me! It'd be altogether too much sport!"

"It is not a crazy scheme," said Frank swiftly. "Do you remember the Knox County League, which we 'ound down in Maine?"

"Yes."
"That was made up to a great extent of college players. The Camden team was almost entirely college men."

"And I've heard they got the stuffing whipped out of them in the series," said Harry. "They were the tail-enders when the league busted!"

"But the league busted just in time to keep them from going up to the head, or the reports I have heard were false," said Frank. "The team they played in the field at the end of the season was the best ever seen outside the big leagues, and Rockland afterward acknowledged it. But we're not talking about that. This Maplewood scheme is what I'm after."

"Are you taking any stock in it?" grunted Bruce, surprised.

"Yes."

"You do not think of going into it, do you?" asked Harry.

"Yes."

"You'll make a mistake," asserted Jack.

"Why?"

"It takes time to get together a winning ball-team. The men should be carefully selected."

"That's true enough," nodded Frank; "but you must not forget how we surprised the Southern League once on a time with a picked-up team."

"Oh, I know, but that was more of an accident than anything else, old man."

"You do not believe it?"

"I do."
Bart Hodge's Letter.

"Well, I am sure it was no accident."

"Why, think, Hans Dunnerwurst played in that game!"

"And made one of the star plays, the same as did Ephraim Gallup."

"Well, if both of those plays were not accident, I don't know what to call them!"

"It may have been an accident on Hans' part, but Ephraim has the stuff in him to play ball."

"If he has it, it needs developing."

"I'm not so certain of that. You seem to forget that I nearly broke my arm tossing up the double-shoot for the leaguers to fan at."

"No. You and Hodge were the two players we had, but you cannot expect to pitch every game. You would knock your arm out in short order."

"We'd have to get hold of another pitcher who could keep them guessing."

"Pitchers can't do everything at winning. It's a crazy idea, Merry. If you had taken hold of it a long time ago, it might have been all right."

"From what Hodge writes, it is plain that this league has had a sudden rise, and I do not believe the other places have had much time at picking out their men."

"But they'd have their teams in good working order by the time you got yours together. That would mean considerable."

Still Frank was not convinced.

"I am not in the habit of making a fizzle of anything
I attempt to do," he said, "and I feel like taking hold of this scheme of Bart's. Of course, I can't force the rest of you to go in with me, but I do not see anything to hesitate about."

"What if we got together a team that couldn't win a game off the others in the league?" grunted Bruce. "Wouldn't the people of Maplewood kick! They wouldn't feel like standing behind that kind of a team."

"I'd stand behind it myself."

"You?"

"Yes."

"What for?"

"Just because I would. I could do it, if I liked, and it would not be anybody's business. In fact, I would not ask the people of Maplewood to put up a dollar till my team had won three games in succession, one from each of the other teams."

"I'm afraid you'd wait a long time for your money," said Diamond discouragingly.

But Rattleton was silent. He was beginning to get interested in Frank's plan.

"That would be all right," laughed Merry. "It wouldn't kill me. Fellows, I believe that is the way for us to spend the rest of the summer. I've heard you all say you were getting tired of Paris, and I don't believe you care to return to London to stop."

"Lot on your nife—I mean not on your life!" quickly cried Harry.

"I should say not!" came from Jack.
"Excuse me!" grunted Bruce.

"Then, what do you say? I put it to vote. Shall we make all haste back to the land of the free and the home of the brave, and get into that baseball league, or shall we not?"

Silence.

"Don't all speak at once!" laughed Frank.

"Will you be in condition to play by the time we get there?" asked Jack, in a low tone.

"Doctor says I'll be all right in ten days."

"And you want to go?"

"I do."

"I'm rather taken with the idea," confessed Rattleton.

"I'll fill my place with a substitute," mumbled Browning. "I can't get out and tear myself to pieces under a boiling sun playing baseball."

"No substitute," grimly declared Frank. "I want you. I remember how you used to slug the ball."

"But I couldn't hit a house if it were pitched right over the center of the plate now!" groaned the big fellow.

"You can get into gear in a week. You'll get your batting eye as soon as you get out and practise."

"But who'll make him get out and practise?" asked Harry.

"I will, if I ever get him to Maplewood," declared Frank.

"I'll vote to go," said Bruce; "but I will not play."

"That's all right," said Frank, satisfied. "I'll attend to that. You are next, Rattleton. Go or not?"
“Go!”

“Your turn, Diamond.”

Jack hesitated but a moment, and then he said:

“Go!”

“That settles it!” cried Frank in satisfaction.
CHAPTER XI.

THE WARNING.

To Bart Hodge, Frank cabled a single word:

"Coming!"

That was enough. Bart would understand it thoroughly, and he would get the team together.

In his heart, Merry was glad to go. He had not been long away from the United States, but he longed to be home again. It was not exactly a feeling of homesickness, but it was a strong love for his native land.

Bruce and Harry were willing enough to go, although the big fellow was tortured at the thought that he must get into training and work off some of his flesh in order to play ball. He pleaded with Frank, protesting that his days of ball-playing was past, but Merry would not hear to it.

"I must have you, old man," he would say. "Hodge will be expecting me to bring three men with me, and I can't let you out of it. Get some clubs, dumb-bells, and boxing-gloves, and I think we'll get some of the superfluous flesh off you before you reach the other side."

When Browning failed to procure the required articles, Frank sent out for them without delay. Then Merry had Dolph, Juliet, and Elsie sent to his room, where he told them of the decision to return to America immediately.

The English youth was astonished.
“My deah boy!” he exclaimed; “this must be awfully sudden!”

“It is somewhat,” admitted Frank.

He observed that Elsie seemed glad, while there was a look of regret and sadness on Juliet’s face.

“Are you going alone, Mr. Merriwell?” asked the dark-eyed girl.

“No; my friends are going with me.”

“All of them?”

“Yes.”

She was silent.

Dolph sought an explanation, and Frank gave it. He told just how it came about that they had decided all at once to go back to America.

“Well, you know your own business, Merriwell,” said Dolph; “but I should think you’d get ball-playing enough at college.”

“We get that only in the spring, and I was not at Yale to get any last year. This will be the very thing I need, if I wish to get onto the team next spring. If I do not play any for a year, almost for two years, I shall not be in condition. The work this summer will get me into condition for another season, and will also put me in shape for the fall football games. It is the very best thing I could do.”

“I suppose you are right. Well, we’ll return to London with you, y’ now.”

“Oh, do not let our going cut your trip short.”

“What’s the use to stay here! We’ve been here awhile, and that will do. Don’t you think so, Juliet?”
“Yes; I have been ready to go back home for some days,” said his sister.

“And you, Miss Bellwood?”

“I believe I have seen enough of Paris, and I believe I have seen enough of Europe to satisfy me for the present.”

“Then sail for home on the steamer with us,” urged Frank quickly. “I meant to ask you to go.”


But London seemed like a prison to Elsie, and it was with difficulty she repressed a shudder at the thought of staying there through the glorious summer days.

“I’ll find some lady in whose company I can return,” she said. “I believe I am beginning to get homesick for Yankee land.”

“By Jawve!” drawled Dolph. “It’s remarwakable how you Americans seem to love your country! I believe you love it just as much as we Englishmen love ours, don’t y’ noow.”

“Why shouldn’t we?” smiled Frank. “It is the land of the free, a glorious land, beautiful land! There is no doubt but every true American loves America quite as much as any Englishman can love his native land. It is only the cads, the Anglomaniacs, t’e sapheads, the noth­ings, that do not love it! They are not Americans! They are mongrels! In America, they are held in the greatest contempt.”

“Well,” laughed Reynolds, “they are not thought much of anywhere else, I rawther fancy. We have some of
them in England. They buy great estates and try to live like titled Englishmen, but they are not looked on with favor. Some of them try to buy titles, and they do anything to get royalty to recognize them.”

“Let’s not talk about such creatures!” exclaimed Merry. “It makes my blood warm, and the weather is too hot for that. We start for London to-morrow morning. Will you go with us?”

“I rather think so.”

“Yes,” answered Juliet positively.

“Then that is settled.”

“But we have made arrangements to ride in the Bois to-day, girls,” said Dolph. “Shall we give that up?”

“No!” exclaimed Juliet. “I want one more gallop through the park. You will come along, won’t you, Elsie?”

Elsie promised.

“Do what you like,” said Frank, “as long as you are ready to start in the morning.”

There was a rap at the door, and a message for Frank, was handed in.

Having asked leave to open it, Merry read:

“Brattle is in Paris on mischief bent, but the protecting genius is near, so fear him not, only be on guard. He has followed the girl with the golden hair from England, and he may do her mischief if the opportunity is obtained. **THE MAN WITHOUT A NAME.**”

Those who were watching Frank’s face saw it grow grave. So Martin Brattle, Elsie’s villainous cousin, was
again in Paris! Frank had hoped they had seen the last of him.

Merry had confidence in the warning, for experience had taught him that "The Man Without a Name" did not warn in vain. For a little time, he had seen nothing of The Mystery, but now it was plain the man was near. Having saved Frank from the Black Brothers, who had sworn to destroy him, the man had disappeared for a time, but he was still in Paris.

"Have you heard anything unpleasant?" asked Dolph.

"I presume it might be called so," admitted Frank, forcing a smile; "but it's not worth mentioning."

He put the message in his pocket.

When they were leaving, he called Elsie back.

"Be on your guard," he said gravely. "There is no telling what dangers may beset you here."

She looked at him in astonishment.

"Dangers for me?" she exclaimed. "What can you mean? How could there be any danger for me in Paris?"

"Paris is not the safest city in the world," he laughed.

"It seems a great deal safer than London."

"Because the dangers are hidden here. Everything is in a state of suspense now, for you know they are bringing Dreyfus back to stand a new trial. That may mean a revolution. The republic may fall. The streets of Paris may again run red with blood."

"Oh, if such terrible things are to take place, it is not strange you wish to get away as soon as possible!"

"I do not know they are to take place, but I do know
men high in power have done Alfred Dreyfus a terrible wrong, and they are quaking in terror at the retribution they see advancing upon them. Their only salvation seems to be to overthrow the present government, and it is impossible to tell when the outbreak may occur."

“But it cannot take place now. Everything seems so calm and peaceful.”

“The calm before the storm, perhaps. If those men in power can control the soldiers, the republic is in danger. But it was not of those dangers I spoke.”

“Of what, then?”

“There are other dangers in Paris. It is a wicked city, although its wickedness does not show so much on the surface. There are evil men here. Be on your guard when you ride in the Bois to-day, Elsie.”

“Frank,” she cried, “I believe you are worrying about something too shadowy to give a thought. What has happened has unstrung your nerves.

He laughed heartily.

“My dear girl,” he declared, “my nerves never were steadier in all the world than they are now. Still, I wish you to promise that you will be on your guard.”

“All right; I promise.”

“And do not forget.”

He did not think it best to cause her greater alarm by telling her that Brattle, whom she feared beyond measure, was in the city. He did not tell her of the warning he had received from Mr. Noname.

Elsie returned from her ride in the Bois, agitated and
excited. Without delay, she hastened to tell Frank of her adventure.

"You warned me," she said, "and it came true."

"How?" he asked. "You are not harmed?"

"No."

"What happened?"

"Mr. Reynolds, Juliet, and myself were riding in the park. I had been riding beside Dolph. Juliet was ahead, and her horse was frightened by something. It ran away with her."

"Go on."

"Of course, her brother pursued, and I found it impossible to keep in sight of them. I tried, but I finally lost them."

"Was that your adventure?"

"Just the beginning. I rode on, thinking to overtake them. After a time, happening to glance behind me, I saw a mounted man who looked familiar."

"Yes, yes!" exclaimed Frank. "Did you know him?"

"At first, I simply glanced at him, but the more I thought about it, the more familiar he seemed. I looked back again, wondering who it could be."

"And recognized him?"

"After a time, I did."

"Who was it?"

"Martin Brattle."

"I knew it!"

She looked at him sharply.

"How did you know?"

"From the warning."
"What warning?"
He explained.
"Why didn't you tell me about it?" she cried.
"Because I did not wish to alarm you any more than was necessary. I thought I said enough. We are to leave Paris in the morning, and I hoped we would be able to get away without Brattle knowing anything about it. I hoped we'd get away before anything happened."
"The Man of Mystery told nothing but the truth," she said.
"He is the greatest and most mysterious friend I have yet known," declared Frank. "He is a wonder to me. Why should he watch over me as he does? Why should he save me from so many dangers? He has said he is my guardian angel, and I am beginning to believe it. Sometimes his words and his ways are like a man mentally unbalanced, and yet all he does works out for good. He must be a person who has plenty of money, for sometimes he has many men in his employ. It was through him the assassin band known as the Black Brothers was broken up. Although the world may never know it, this mysterious man has done much for innocent Alfred Dreyfus. But he did it because he found me involved in the affair. If I had not been involved, it is doubtful if he would have lifted a hand for the prisoner of Devil's Island."
"And now he saved me from an enemy."
"Saved you?"
"Yes."
"To-day?"
"To-day in the Bois."
"Go on, Elsie! Tell me all that happened."
"When I was sure the man was Brattle, I whipped up and tried to gallop away."
"He followed you?"
"Like a hound on the scent! I could not escape him. He was after me at every turn."
"The wretch! If I had been there—"
"A terrible fear came upon me. I felt like screaming for aid. I know I was white and shaking."
"Poor little sweetheart!"
"Oh, Frank! you cannot tell how I dread that man! His persistence in following me has filled me with terror."
"He should be arrested and locked up!"
"At last, I was in despair. Not only did I find I could not get away, but I discovered that he was slowly and surely drawing nearer. Just as he came up beside me, I saw another person beside him. A man mounted on a magnificent coal-black horse, wearing a strange caped coat and a hat with a wide brim. His eyes were coal-black, as was his beard, which was trimmed."
"The Mystery!" cried Frank.
"He had the sternest face I ever saw. It seemed like a face cut from stone, and the light in his eyes made me tremble still more. He spoke to Brattle, just as Brattle addressed me. Brattle called me his 'charming cousin.'"
"What did Mr. Noname say?"
"He told Brattle to turn about at once and cease annoying me."
"What happened then?" excitedly asked Frank.

"Brattle swore at him, and the man in black reached out and grasped the bit of Brattle's horse. Then Brattle struck at him with his whip, when, quick as thought, the man threw the horse on his haunches, and my wicked cousin was flung to the ground."

"That's the kind of man Mr. Noname is!" laughed Frank triumphantly. "When he does anything, he does it in a hurry."

"I did not stop," Elsie continued; "but as I looked round, I saw he had set Brattles' horse free and the creature was galloping away. Without paying any further attention to my cousin, the man rode slowly after me."

"What did you do?"

"I was so frightened I didn't know what to do."

"Didn't you wait for him?"

"Not then. Somehow, I had a foolish fear that he might do me harm, even though he had saved me from that man."

"He would not think of it."

"I tried to find Dolph and Juliet, and I did so, finally. Dolph had succeeded in overtaking his sister and stopping the horse. Juliet was not harmed. All the way the man in black had been following me, but when, after reaching them, I turned to look for him, thinking I would thank him, he was gone."

"It is a way he has," said Frank. "He appears and disappears in the most astonishing ways. Sometimes he..."
seems almost more than human, but I know he is not. He is simply a most remarkable man."

"I owe him thanks, and I wish you would tell him when you see him again."

"I may never see him again. We leave Paris in the morning, and I shall not stop in England. From London I shall proceed with all possible speed to sail from Liverpool, if I can obtain passage. Of course, I do not know, but I fear I may never see him to express all the gratitude I owe him. In London, he seemed ever at hand to give me a lift. That time when I rescued you from Brattle, I could not have found you but for him. His powers seem uncanny. I would give much to solve the mystery that surrounds him."

"He may follow you to the United States."

"I hardly believe he will. He did not appear till I had been in London some little time."

"Do you think him an Englishman?"

"I do not know. He speaks English perfectly, but he seems to be equally perfect in his handling of French. However, I am certain he is not a Frenchman."

"He may be an American."

"I have thought of that. Once I saw him handle a pair of revolvers, shooting with both hands, and nowhere except in the West of our own land have I ever seen men handle shooting-irons as he did them. He seemed to possess the skill of a Western cow-puncher, and I asked him if he had not been in the Western States of America."

"And his answer?"
“Was that he had traveled the whole world over. He has never seemed much inclined to tell anything about himself, save that, for some mysterious reason, he was my good genius and guardian. I have seemed to feel that there was an unseen bond between us. Somehow, at times when I have been near him, a strange feeling has stirred within me—a feeling I cannot describe and do not understand.”

“That man has told nothing but the truth in saying he was your good genius, Frank. I believe it.”

“I have not doubted it for some time, for all of his many strange acts—for all that Jack Diamond has called him crazy.”

“He may not be just right in his head, for there was a remarkable and terrible light in his eyes when he stopped Brattle to-day. That look added to my fear.”

“Still, it is strange that one who is deranged should cling to one purpose with such tenacity.”

“Strange, indeed; and, Frank, I firmly believe the mystery of it all will be solved some day.”

“I hope so, Elsie.”
CHAPTER XII.

BACK IN ENGLAND.

It is a comparatively short trip from Paris to London. The day was well spent when the party arrived there. Dolph Reynolds had sent a message ahead, and while crossing the Channel he insisted that they accompany him to his home. The suggestion did not please Diamond at all, and Frank demurred against it.

"My dear fellow," said Merry, "we can't overrun your place as if it were a hotel."

"And you can't refuse to accept my invitation, Merriwell. Have you forgotten that I am more indebted to you than I can ever hope to pay?"

"Oh, pshaw! that's all nonsense!"

"Nothing of the sort."

"You owe me nothing."

"He owes you everything," put in Juliet earnestly. "He would have been an outcast from his own home to-day but for you, Mr. Merriwell."

"That's right, by Jawve," nodded Dolph seriously. "The old man would have kicked me out into the cold, cold world if he'd found I'd been plunging, and he'd found it out if I'd lost the sparring-bout at the Holborn Club. You went in for me when my unknown failed, and you pulled off the match. I won enough to get on my feet again and pay every debt I owed."
That set me right with the world and saved me from disgrace."

"You cannot say he owes you nothing, Mr. Merriwell!" exclaimed Juliet. "You must accept his invitation—our invitation—to stay with us at our home to-night, you and all your friends."

"I've sent a telegram to the governor," said Dolph, "and he expects us. I shall think you're not using me right if you decline to come, don't y' know."

"You refused to take any of the money won on the match at the club, and—"

"I did not go into that to win money," said Frank. "But for you, Miss Reynolds, I should— not have gone into it at all. You explained fully the danger your brother was in, and I resolved to save him if it lay in my power. I fought to save Dolph from disgrace."

Reynolds caught Frank's hand.

"You did it, my boy!" he exclaimed feelingly, "and then you wouldn't even let me tell the club your name."

"No. I was not proud of knocking a man out in a prize-ring. I think I have expressed to you my opinion of professional prize-fighters. I learned the art of boxing purely that I might be able to defend myself when forced into battle, and with no thought of ever entering the ring in a regular match. I do not care to have it known in college that I ever did go into the ring. As it happens that I am pretty well known in America, had my name been given to the Holborn Club that night and been published by the London papers in the morning,
papers in the United States would have caught it up eagerly. Some of the yellow journals would have appeared with flaming head-lines: 'Frank Merriwell Fights. The Famous Yale Athlete Enters the Prize-Ring. Knocks Out the Irish Gamecock at the Holborn Club, London.' Now, wouldn't that have been fine! I'd have had a reputation as a slugger, and sluggers I detest. I have not the least sympathy or respect for any man who makes prize-fighting a business. Had such reports come out in the papers, I'd have felt like remaining away from the United States forever. I'd never return to Yale! Think of the gang getting round me and cheering for the man who knocked out the Irish Gamecock!"

Frank shuddered at the thought.

"Some of your party will let it out," said Dolph.

"If so, I'll find the fellow out, and, after giving him the thrashing he deserves, I'll cut him for good," laughed Frank. "But I haven't the least fear in the world that any of them will tell of it. All have pledged silence."

"Well, this does not settle the point we were talking about. You must come home with me. I have sent a message to the governor, and this entire party will be expected. Aunt Hetty runs the house, and——"

"Where is she now?" asked Juliet.

"Oh, she's forward with Mr. Maybe. She's chased him from one end of the boat to the other, lecturing him on parrots. He is desperate enough to throw his parrot overboard, cage and all."

"I really believe your aunt has designs on poor littl
Maybe, Dolph," smiled Frank. "I think he is scared to death of her, and——"

At this point the little tutor came staggering down the deck, his face deathly pale and a wild light in his eyes.

"Where can I hide?" he gasped. "Let me lie down somewhere. Oh, this bobbing motion! I'd like to get out and walk! And that woman will find me again in a minute!"

"Between the sea and The Dragon, he's having a hard time of it," grunted Browning. "The Channel is shaking him up, but The Dragon will shake him up worse if she captures him."

Mr. Maybe's desperate efforts to escape were unavailing, for Aunt Hetty came swooping down on him.

"Oh, here you are!" she exclaimed. "I thought you were coming right back and listen to what I had to say."

"I was," groaned Maybe, collapsing in a heap on a deck-chair, "but my legs gave out, and my stomach—oh, my stomach——"

"You are sick."

"I think so, and the Lord knows enough has happened on this voyage to make any man sick!"

"Too bad!" exclaimed Aunt Hetty, with a sudden burst of sympathy. "I'm real sorry for you, poor man! It must be an awful thing to look the way you do in the face!"

"There are worse things," said the little tutor feebly. "In my mind's eye, I can see things even worse." He looked straight at her.
"Now, when we get across," pursued The Dragon, "you must have something to settle your stomach. If I had you home, I'd give you some pennyroyal tea, and——"

"Ow!" howled Mr. Maybe, and then he jumped up and staggered to the side of the boat, leaning over the rail in a manner that indicated what was happening.

"Now, I am real sorry for him!" sighed Aunt Hetty, puckering up her round face. "He is in distress! Goodness!" she screamed, "is he trying to fling himself overboard?"

Maybe had lurched forward with a convulsion, and she made a rush for him, grasping his coat by the back and holding on with both hands.

"Don't!" she entreated; "don't give up so easily!"

"I can't help it," was the answer that came back. "I've held it down as long as I can."

Then there was another convulsion.

"Aunt Hetty seems to be overcoming her prejudice for men," smiled Juliet. "You must look out, Mr. Merriwell, or you will lose your tutor."

"He's still doing his level best to escape," said Frank, as Maybe straightened up and staggered toward the stern of the boat, closely followed by Aunt Hetty.

"But it looks as if his efforts might prove fruitless," said Browning. "She's holding onto him like grim death. I'll bet the old girl wins!"

"Well, this other matter is not decided, don't y' now," put in Dolph.
"Yes, it is!" exclaimed Juliet. "They can't refuse to accept the invitation! If they do, I'll be angry with them all!"

"Well, I am sure we do not wish to arouse your anger," smiled Frank, "for I am sure it must be something no man would care to bring upon him."

"Now, don't judge me by Aunt Hetty!" cried Juliet. "You will come with us, Mr. Merriwell?"

"Yes."

"Mr. Browning?"

"Count me in."

"Mr. Rattleton?"

"I'm another."

She turned and looked at Jack Diamond. Their eyes met, and Diamond seemed pale, while she flushed to her hair.

"Of course, you will accompany your friends, Mr. Diamond?" she said.

Without speaking, he simply bowed.

"There," said Dolph, "that settles it, for it is the entire party."

"Except Mr. Maybe."

"And his consent is not needed."

"Still I propose that we go aft and obtain it."

They started, and they came upon a spectacle that brought them to a stand.

Wellington Maybe, white and seasick, was stretched upon the seat that ran along the rail at the stern, his
head pillowed in Aunt Hetty’s lap, while she was stroking his forehead and talking to him soothingly.

“No need to ask him,” laughed Frank. “He’ll go.”

They were made welcome at Dolph’s home. Everything was prepared for them, and it was a haven of rest after the trip of the day. Mr. Maybe was badly broken up, but Aunt Hetty tended him with great solicitude.

“I never could bear men,” she said, “but the helplessness of this poor, lonesome creature has affected me deeply. He needs somebody to care for him, for it’s certain he is unable to care for himself.”

“This is your opportunity, aunt,” grinned Dolph. “If I were you, I’d seize it, don’t y’ ’now. Mr. Maybe is a very cultured man, and he’d make a good husband for——”

“Now, Dolph, you stop!” cried the maiden lady, actually blushing. “Why, you know I’ve always said I wouldn’t marry the best man in the whole world, and——”

“Yes, I know you have said so, aunt, and I think you were perfectly safe in saying it, for the best man wouldn’t give you a chance, you know.”

“Oh, you mean fellow! You know——”

“I know all about it, aunt. It’s all right. Go in—and win. I’ll bet on you. You are the best man.”

Aunt Hetty retreated with a show of confusion that seemed quite foreign to her, and caused Dolph to laugh heartily.
Dinner was jolly enough, everybody seeming to enjoy it, with the exception of Jack Diamond. The Virginian was silent, speaking only when spoken to, and seldom smiling. When dinner was over, Diamond wandered alone into the dimly lighted parlor, where he sat by a window and looked out on the quiet street, where the lamps were gleaming.

His thoughts were sad, and a sensation of unspeakable loneliness beset him. He was thinking of his mother in fair, far-away Virginia, and he felt a longing to see her, to confide in her, to ask her advice. How long he sat there, he did not know. The sound of voices and laughter ceased in the dining-room, and a strange stillness seemed to settle on the house.

Jack found the piano and sat down to it, his fingers running over the keys and making soft music. He did not play any piece he knew, but just seemed to let his fingers wander aimlessly, and somehow they found a melody that told all the emotions which were gnawing at his heart. It was beautiful, and yet so sad! The piano throbbed and sobbed as it told all the story of his hopeless love. It did not seem to Jack that he was playing, but that his soul was pouring itself into the instrument. His heart swelled and rose, and his eyes swam; and then he heard a sob near at hand that turned him to stone. A choking voice pleaded:

"Don't—please don't play like that any more. I—I can't stand it—Jack!"

Slowly he turned about. Somebody was crouching in the enveloping embrace of a chair, half hidden by the
gloom. He knew who it was, and he was astonished. He had not known when she came, and he wondered how long she had been there. Involuntarily he breathed her name:

"Juliet!"

He saw her start and then sink back still farther. Yet she had spoken to him by his given name!

"I did not know you were there," he said huskily; "and still, somehow, I think I seemed to feel your presence."

She was silent. He could feel her eyes upon him. She was looking at him through the shadows.

"Perhaps I ought not to have come," she said, after a little, and her voice was low and unsteady.

He did not speak, and, in a few moments, she went on:

"I couldn't help it! I heard you playing, and it drew me—drew me! Never have I heard such music before! I could not keep away—Jack!"

Again she had spoken his name, and he felt his heart tugging at its strings.

"How could you play like that?" she asked.

And he half whispered:

"I was thinking—thinking of you!"

"Thinking of me—and you made such sad, such sweet, such wonderful music? How could that be?"

"I don't know," he confessed. "I didn't know what I was playing. I just kept touching the keys and the piano seemed to speak my thoughts."

"And your thoughts of me were so sad?"
"Yes."
"Jack—I beg your pardon—Mr. Diamond——"
"Call me Jack, please, for to-night—only for to-night!"
"Only for to-night! Then you——"
"To-morrow I am going away. We may never meet again."
"Never?"
"Never, Juliet!"
"And you are sorry we ever met?" she breathed.  
It was half a question, half an exclamation.
"I did not say so."
"Your music did!"
"No, I don't know that I am sorry we met—now. I have been sorry, but I should have lost much had I not met you. I shall not forget you, Juliet."
"But you do not care because you are going away?" she passionately breathed.  "You are not sorry?"
"No, I am not sorry."
"Ah!"
It was a cry of pain, as if she had been struck to the heart.
"How can you be so cruel!" she exclaimed bitterly.
"Cruel!" came in astonishment from his lips.  "Do you say that of me—you, who have sought in every way to wring my heart. I was foolish enough to let you know I cared for you, and then——"
"And then you showed that you were playing with me, as you have played with scores of girls, perhaps! Do you think I am a girl to be toyed with and deceived?"
He half started to his feet.

"Juliet!" he exclaimed; "you must have misunderstood me. It is you—you who were playing with me!"

"No, no!"

"All your actions have proved it!"

"You are wrong! You are mistaken!"

"In Paris—"

"Well?"

"What did you do? You scarcely looked at me! You laughed and talked with Rattleton, you seemed to enjoy his company, you went everywhere with him."

"And was utterly miserable every moment of the time, Jack Diamond!"

"Miserable? Why?"

"Because you were not in Rattleton's place! How do you think I could care for him!"

"Then you deceived him, for he thought you cared for him."

"I never gave him any real reason to think so, more than that I considered his company agreeable—which it was not."

"Your eyes—your eyes told him more than your lips."

"And all my eyes spoke was meant for you, you, you!"

"For me?"

"For you, stupid! I was trying to make you jealous!"

"And, by the gods, you succeeded, for I could have killed Rattleton. I had it in my heart to kill him that morning when we met at sunrise, and—"

"Then it is true—it is true? You fought?"
"We had begun when Merriwell appeared, and I wounded him as he sprang between us."
"You fought for me!"
"Because of you."
"Oh, Jack! I didn't think Mr. Rattleton would do it! If I had, I might have been more cautious. What if one of you had been killed! What if you had been killed!"
"Once I thought you would not have cared!"
"You thought me perfectly heartless?"
"You seemed so."
"Oh, Jack, you wronged me! You do not know how much I have suffered! It has been terrible! Now you are going away! I did not mean to let you know, but your music drew me here. Frank and Elsie have gone to the theater, and the others went up to the billiard-room. I knew you were playing here, and your music dragged me into the room. Now—now you know all my secret, Jack!"

He had been holding himself in check, but he could do so no longer. With a spring, he was kneeling at her side.

"Juliet!"

His arms were around her!
CHAPTER XIII.

ADVENTURE IN LONDON.

After dinner Elsie and Frank decided to attend the theater that evening, as Merry wished to see Tree in a new piece he had just put on. Frank mentioned his desire to see the piece, and it was soon made plain that it would be considered perfectly proper for him to go, while Browning and Dolph would play a set of billiards with Rattleton and Mr. Reynolds.

Mr. Reynolds ordered his carriage for Frank, and Juliet herself asked Elsie if she would like to go. It seemed to Elsie that Juliet rather desired her to do so, and, when Frank seemed eager for her company, she consented.

"We have spent many an evening together behind the footlights, Elsie," smiled Frank. "This evening we will spend in front of them, our last evening in London."

"And I am glad it is to be our last here," said the loyal little American girl. "I am sick for home, and it doesn't seem that I can get there fast enough now that we have started."

"I have the same feeling," confessed Frank. "I long to get my feet on American soil again. After all, there is no place like home, especially when that home is in the land of the free!"

When the play was over, they came out for their carriage. It rolled up with the coachman sitting stiffly.
on the box, and the footman threw open the door. Frank started to help Elsie enter. An exclamation of surprise came from her lips when she was half-way into the carriage, and she started to retreat; but she seemed to be jerked inward, and the door swung shut with a slam.

At the same moment, the whip of the coachman fell on the backs of the horses. There were shouts of astonishment and alarm, but the horses did not plunge away beneath the lash. Instead, they were flung on their haunches by a pair of strong hands that grasped their bits.

One glance showed Frank Merriwell that the man who had stopped the horses and was holding them with hands of iron, for all of their plunging, was Mr. Noname!

The Mystery was there.

The coachman lashed the horses again, causing them to rear and plunge, but that wonderful man held them from breaking away, even though it seemed that he must be beaten down by their iron-shod feet. Frank knew something was wrong. He tore open the door, and saw Elsie struggling in the embrace of a man within the carriage!

She screamed, and the man uttered an oath.

Then, as Frank Merriwell was about to fling himself into the carriage, the muzzle of a pistol was thrust almost against his head.

There was a flash, a report, and Frank reeled backward.

To the horrified spectators, it seemed like murder.

But, quick to think, Frank had realized his peril when
the pistol was thrust out, and he had jerked his head to one side.

The flash blinded him, the blaze scorched him, the bullet cut a lock of hair from his temple! It was a close call, but he was not even wounded.

The crowd surged toward the carriage, and Frank was caught by several persons, who demanded to know where he was shot.

"Let go!" he cried.

He attempted to fling them off, but they seemed to think his struggles were those of a man in his death agonies, and they clung to him the harder. Their efforts baffled Frank, for the moment, in his endeavor to spring forward into the carriage once more.

At last he hurled them off. He was at the carriage door in a twinkling.

"Elsie!" he cried.

She answered him, and he saw the door on the opposite side of the carriage was open.

"Where is he?" panted Frank, as he lifted Elsie from the bottom of the carriage.

"Gone!" she answered faintly. "Escaped by that door!

Stop him!"

"Stop him!" shouted Frank to the men behind him. "He just sprang out on the other side!"

A man was seen in full flight across the street. With a roar, the angry crowd started after him. Not till he was certain Elsie had sustained no injury would Frank join in the pursuit. He lifted her from the carriage and held her in his arms.
"Has he harmed you, sweetheart?" he breathed in her ear.

"No; he frightened me, that was all.

"What in the world was he trying to do? Was the creature insane?"

"It was Brattle!"

"The dastard!"

"I think he meant to kidnap me!"

The boldness of the attempt nearly took Frank's breath away. He could hardly believe the desperate villain would dare try such a thing.

"The coachman—the footman! they were in the plot!"

The footman was gone, and the coachman had tried to escape, but had been captured by Mr. Noname himself, who had given the plunging horses over to others. The coachman looked sullen and defiant. And now, as Frank examined him, a discovery was made.

"This is not Mr. Reynolds' coachman!" he exclaimed. "It is another man in the coachman's clothes!"

"That's right," nodded the fellow. "Ye'll find yer old coachman in Trix's place, down the street, and yer footman, too."

"That is right," said Mr. Noname quietly. "Both coachman and footman were lured there, one at a time, and drugged. Their clothes were taken by two rascals, who took their places. Martin Brattle was inside the carriage."

"And you——"

"I was keeping track of the game, and I waited to see
just what it meant. I prevented them from carrying it out."

"You did," said Frank, with gratitude. "If you had not put yourself at the heads of the horses, the plot would have succeeded. I never heard of anything like it in all my life!"

Nor had anybody else present. It was hard to believe that such a desperate scheme to kidnap a young woman in a street of London, directly in front of one of the best-known theaters, had been tried. Officers appeared to take charge of the bogus coachman, and he submitted without a struggle.

"It's all right," he said sullenly. "When a man's family is starvin' he'll do hanything for twenty pounds."

"You were paid twenty pounds for your part in the plot?"

"Yes, sir."

"If you had caused the arrest of the wretch who hired you, I'd have given you a hundred pounds!" declared Frank.

"I didn't know habout that, sir. All I knew were that me wife and children are starving, and 'ere were a good hopportunity to make money to keep 'em for a long time."

"Poor man!" breathed Elsie. "Isn't it awful that he should be driven to such desperate straits!"

"It is if he tells the truth, which I am inclined to doubt," said Frank. "His story shall be investigated."

Frank was not foolish enough to believe the man until the entire truth was known.
Those in pursuit of Brattle had disappeared, and there was much speculating as to their chances of capturing him. Two policemen had joined in the chase, and the officers who had arrested the bogus coachman were confident that the chief plotter could not get away.

Frank, however, felt no such confidence. He remembered how he had pursued Martin Brattle through the streets of New York in broad daylight, and the fellow had escaped him. In London, at night, provided Brattle knew the ground, it seemed much more likely that he would get away. Elsie was shaking with the excitement of the adventure.

“Oh, Frank!” she whispered; “I thought you were killed when I saw him fire almost into your face and you staggered back! It was a dreadful feeling!”

“I do not think I was born to be killed by a snake like that,” said Merry.

One by one the pursuers came back, till, at length, the discomfited officers returned, announcing that the fugitive had dodged them in the alleys and lanes of a low quarter not far away.

“He has escaped again!” said Frank; “but he will reach the end of his rope before long.”

Of course, Frank and Elsie had a thrilling story to tell when they arrived at Mr. Reynolds’. They found everybody up and in the best of spirits. Indeed, they were not a little surprised to see Jack and Juliet together, both looking as if they had never known a care in the world.

Mr. Reynolds was highly indignant when he learned
that both his coachman and his footman had been lured to leave the carriage and enter an ale-room, where they were drugged by the plotters. He announced that he should discharge them at once.

“IT’S A SHAME,” said Dolph, “THAT THE WRETCH WHO IN-STIGATED THE WORK COULD NOT HAVE BEEN CAPTURED.”

“TO-MORROW,” said Frank, “I WANT YOU TO INVESTIGATE THE STORY OF THE BOGUS COACHMAN. HE SAYS HE WAS DRIVEN BY POVERTY TO DO WHAT HE DID.”

“The story of every criminal in London!” exclaimed Mr. Reynolds impatiently.

“But it may be true,” put in Elsie earnestly. “He said his wife and children were starving, and Martin Brattle gave him twenty pounds to do the work.”

“The story of the twenty pounds may be true, but it’s even chances he has no wife and children.”

“If he lied,” said Frank, “he should be punished. I shall not be here to attend to that. I refused to make a complaint against him, as I cannot stay to press it.”

“I will see to that,” assured Dolph.

They talked about it a long time. At last, Browning proposed retiring.

“It will take an earthquake to turn me out in the morning if I don’t go to bed soon.”

Elsie and Juliet slept together that night. When they were alone in their room, the English girl threw her arms about the neck of her American friend and kissed her.

“You seem to have grown happy all of a sudden, Juliet,” said Elsie.
“I am happy,” was the answer, and Juliet blushed betrayingly.

Elsie looked at her, wondering.
“What has happened?”
“Guess.”
“Jack——”
“That’s it!”
“And you——”
“You are right!”
“Well, I declare!”

Then Elsie embraced Juliet, and they both laughed, after the manner of girls.

“Now, sit right down on the bed,” commanded Elsie breathlessly, “and tell me all about it.”

“I don’t know how to tell you,” declared Juliet, with a confusion that surprised Elsie, who had thought her so calm and self-possessed.

“How did it happen?”

“Oh, I don’t know, but, after you were gone, all the men but Jack and Mr. Maybe went up to the billiard-room for a game and a smoke. Mr. Maybe was still ill, and Aunt Hetty was caring for him. I was left alone.”

“Where was Jack?”

“He had gone into the parlor. I felt like going to my room to have a good cry.”

“You—you cry, Juliet?”

“Is that so strange?”

“I had fancied you never did such a thing.”

“Well, you are wrong.”
"Did you——"

"No, for I heard somebody playing on the piano in the parlor. I listened, and, Elsie, never before had I heard such music. It was like no tune I had ever heard. It was wild and strange and sweet and sad. Jack Diamond was playing all alone in there."

"And he composes music, I have heard."

"He was composing as he played. He told me afterward. That music drew me in there. I could not keep away. At last, when I could stand it no longer, I begged him to stop playing. Till then he did not know I was there. He turned round and found me on a chair. After that—— Well, dear, I hardly know what happened after that; but I do know that it is all right. We understand each other at last."

"I am very glad, Juliet," declared Elsie gravely. "It is so hard when we misunderstand those for whom we care very much and are misunderstood by them."

"Yes; and it was nothing more than a misunderstanding between us."

"Then—then you and Jack are——" "Are what?"

"Engaged?"

"Oh, no, not yet."

"Not yet."

"No. We talked it all over. He told me a story of his mother, and we agreed to wait awhile. We agreed to make sure that we both felt it was right for us to marry. You know we are so much alike. Both have dark hair and eyes, and we are so quick. We do not stop to reason."
There is danger, perhaps, that we might not be happy together. That is, there may be danger. We have both of us resolved to try to learn to govern our impulses and tempers. We shall correspond. If, after a time, we feel that it is right, we shall become engaged, providing, of course, that papa consents."

"And this has made you happy?"

"So happy, Elsie!"

"I am glad."

But Elsie was thinking that it was more than probable Jack Diamond and Juliet Reynolds would never marry.

After they were in bed and locked in each other's arms, the girls talked of Frank and Jack till sleep could be repelled no longer. Then they closed their eyes to pleasant dreams.

In the morning, there was the bustle of making ready to leave London. In the midst of it Aunt Hetty appeared, with Mr. Maybe following.

"Oh, Mr. Merriwell," said the maiden lady, seeming, not a little agitated, "I am sorry you are going. I have grown to like you and your friends. You almost seem part of the family."

"Thank you, Miss Hardingham," said Merry. "You have been very pleasant to us, and I suppose the most of us hate to leave, even though we are going home—Mr. Maybe in particular."

The little man cleared his throat, braced his feet, flushed to the roots of his hair, and said:

"Mr. Merriwell, when I came abroad with you as your
tutor, I had no idea that you would think of returning so soon."

"I presume not," said Frank. "I did not think I would, either; but circumstances have brought it about, and so back we go, Mr. Maybe."

"Ah! ahem! You mean back you go, sir—back you go."

"But you, Mr. Maybe—are you not——"

"I have concluded not to return to America at present."

"Indeed? What has brought about this sudden decision, sir?"

"I have," admitted Aunt Hetty, coyly. "I have induced Mr. Maybe to remain on this side of the water a little longer. In fact, for a long time to come."

"Scrate Gott!" gurgled Harry Rattleton, nearly losing his breath. "The Dragon has become a dove!"

"A siren," muttered Browning. "She has found—a man."

"But you can't mean Wellington Maybe?"

"Do I fully understand you, sir?" asked Frank, with an appearance of surprise and regret. "Are you going to leave me now, Mr. Maybe?"

"I—I trust you will pardon me," stammered the little man. "If you insist, Mr. Merriwell, I presume I shall have to accompany you."

"Nothing of the sort!" cried Aunt Hetty, getting hold of the lapel of his coat, as if she meant to detain him by force. "You can't go now!"
"But really, Miss Hardingham—I am engaged to him, you know."

"But your engagement to me is much more important," declared Aunt Hetty positively. "I think Mr. Merriwell will let you off without trouble, but if you do not keep your word with me I shall sue you for breach of promise—there!"

That settled it!

"Mr. Maybe," cried Frank, grasping the little man's hand, "let me congratulate you! I'd like to remain to the wedding, but it is not possible. I wish you long life——"

"And a large family," put in Rattleton.

"Oh, you horrid!" exclaimed Aunt Hetty, and her florrid face became redder than ever.

"Do not mind him, my darling," cooed Wellington, endeavoring to slip his arm about her ample waist.

"Oh, my!" exclaimed Rattleton and Browning together, and they turned their heads away.
CHAPTER XIV.
TALKING OVER THE TRIP.

In Paris, Harry Rattleton, acting as Frank’s agent, had been able to secure at the office of one of the big ocean steamship companies transportation for the entire party, so all they had to do when Liverpool was reached was to look out for their baggage and go right on board. As they stood on the pier, Rattleton said:

“Well, fellows, it doesn’t seem more than a week since we stood here minus one of our number.”

“And Merriwell was that one,” put in Diamond.

“That’s right,” nodded Browning. “We thought he’d found a grave in the ocean.”

“Or had gone up in smoke when the Eagle, loaded with petroleum and powder, blew up.”

Frank laughed.

“Well, fellows,” he said, in turn, “I don’t fancy you thought me gone up any more than I did myself when I saw the boats pulling away without me as I stood on the deck of that old tramp steamer, knowing a fire was raging down in her hold, where the petroleum and powder lay. I expected to go scooting skyward any moment, and I made a hustle to get overboard and away from her on something that would float. I wasn’t any too soon, either.”

“We didn’t do any of the pulling when those boats left you, you can bet!” exclaimed Rattleton.
"If we had," said the Virginian, "we'd have turned the boats about and pulled back."

"That would have done no good. They were loaded to the utmost capacity then."

"Well, somebody would have been obliged to get out and walk!" grinned Rattleton.

"Rattles tried to do that, as it was," spoke Bruce. "Twice he attempted to jump overboard, with the intention of swimming back to the Eagle and dying with you."

"Dear old fellow!" exclaimed Frank, grasping Harry's hand. "Just like him!"

"Yes, he always was a fool!" rumbled the Yale giant, but Frank knew not one of his friends would be more ready than Bruce to suffer any sacrifice for him.

"I tell you," put in the Virginian, "it was a mighty doleful crowd that stood here on this pier that morning when the big liner came in with Merriwell on board. We were watching her and saying how much better it would have been if we had taken passage on her. The tender came in, crowded with passengers, and——"

"Frank Merriwell was the first one we saw!" cried Harry, seeming to feel much of the thrill and joy he had felt at the moment of which they were speaking. "I don't know what I did——"

"I know what I did," grunted Browning. "I dropped dead on the spot!"

"Impossible," grinned Harry. "You've been dead for years, only you don't know it."

"If you think so, just wake me up a little."
"Can't do it. I've tried before now. You are the hardest man to wake up I ever kicked out of bed."

"But the alarm-clocks woke him up in Paris," smiled Frank.

"I should guess yes!" snorted Browning. "They not only woke me up, but they kept me awake all night. I wouldn't more than discover one of the confounded things and hammer the stuffing out of it with the heel of my shoe before another one would go off somewhere. There were alarm-clocks concealed in every conceivable hiding-place in that room. I began to wonder if I couldn't comb a few of them out of my hair. Oh, that was a great and solemn occasion!"

"And you were a holy spectacle when we dropped in to see you in the morning," chuckled Harry.

"Sleeping on the floor," smiled Jack.

"With the room turned bottom up and your bed upset," laughed Frank.

"Oh, that room was a sight!" shouted Rattleton. "There were pieces of alarm-clocks scattered all over it."

"And Browning looked as if he'd been in a prize-fight," said Diamond. "His face was cut."

"Piece of glass flew and did that when I smashed a clock," explained Bruce.

"His nose was scraped and covered with blood."

"Fell out of bed and struck on it when one of the alarm-clocks went off," put in the big fellow.

"He had a black eye," laughed Merry.

"That's where a marble-topped table slugged me when
I was clawing round in the dark in search of one of those fiendish clocks.

"And there he lay on the floor, with a pile of bedclothes clawed up around him," said Merry. "We stood around and sang 'Kathleen Mavourneen.'"

"If I'd known you were going to do that, I don't believe I should have felt any pleasure when I saw you coming from the big liner on that tender, Merriwell."

"Well, boys," said Frank, "looking it all over, you must admit that we have had a pretty hot time."

"Hot!" cried Diamond. "I never struck anything like it! It's been too hot."

"Oh, you can't kick," grinned Bruce. "You won the girl, after all."

Jack blushed.

"I wasn't thinking of that," he declared. "I was thinking of our adventures in England and France."

"Our adventures!" cried Harry. "Muts the whatter—I mean what's the matter with Merriwell? I rather think he had the adventures."

"Especially in Paris," said Bruce. "Frank, why don't you write a book? You could tell a thrilling yarn about your connection with the Dreyfus case."

"And one nobody would believe," said Merry. "If I were to relate nothing but the plain truth, the public would call it the rankest kind of romancing."

"Which shows that truth is stranger than fiction."

"The whole history of the Dreyfus case shows that. It is as fascinating as some Monte Christo yarn."
"Why don't you write a story about it, Merry?" cried Harry, with enthusiasm.

"Haven't time. I've never thought of trying my hand at story-writing."

"I'll bet you'd make a dandy! You have succeeded at everything else you've done."

"And that is no sign I could succeed at story-writing. It requires a peculiar kind of genius to write stories, and, in America alone about nine-tenths of those people who are trying to write stories are wasting their time, being entirely unqualified for it."

"You seem to know something about it."

"The same as I know something about anything on which I can obtain information. Even if a man does succeed at story-writing, it is more than probable that he could make far more money at something else, had he applied the same amount of energy and talent to it."

"According to that," said Diamond, "the fellow who succeeds at story-writing makes a failure!"

"In a certain way he does. If he goes into it for money, he makes a failure. There are hundreds of other things at which he might make more money. But story-writers, as a rule, are peculiar."

"How?"

"They couldn't succeed at anything else if they tried."

"Why not?"

"Because they are cut out for story-writers, and a man in whom the literary instinct is thoroughly developed seldom has any business instinct. In business he would be a fizzle, so he is better off as a story-writer. If he makes
a good living, he is doing well. If he is a genius and works like a horse, he stands a show of making something more than a living—perhaps. But why are we talking about story-writing? We were speaking of the times we have had since we started on this trip.”

“And we had run over almost the whole trip from start to finish,” said Jack. “I don’t think we mentioned your friend Mr. Noname.”

“No.”

“We thought we’d leave him in Paris.”

“Along with Brattle, and we left neither of them. Both were in London last night, where Mr. Noname gave me another lift. My one regret in leaving Europe is that I have not been able to solve the mystery of that man.”

“Perhaps you may meet him again some time,” suggested Browning.

“I doubt it. I never saw him before I crossed the ocean, and I never expect to see him again.”

“Here comes the tender!” shouted Harry. “Hurrah! At last we’re off!”

“Hurrah! we’re off!” cried the others, as the puffing tender approached to set them on board the great black steamer awaiting them outside.
CHAPTER XV.

THE MASK FALLS.

On the second day out from Liverpool, they struck a storm, and it was a screamer. Within an hour, nine-tenths of the passengers were seasick. Rattleton, Diamond, and Browning all were seized.

"Here is where I reduce my weight for that ball-team, Merriwell," groaned the big fellow.

"I'm with you, Browning," came dolefully from Rattleton; "though I'm light enough now."

"What have you to say about it, Diamond?" laughed Frank.

"Don't talk to me—don't talk to me!" groaned the Virginian savagely. "If anybody talks to me now, I may murder him when I get better!"

"I don't believe I'll ever get better!" moaned Harry. "If I'd known in advance that we'd struck anything like this, I'd never have crossed the ocean."

"If I'd known it in advance, I wouldn't have missed it for a thousand dollars," declared Browning weakly. "It's better than a dose of spring bitters. It's worth the price of admission to hear Diamond groan."

"That may be funny to you," said Jack, in the same mournful tone of voice, "but it isn't funny to me."

"Oh, cheer up!" cried Frank lightly.

"Cheer up!" gurgled Rattleton. "We don't have to
cheer to bring it up! All we have to do is let her come!"

"I'd give a hundred dollars if you'd get sick, Merriwell!" Jack said, as savagely as he could. "You wouldn't think it so much fun."

"But it is fun," insisted Browning, who was as sick as the others. "It's the most fun I've had since I went to my grandmother's funeral. Avast there, Rattleton! Stop heaving! That's good nautical talk."

"Don't be so funny!" grunted Harry, from the upper berth. "You will hurt yourself."

Frank found the air of the stateroom getting rather bad, although the windows were open, and he went out.

The storm did not hold very long, but it left a nasty rolling sea that continued to keep the passengers in their rooms.

Merry strolled about, thoroughly enjoying the passage. Never in his life had he felt a qualm of seasickness, and he was rather thankful for it. He leaned on the rail of the almost deserted steamer and looked out across the rolling ocean.

He did not see a pair of evil eyes that were watching him, and he did not hear a soft step behind him. No intuition warned Frank Merriwell that his most deadly enemy had crept up at his back and held a glittering knife uplifted to plunge it between his shoulders!

The knife did not fall!

Behind Frank's enemy was yet another person, and he grasped the wrist of the man, stopping the blow.
"I have you, Martin Brattle!" a voice cried in the villain's ear. "You have been caught in the act!"

Frank Merriwell jumped aside and whirled about. He was amazed by what he saw. Two men were struggling on the deck, and one of the two was The Mystery!

Mr. Noname was there.

Mr. Noname was grasping the wrist of Frank's greatest living enemy, Martin Brattle, while Brattle's hand held a long knife.

"Curse you!" snarled the villain, as he made a furious lunge and tore his wrist away. "You have baffled me times enough, you old fool! This time is your last!"

The knife rose and fell!

Frank tried to prevent the blow, but was not soon enough. With a squirm to one side, Mr. Noname partly avoided the stroke, but he was stabbed in the side.

He did not fall. Instead of that, the wound seemed to turn him into a frothing maniac. A terrible light came into his eyes, and he struck Brattle a blow on the chin that stunned the man.

Quick as thought, The Mystery caught Brattle up, swung him over his head, and screeched:

"Down—down, thou spawn of the Evil One! Down to the death you merit!"

And, with terrible strength, he launched Brattle far over the rail!

A cry of despair came back from the lips of the wretch, and then he struck and disappeared in the sea. There was a shout of "Man overboard!" and the engines were stopped quickly.
The Mask Falls.

With his white hands clutching the rail, Mr. Noname stared at the sea where Brattle had disappeared, and then, uttering a moan, he fell slowly to the deck. In a moment, Frank was bending over him.

"You are wounded!" exclaimed Merry. "You are seriously hurt!"

"I fear so, my son," came faintly from those lips. "Help me down to my room. It is not far away."

Frank assisted the man to rise and aided him in walking to his room, summoning aid on the way. The ship's doctor came at once and examined the wound. There was great relief when he said he did not believe it was dangerous, explaining that the knife had been stopped by the man's ribs, but had cut his side rather severely.

The wound was dressed, and Mr. Noname was made comfortable. By this time word came that all efforts to pick up the man "who had fallen overboard" had proved fruitless, and the steamer headed upon her course once more.

"That is the last of Martin Brattle, my son," said the Man Without a Name, as Frank Merriwell lingered by his side. "His evil career is over, and you need fear him no longer. I think your dangers are past now, and I will need to keep watch and ward over you no longer."

Frank was staring at the strange man in a peculiar way, his face white and drawn. Within him old memories were stirring and awakening. Never before had he been given an opportunity to see the man with his hat off. Now more than ever before was there something familiar in the face of the Man of Mystery.
Mr. Noname saw Frank staring at him thus, and he quietly said:

"You should know me now, my boy, for all of any disguise given me by dyeing my hair and whiskers. Think of me as a man with snow-white hair and beard, and then—"

"You are my father!" shouted Frank, as it came upon him like a sunburst.

"I am your father," said the man quietly. "I last saw you in Denver before I found you were in London. When I saw you in London, I discovered that you were beset by perils, and I resolved to do everything in my power to guard you against them. As I am immensely rich, I was able to accomplish my purpose. I hired scores of spies to dog your foes and report to me every plan and every move they made. Thus it came about that I seemed to have almost more than human knowledge of their doings. Thus it happened that I was always on hand when one of them sought to do you an injury."

"But, father, why didn't you let me know who you were?" asked Frank, as he embraced the old man.

"Because, my son, the time had not come for that," was the strange man's strange answer. "And I wished to know how long it would be before you would recognize me."

"Could I recognize you? I have not seen you in many years, save that time in Denver last spring. Then you had changed so I did not know you. I remem
bered you as a comparatively young man, but you had grown old, and your hair and beard were white as snow. When I saw you in London, your hair and beard were black. You always wore a hat slouched over your eyes. You tried to hide your identity from me.”

“I did.”

“Why?”

“I wished to watch you awhile and see what you would do. I have watched you, and I am satisfied of one thing.”

“What is that?”

“You are brave to a fault. You do not seem to know fear. Any father might be proud of such a son. But I remember my own failings, and you are my son. Money ruined me—made me an outcast. Too much money is liable to ruin any young man. He is better off without it. I am rich, Frank, but not a dollar of my money goes to you yet awhile. I am going to see you fight your way in the world. You must win your way to the top by hard work.”

“I do not want your money, father!” cried Frank, rather resentfully. “I have some money of my own.”

“Forty or fifty thousand dollars—a mere nothing!”

“A mere nothing, father! Why, it is a snug little fortune!”

“My son, I am worth millions of dollars! You stare at me as if you doubted. I expected that. I am one of the richest men in the world—if not the richest. Some
time I shall tell you how I came into possession of such wealth, but not now. If you prove yourself worthy by working your way up in life, all my wealth shall be yours when I die. I have no other person to think of, and it shall be yours. I will make you the richest man in America!"

Some lads would have been dazzled and bewildered by the prospect. Not so Frank Merriwell. Instead, he wondered if his father were not somewhat unbalanced.

"All I want is you, father!" he declared. "You have wandered over the world long enough. You should stop it now and have a home."

"Thank you, my boy; but the unrest is in me, and no place will ever again seem to me like home. I have been a wanderer so long, so long! One thing I mean to do, Frank. I am going to buy back the old place of which you were robbed by Darius Conrad and give that to you."

"Wait, father; let me buy it back myself. I can do it. I shall feel better knowing I won it back through my own efforts."

"As you choose, my boy. Now let me rest. Come and see me often, my brave son."

Thus Frank was dismissed by the strange man.

Mr. Merriwell's wound did not prove severe, and it had begun to heal when New York was reached.

He accompanied Frank to a hotel, and there Merry fancied he left him in no condition to go away of his own accord. Frank attended to some business that re
quired immediate disposal, and then he returned to the hotel to find his father gone.

Behind him the strange man had left this message:

"My Dear Boy: I am going to leave you again for a time, so I bid you farewell. Fate alone can decide how long it will be before we meet again. Perhaps we may not meet on earth. Still, I think we shall. You have asked me many questions about myself that I have not chosen to answer. Some time, perhaps, I will answer them all for you. Within me there is a power not my own that draws me away and keeps me moving ever onward. I am doomed to be a wanderer. Perhaps when those rocks fell upon me as, by the strength of a thousand men, I tore my way from the cavern of gold, where my enemy had buried me to rot and starve, my brain may have received some injury. At times I think I am not just right there. But my will is made, and you will some day receive all my wealth, unless you prove yourself unworthy. If you do prove unworthy, I shall give what wealth I possess to charity, and with me shall perish the secret of the cavern of gold.

"Your father,

"Charles Merriwell."
CHAPTER XVI.

AT MAPLEWOOD

Maplewood was excited.

"Are yez reddy fer th' gayloot, b'ys?"

"Yeou bet yer butes I'm reddy!"

"Vale, I vos anodder."

"Oi can hear the sound av th' car!"

"So kin I, b'gosh!"

"Yaw, I vos anodder vot dot car can hear alretty."

Bart Hodge, his cap in one hand, while his other hand shaded his eyes from the sun, so that he could look toward the opening in the woods, out of which the trolley-car must wind in its approach, stood beside the small brass cannon. Behind the cannon, on the green lawn in front of the Maple Heights Hotel, was gathered a crowd of people, dressed in ducks, summer flannels and golf suits. They were mostly young people, although there were a number of middle-aged and elderly persons in the gathering.

To a large extent, the crowd was made up of the summer visitors at Maplewood, a very small New England village, nestled amid some picturesque hills. A few villagers had gathered near, watching with considerable interest. Among them was a tall, broad-shouldered, muscular youth, who was chewing tobacco, and whittling a piece of pine. There was an expression of eagerness on his face.
"Danged 'f I don't want to see this feller they're makin' all the fuss abaout!" he declared. "Anybody'd think the President was comin'. He must be a giant to do all the things they say he kin. What's his name, Si?"

"Frank Merriwell, so somebody said," answered Si, a hulking, freckle-faced, red-headed boy of seventeen. "He's in college, an' they do say he's a rip-snorter."

"Never took much stock in none of them college fellers," declared the first speaker, squirting tobacco juice at a fly that had settled on the toe of Si's boot, and missing the fly, but bespattering the boot, which did not even arouse a murmur of protest from Si. "They're too stuck up."

"That's so," nodded Si. "They alwus think themselves some pumpkins, don't they, Jeff?"

"Part their hair in the middle, wear cuffs, an' collars that hold their chins up in the air, carry canes, an' all that," came with supreme contempt from Jeff.

"But this feller Hodge goes to the same college Frank Merriwell is from," somewhat timidly put in another of the village boys. "He kin play ball all right."

"Oh, he thinks himself a ripper!" sneered Jeff; "but he ain't such an awful thing. He's got an idee he'll have a ball-team here than kin play with Rockford, Seaslope, an' Torrentown. Maplewood ain't big enough fer that. Them fellers is players, and some of them that's bin practisin' here don't know a baseball from a bass drum! That Dutchman's one of um. He falls all over himself. And that long-legged chap with the sorrel top is
another. He’s all legs an’ arms, an’ he’ll come to pieces some day.”

“But the Irishman kin play,” ventured the nameless boy who had spoken once before.

“Oh, he kin play some,” admitted Jeff; but there’s jest, as good players right here in Maplewood. Si Plunk kin do as well as he kin, an’ I kin do a durn sight better.”

Jeff looked round scowlingly, as if to see if anybody dared dispute him. As no one disputed him, he demanded:

“Don’t you think so, fellers?”

“Oh, yes! of course we do!” they cried, and the manner in which they said it told how Jeff stood in Maplewood. They didn’t dare express a contrary belief.

“That’s one thing’s made me sore,” grunted Si. “This feller Hodge he ain’t never seemed to care to have any of us fellers play on his team, though we’ve practised with him, an’ we’ve beat his team in practise more’n half the time. We ain’t good enough to play with him, ye know!”

“Joe Scott’s goin’ to play on their team,” said one of the boys. “He told me last night.”

“Yes,” came derisively from Jeff; “he is goin’ to play till they kin git somebody to make out a full team. Before I’d do that, I’d do anything else! Joe’s a fool! Soon’s they kin git a college chap to take his place, they’ll kick him out.”

“Joe said Hodge thought Frank Merriwell might keep him.”
Then this mighty feller Merriwell is goin' to be the boss?

"He's goin' to manage the team."

"What'll support it?"

"There's bin a board of directors elected."

"Be they goin' to support it?"

"I guess one of uni's goin' to do a big part of it."

"What one?"

"Old Hammerswell."

"Say, if anybody heard ye call him 'old Hammerswell!' Why, he's bin in the Senate. He's the Honorable Artemas Hammerswell."

"An' ain't he got piles of money?" exclaimed one little fellow. "My! my! He jest rides round in a spankin' carriage, with black bosses, all covered over with silver an' gold harnesses, an' has a nigger in uniform to drive an' another in uniform to set on the seat with his arms folded, jest like he owned the United States, an' he—"

"Oh, shut up, Tid!" advised somebody. "You'll wear your mouth out talking if you git started."

"I'd like to be Herbert Hammerswell, old Ham's son, jest the same," muttered the little fellow. "He don't do noth ing but wear good clothes an' smoke cigarettes."

"An' parts his hair in the middle!" said Jeff, with a sneer. "He makes me sick! I'd like to git him out an' thump him some time."

"His father'd have ye put in jail fer life if ye did," declared Tid. "You kin lick us fellers as much as ye
want to, Jeff Nash, but you hadn't better touch Herbert Hammerswell.”

“Oh, I don't know,” growled Jeff, with a grin. “Mr. Hammerswell may git ketched some dark night, an' then he can't swear who done it. Anyhow, I ain't afraid of his father if he does cut a big swell round here.”

“You may not be afraid,” said Si, “but the law——”

“Oh, hang the law! What do ye s'pose I care fer the law?”

And those who knew Jeff best felt that he was not a person who had much regard for the law. He had demonstrated that in the past by many reckless deeds. He was the bully of the town, of whom the Maplewood boys stood in great awe. That he was a fighter he had demonstrated in many a fierce battle. He was a person who never let up on a fallen enemy, and he took delight in torturing the weak and helpless. Whenever any piece of malicious mischief was perpetrated in the town the citizens were sure to say that Jeff Nash must be “at the bottom of it.”

It galled Jeff to know he was not regarded as an equal by the young men who were summering in Maplewood, but he pretended to hold all of them in scorn. He had taken a strong dislike to Bart Hodge, although he had never come in conflict with the dark-haired young fellow who was getting together a ball-team to enter the Trolley League.

It had been heralded that Frank Merriwell, the famous Yale athlete and pitcher, would manage the team, and
this gathering in front of the Maplewood Heights Hotel was to welcome Frank and a number of players who were expected to arrive on the next car.

Hodge had been the chief mover in getting up the demonstration. But there were other of Frank’s old-time friends who were prepared to take a hand in it, especially the three who stood near Bart. They were Barney Mulloy, the true-hearted Irish youth; Ephraim Gallup, the awkward country lad, and Hans Dunnerwurst, the roly-poly, happy Dutch lad.

Barney was a good ball-player, being a brilliant outfielder and batter. Ephraim, despite his apparent awkwardness, could play a “fast” game at times, being a great thrower. Hans was the only man who never did anything brilliant, although he knew the game well and sometimes did creditable work.

A sudden cry went up from the crowd:

“There comes the car!”

Frank Merriwell was coming at last!

Out of the woods came the trolley-car. Then there was excitement on the lawn in front of the hotel.

“What av he shouldn’t be on th’ car, b’ys?” gasped Barney Mulloy, with a sudden feeling of dread.

“Gosh! didn’t he tellgraf he was comin’?” cried Ephraim Gallup, dancing about because he found it impossible to keep still.

“Vale, uf he ain’d dot cab on you vill peen der maddest man I efer saw!” declared Hans Dunnerwurst.

Every eye seemed to be on the approaching car. Bart
Hodge stood like a statue, a flush in his dark cheeks, his eyes gleaming. His heart was thumping in his breast. Once he looked round toward the broad veranda of the hotel, on which sat a pale, sad-looking lady in black. She smiled at him. It was his mother.

Beside the lady’s chair was standing a handsome, black-haired girl, who seemed very calm, but whose face was pale, and who could not entirely conceal her excitement. The car came nearer. On the forward seat somebody suddenly rose up, and waved a hat.

“Hurro!” yelled Barney Mulloy. “Av it ain’t Frankie hisself I’ll ate me hat! I’ll miss it!”

“Yaw!” yelled Hans; “der car peen on Vrankie sure as you live! Dunder und blitzen! ain’t you der pleasantest poy I efer saw?”

“We-ow!” yelled Ephraim Gallup. “Hold me, somebody—hold me tight before I run away with myself!”

Hodge turned to those behind him.

“Ready!” he cried, lifting his hand.

Fifty horns were lifted. The car was drawing near. Beside Frank Merriwell could be seen three more young men.

They were Rattleton, Diamond, and Browning.

“Open up!” cried Hodge.

Toot! toot! toot! too-oo-oot!

Pop! pop! crack! bang!

Boom!

“Hooray! hooray! hooray!”

Such a fearful blare of horns! such a snapping and
spluttering and banging of firecrackers! such a thunderous report as came from the little brass cannon! and such a great cheer as went up from the crowd!

The flag in front of the hotel had been lowered, but now it went gliding up to the top of the tall pole, while scores of small flags fluttered in the hands of the persons who had come out to welcome Frank Merriwell. Never before in the history of Maplewood had any person been welcomed to the little place by such a demonstration. If President Roosevelt himself had appeared there, he could hardly have been received with greater acclaim!

Frank was dressed in a handsome light suit and wore a straw hat that was right up to date, while a pair of well-polished tan shoes were on his feet; but he was perfectly modest in his clothes, and there was not the least suggestion of overdisplay. His friends were dressed appropriately for the season, and a fine-looking quartet of healthy, manly, independent young men they were.

When they had arrived in view of the hotel, Browning had grunted and showed some interest.

“He’s waking up!” exclaimed Rattleton.

“What’s the meaning of all that crowd out there?” muttered Bruce. “They must be having some kind of a celebration here.”

“Something is going on,” said Diamond.

“Does seem to be a large gathering,” murmured Frank. “You don’t suppose——”

He stopped.

“I can see Hodge!” cried Rattleton.
Frank rose and waved his hat.

Instantly there was a stir on the lawn. The crowd seemed getting ready to do something.

"By Jove!" cried Diamond. "I believe they are—"

"So do I!" exclaimed Frank.

Hodge was seen to lift his hand. A moment later, pandemonium broke loose. Huge firecrackers exploded on every hand, sending off puffs of blue smoke, and there was a blare of horns and a wild chorus of cheers, punctuated by the roar of the cannon, which was flung back from the mountain crags on the opposite side of the silver lake in the valley.

"Will you tell me what this means?" gurgled Browning. "Is this the Fourth of July, or—"

"They're celebrating!" cried Harry.

"Celebrating what?"

"Frank's arrival, of course!"

"I swear I believe they are! Well, if this isn't a reception!"

"There's Gallup!"

"And Dunnerwurst!"

"And Mulloy!"

"This is great!"

The car came to a stop, and the crowd surrounded it instantly. The big firecrackers continued to explode, and the horns blared while the cheering had not ceased for a moment. With all haste, the little cannon had been loaded again, and once more it belched forth its thunder to the mountain crags.
Bart Hodge was the first to get hold of Frank's hand, and his grasp told the welcome which he could not express in words. Then he shook hands with the others, while Mulloy, Gallup, and Dunnerwurst took their turns. Hans was laughing so hard that the big tears actually ran down his cheeks. He was in such haste to get hold of Frank that he lost his hold in scrambling up onto the car, and fell off onto a man, whom he flattened out in the dust. The Dutch lad did not even stop to thank the man for serving as a cushion to break his fall, but clawed his way onto the car again, and hugged Frank.

Then they lifted Merry on their shoulders and bore him to the veranda of the hotel, surrounded by the cheering crowd. On the high steps he was placed, and Diamond, Rattleton, and Browning were compelled to take places beside him.

"If I'd known this, I'd never had the courage to come!" shouted Bruce in Rattleton's ear.

Great drops of perspiration were rolling off the big fellow, and he seemed badly frightened. Hodge turned to the crowd, and his uplifted hand brought silence. His hat was off, and he tossed back his dark, curly hair.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he said, "you all know the efforts I have made to get together a ball-team worthy to enter the Trolley League, and represent Maplewood. I have received some encouragement, for which I thank you. But had I not been able to secure the right man to manage the team I should have abandoned the project. There was one man whom I knew could fill the position properly, and who would lead the Maplewoods,
to victory if such a thing could be. That man was in Europe, but I lost no time in communicating with him. That was a little more than two weeks ago. To-day, he is here, ready to take charge of our baseball-team.”

This brought some cheering, but Hodge held them in check with a gesture.

“This man,” Hodge continued, “is one of whom many, if not all, of you must have heard considerable, for he is one of the most famous college athletes the United States has ever produced. He is a Yale man, and he has one of the cleanest records ever made by any college man in the field of sport. As a pitcher, he is a wonder, I know, for I have stood behind the bat as back-stop in many games when he has been in the box. He has a curve that will make the fast fielding Seaslopers, the hard-hitting Torrentowns, and the fighting Rockfordites think they’ve got the delirium tremens. And he can hit the ball hard and run bases like a streak. Combined with this, he has the best head that ever grew on a neck! Ladies and gentlemen, permit me to present the manager of the Maplewood ball-team, Mr. Frank Merriwell, of Yale!”

It was the speech of Bart’s life. Naturally quiet and not given to words, he had fairly outdone himself. But he knew his mother was listening, and, besides that, he was speaking of the friend he loved most in the whole world, and every word he uttered came straight from his heart. He felt that he was utterly incapable of saying enough in praise of Frank.
At Maplewood.

And then, as Frank took a step forward, bowing and smiling in his magnetic manner, the crowd threw hats, flags, and arms aloft, greeting him with such a tempest of cheering that the very hills seemed astounded and awe-stricken.
CHAPTER XVII.

INZA.

The cheering ceased, as Frank stood there, smiling, his hands on the rail of the veranda.

That smile won them, almost without exception.

"Friends," he said, and his voice was an added charm that attracted them, "I thank you for this most unexpected and most generous expression of your pleasure at our arrival, for I am sure that a part of this pleasant greeting is for my friends who have accompanied me. I assure you that nothing of the sort was anticipated by us."

"I should say not!" muttered Rattleton, while Browning gave a lazy grunt.

"I am afraid that my friend Hodge has led you to expect too much."

"No! no!" shouted the crowd.

"You do not know about that," laughed Frank. "He has surprised me by his flattering compliments. As he is one of my dearest friends, he is prone to overlook my faults and magnify my better qualities. You must not for a moment think that I know all there is to be learned about baseball, or that I can always pitch a winning game."

"Never knew him to lose through any fault of his," said Harry Rattleton. loudly enough for those near the veranda to hear.
“Keep still!” smiled Frank. “You’ll have a chance to speak later on.”

“Don’t go to running yourself down,” advised Harry.

“I love the game,” Frank went on. “It is the greatest athletic game that can be played. It is a manly game. It should always be played in a gentlemanly manner, although often it is not. We will endeavor to have a ball-team here that will be composed of gentlemen, and anything offensive to good taste will not be permitted on the grounds. You may be sure that we will do our best to win the pennant in the league. Of course, as yet, I am not posted concerning the quality of the teams we are to meet. I expect they are strong, but I see no reason why we cannot have one equally strong right here.”

“We will!” cried several.

“We’ll do our best,” declared Frank; “and that is all we can do.”

Then he stepped back, being cheered again. After this Browning, Rattleton, and Diamond were introduced. None of them would make a speech.

Hans Dunnerwurst, however, insisted on making a speech. He took a position at the front of the balcony, waved one fat hand in the air, and cried:

“Ladies und chentlemen und odders: Uf I peen aple not someding to said here you pefore I pelief you vould pust vide open mit der intensification uf my feelings. Yaw! I peen so glad as nefer vas to velcoming to Mable-wood mine ould college chump Frank Merrivell, vot vas der pest man dot efer two legs stood on alretty! Der world haf trafeled all ofer mit Vrank Merrivell und I,
und uf you don’t knew him brritty vell ven I haf peen rnit him as long as dot, you vos a liar! Yaw! I know vot I vos speechnening apout, you pet my pooots! Dot Vrank Merrivell a dandy peen der pasepall busines at, und don’t you let me vergot dot! Der pall can hit him so hardt dot a pase he vill make most efry dime, und somedimes a home run vill make him ven you don’t expect id. Und ven der pall pitches him you ought to seen der curfs vot id vill cut. Der vay he vill der patter fool vos someding surprisining. Yaw! Ven der pat svings dot patter der pall and he don’t anyding but der air hit. Dot vill make you laugh so hardt I vill al­most pust. Laties and chentlemen—"

Right there Barney Mulloy got Hans by the collar and yanked him back, exclaiming:

"Pwhat’s atin’ yez, ye Dooch chaze! Begorra! ye’ll have to learn to talk th’ Amirican language before ye be afther makin’ any spaches."

"Don’t inderrupt you!" squawked Hans. "You ain’t said half vot I vanted to."

"Oi think ye’ll have to cut it out, ye flannel-mouthed barrel av sourcrout. Ye’ll spoil th’ whole business av ye thry to talk inny more."

"Somebody’ll throw a club at ye, Hans," grinned Ephraim Gallup.

"Vale, you shust led somepody throw me ad a club!" cried the Dutch lad, belligerently. "Uf dot don’t made me mad you vos a liar!"

But Hans was suppressed.

Then several of the prominent resorters at Maplewood
came up to be introduced to Frank and his friends. Among them was the Honorable Artemas Hammerswell.

"Young man," said Mr. Hammerswell patronizingly, "I rather like your appearance, and I hope you will be able to make good all your claims. I was chosen one of the directors of the Maplewood ball-team at a meeting held last night, and my influence will be behind you."

"Thank you, sir," said Frank quietly. "I shall be glad to know that your influence is behind us."

"Vale, his money would a great deal more ice cut," cried Hans, loudly enough to be heard by those in the vicinity.

"As for claims," said Frank, "I was not aware that I had made any. Not having sized up our rivals, and not knowing our own strength, I am not ready to make any claims."

This did not seem to please the Honorable Artemas. "Why, you talk as if you entertained some doubts of your own powers!" he exclaimed. "If that is the case, I am sure I shall not feel like backing the team with my money."

"You have misunderstood me, sir. As for your money, I am sure we shall need the support of Maplewood, but we mean to earn it by our playing, and we do not wish to be indebted to any one individual to a great extent."

Frank's straightforward manner of speaking did not seem to please the ex-senator. Mr. Hammerswell was accustomed to people who treated him with great deference, and he was disappointed when Frank did not seem at all awed in his presence.
"But you will understand," he said gruffly, "that a ball-
team cannot be run in this small place by gate receipts alone. The place is not large enough, and there are not enough people here for that. You will have to rely on the men of means who are willing to stand behind you if you put a winning team into the field. Among those perhaps I am as able as anybody to back you, and I will do so under certain conditions."

"What are those conditions?"

Frank asked the question pointblank.

"Ahem!" coughed Hammerswell. "I—er—we will speak of them later—later, sir. But I wish to introduce you to my son, who is a great patron of sport, and who is interested in the Maplewood team."

A dudish-looking young man, who carried a cane, came forward and languidly extended his hand.

"Aw! I'm deuced glad to see yer," he drawled, in an affected manner. "I hope you'll be able to do all they say you can, my deah fellow."

Frank took an instant dislike to Herbert Hammerswell, but he did not betray it. He shook hands with the young fellow, but Hammerswell's hand had no warmth in its clasp, and Merry dropped it quickly.

"I am afraid my friends have talked too much about me," he said.

"Oh, my dear fellow," said Herbert, "we know better, you understand. We've seen your record in the papers. I follow such things, don't you know, as I'm fitting for Hawvard. Expect to enter next year. Why didn't you go to Hawvard instead of Yale, Merriwell, old boy?"
"I preferred to go to Yale."

"That's the difference between you and me. Yale is rawther common; everybody goes there. Harvard is different. A fellow can be exclusive there. He can go in his own set, without being troubled by the vulgar, you know."

"I understand. Harvard has its sets, and there a man is rated by his family and his wealth."

"Yes, that's it."

"In Yale a man is rated by his ability. It is seldom that the standing of his parents cuts any figure. If he has brains and ability, he can take his place in the best class."

"A great many fellows have brains, you know, and yet one would hawdly care to associate with them. The governor says brains are cheap. He says he can buy brains at fifteen dollars a week. It's money that cuts ice nowadays."

"Not always."

"Well, pretty nearly always. Now, if you had plenty of money, you wouldn't have to play ball vacations to pick up a few dollars."

This caused Frank to laugh heartily.

"I am not playing ball for the money there is in it, Mr. Hammerswell," he explained.

"Aw! How is that?"

"I do not have to play it."

"Then why do you play in the summer, when it's such deuced hot weather? I should think you'd rawther take it easy and look on while others play."
"I am not built that way, sir. When there is sport going on, I like to have a hand in it."

"By Jawve, I can’t understand that! I call it beastly hard work, and I think it’s much more sport looking on."

"That is the difference between you and me," said Frank, turning away.

"Haw!" said Herbert Hammerswell. "Rawther independent, don’t you think, governor?"

"Altogether too independent," scowled Artemas Hammerswell. "He needs some of it taken out of him. As chairman of the board of directors, I think I shall find it my duty to sit on him."

"That’s right, governor, and don’t forget my little scheme. If you are going to put your money behind the team, there is no reason why I shouldn’t get some glory out of it. I know enough about the game to fill the position."

"You shall have it, my son," promised the ex-senator. "Since seeing Merriwell, I’ve decided on that."

"Thank you, old boy," drawled Herbert, as he turned to join some girls on the veranda.

"Merry," said Bart Hodge, "come with me a moment. I wish to introduce you to somebody."

He slipped his arm through Frank’s, and led him to where the pleasant-faced lady in black was sitting.

"Mother," said Bart, his voice quivering with the emotion he could not wholly conceal, "this is Frank Merriwell, the truest friend I ever found outside of yourself."

The lady held out both her hands to Frank, while her pale face seemed to shine.
"Mr. Merriwell," she breathed, "I cannot tell you all I would say, but I thank you—I thank you from the bottom of my heart. My boy has told me of all your goodness to him, and I have longed for the day when we might meet."

"Mrs. Hodge," said Merry, his voice choking a bit, "I think I understand you, and it is one of the greatest pleasures of my life to meet Bart's mother."

"You are just as I pictured you in my mind," declared the lady. "Bart described you to me a score of times. He told me all about the noble things you have done for him, how you always stood by him under all circumstances, never doubting him even when things looked blackest for him. Oh, it is good to have such a friend! I can never repay you, except by my everlasting gratitude."

"I did not become Bart's friend because I expected remuneration, and your esteem, Mrs. Hodge, is more precious to me than anything else could be."

There was love in her eyes.

"It almost seems that I have known you a long time," she murmured. "You know Bart spoke of you in every letter he wrote, and since he has been with us we have talked about you every day. He has been studying hard to go back to college. I wish him to go back while you are there."

"And I have the same desire."

"Oh, I'm going, Merry!" cried Bart. "I have made up my mind to do it. But here is somebody else you have not seen."
Frank looked up, and his eyes rested on the handsome, dark-haired girl who had been standing near all the while. He gave a great start of astonishment.

"Inza?" he cried, as if in doubt.

"Frank!" she exclaimed, stepping forward.

"Is it you?"

"Yes, Frank."

Inza Burrage was there!

"Well, this is wonderful!" he laughed, as he caught both her hands in his. "Inza, if we were not out here on the veranda, with everybody watching, I'd—I'd kiss you!"

"If I'd let you," she said, her cheeks burning. "How do you know I would?"

"I'd not stop to ask!"

"Oh, I haven't a doubt of that! You always had a way of taking things without asking."

"Yes, he has a very taking way," smiled Hodge.

It was such a surprise to Frank that it took him some minutes to recover.

"How do you happen to be here, Inza?" he asked.

"I was stopping at Seaslope with father till I heard you were coming to Maplewood," she answered. "Father is very feeble this summer, and Maplewood is quieter than Seaslope, so we came here."

"I'm afraid he hasn't found it very quiet to-day."

"Well, this is the first time there has been any noise here since we arrived."

"I don't believe there ever was so much noise here before," put in Hodge.
"And you are responsible for it all!" smiled Frank.
"If our ball-team proves weak, you'll be sorry you made such a spread over our arrival."
"If the team is weak at first, you'll get it into shape," declared Bart, with confidence.
Frank talked with Inza and Mrs. Hodge awhile, and then went away with Bart to his room.
Hodge had secured a fine room in the Maple Heights Hotel for Merry, and Frank found his baggage had been taken up ahead of him.
When they were alone in the room, Bart grasped Frank's hand again.
"I feel foolish with happiness, old man!" he cried.
"When we separated in the spring, I didn't know that we'd ever meet again; but strange things have happened since then. My father is dead, and now I have a fortune awaiting me when I reach twenty-five, with an ample yearly allowance in the meantime. I am no longer an outcast. And I owe it all to you!"
"To me?"
"Yes."
"Oh, come——"
"I do!"
"How do you make that out?"
"If I'd gone wholly wrong, my father would have cut me off with a dollar. He would have fixed it so that I could not have inherited his fortune. You saved me from going wholly wrong. You saved me from becoming a criminal. Your helping hand supported me in my hours of need and trouble. Your confidence in me made me
ashamed to go wrong. So I owe it to you that I was not disinherited.”

“Bart, if I have done this for you, I am happy.”

“You have!”

“But you had a mother——”

“Sometimes I forgot even her; but I could not forget that you—you always believed me more sinned against than sinning. I could not forget that you believed me innocent when everything seemed to prove that I was a thief. Frank, to a great extent you have wrought a great change in me. I know I am not like my old self. Once I took delight in being mean and hateful. I did not care for friends. I did not care for anything but myself. You showed me that I was wrong, and you did it without preaching. I felt that I’d give anything in the world to be like you. Even now I know that is impossible, but you have changed me.”

Frank Merriwell slipped an arm over Bart’s shoulders.

“I’m glad all has turned out so well,” he said sincerely. “My regret is that other of my enemies could not have become my friends. I even tried to make Sport Harris a friend, but he had no sense of shame, and his heart was entirely given to hatred. Poor fellow!”

“Poor fellow! What do you mean by that?”

“It’s too late for him to reform now.”

“Too late?”

“Yes; he is dead.”

“Harris dead?”

“Yes. He followed me to England, and there he met his death while trying to injure me.”
Frank told the story of Harris' tragic death.

"Served him right," was Bart's comment. "I do not believe there was one redeeming quality in the fellow."

"It seems that you are right; but I am glad I did not kill him that time when I had the fight with him after his attempt to kidnap Elsie."

"Elsie—where is she?"

"She came back with me and has gone to visit friends in Philadelphia for a time. She thinks of coming here later in the season."

"I'm afraid you will have too much on your hands with both Elsie and Inza here," observed Bart.

And, for the first time that day, a shadow clouded Frank's face.
Hodge and Merry had a long talk; in which Bart told Frank all about the baseball situation at Maplewood.

"There are a few rich men here on whom we must depend," said Bart. "It happens that the Honorable Artemas Hammerswell is one of them. He is certain to be most liberal in the support of the team, if things go to please him."

"There is a big 'if' in the way," said Frank. "It's mighty hard to make a ball-team go to please everybody, you know."

"Don't I know it?" cried Hodge. "I don't like either the Honorable Artemas nor his son, but their good-will is preferable to their ill will, and I have treated them with deference."

"Well, you have changed!" exclaimed Frank. "Time was when you would not have cared a rap whether you had their good-will or not."

"This is different. I was thinking of you and the ball-team. If Artemas Hammerswell were to turn against us, we could not raise enough dust here to support the team."

Frank looked as if this information did not please him at all.

"Then our ball-team at Maplewood depends on the good-will of Artemas Hammerswell?"
"That's about the size of it."
"He'll make trouble."
"I'm afraid so, unless you can handle him right. You have a way of handling troublesome persons, and I thought you might take care of him and his son."
"Oh, his son is of no particular consequence."
"Still, he had gall enough to come to me to-day and propose that he be made manager of the team, while you were to be the captain!"
"He did?"
"Sure."
"And you told him——"
"That I had nothing to say about it; he'd have to see you, but I didn't think you'd agree to it."
"I should say not!" laughed Frank. "I'm inclined to think his ideas of managing a team would be rather crude."
"Crude! Why, he's a saphead! He'd ruin everything. But we can't afford to get his father down on us."
"And we can't afford to bow down to any man. If one man gets the idea that he is running the team, there will be trouble."
"What are we going to do?"
"Oh, I think we'll settle that all right."
"Hammerswell pledged himself for the largest sum of anybody in getting the field ready."
"Then the field is ready?"
"All but completing the grand stand and the fencing. The diamond is in first-class shape, and the outfield is good. We can play on it to-morrow. The directors of
the league meet to-day to make arrangements about letting us in."

"Then that matter has not been arranged yet?"

"Oh, they have the same as promised us that it will be all right. This meeting is a mere matter of form."

"Well, I hope there will be no hitches now. What kind of a team can we put on the field?"

"You brought three men with you. Besides them, there are Mulloy, Gallup, Dunnerwurst, and myself."

"That makes but eight, and Dunnerwurst is a weak man."

"Still, he has a way of blundering into some star plays."

"Where is the ninth man?"

"I have a local man who is pretty swift. His name is Scott. Second, third or short. If he plays as well as he practises, he's all right."

"And that makes but nine. We should have ten or eleven men. Eleven will not be too many. We ought to have two regular pitchers, besides one man who can play outfield and pitch, too."

"I've done my best to get hold of a star pitcher to alternate with you, but it's hard. All the men seem taken by other teams. I have two on the string, but don't know that I can nail either of them. One is Con­day, of Dartmouth, a freshman who has made a good record."

"And the other?"

"Duke Derringer, the Western Wonder."

"He's the man."
"But Rockford has him on the string, and money cuts no ice there, so I'm afraid I shall lose him."

"Rockford is ready to pay well for him?"

"Sure. I've offered him twenty dollars a week and board at this hotel."

"And that has not brought him?"

"He wrote that he would wait to hear from Rockford."

"So he is playing one town against the other," said Merry, with a bit of a scowl.

"That's what."

"I don't like that, but I suppose he has a right to get whatever he can. Who communicated with him first?"

"I did."

"Can you prove that?"

"I have proved it. I showed the Rockford manager that I wrote Derringer first."

"What did he say?"

"He said that as long as we were not yet in the league he had a right to get the man if he could."

"Did he?" cried Merriwell. "Well, we'll see who gets him!"

"The Rockford team is made up of fighters, you know, and Derringer is said to be a wild fellow, who had as lief fight as eat."

"So the Rockfords are bullies?"

"They win some of their games by fighting for them."

"If they fight in the right kind of a way, it isn't so bad."

"They're ready to fight in any old way."
“Then they may run up against trouble. I don’t think much of a crowd of ball-players who win victories by bullying.”

“It’s likely they will get Derringer, and I don’t know where we can find another man like him.”

“That would be a body blow, for we must have a corking pitcher. I can’t afford to kill my arm.”

“I should say not! What can we do?”

“Let me think it over.”

While Frank was thinking, singularly enough, there came a knock at the door, and a boy handed in a despatch from Derringer himself. This is what it said:

“MR. BART HODGE, Maplewood:
Rockford offers twenty-five and board. Can you do better? DUKE DERRINGER.”

“That settles it!” exclaimed Bart dolefully. “We can’t crack up any more than that.”

“Any answer?” asked the messenger, who was waiting. “Yes,” said Frank, taking out a note-book and pencil.

In a moment he had dashed off a message, while Bart, who was looking over his shoulder, gasped with astonishment. This is what Frank wrote:

“MR. DUKE DERRINGER, Kankakee, Ill.:
Will pay you one hundred dollars a week and board to pitch for Maplewood, in case you reach this place within three days. Answer if you accept.

FRANK MERRIWELL.
“Mgr. Maplewood B. B. C.”

“What?” shouted Bart. “You’re joking!”
Frank counted the words, and handed the right sum of money to the waiting boy, saying quietly:

"Have that telegram sent without delay."

"You're crazy!" gasped Hodge.

"No."

"Do you really mean that?"

"I do."

"You will pay Derringer one hundred dollars a week?"

"Yes."

"How can you do it?"

"Why, I'll just do it."

"But the place won't stand it!"

"The place doesn't have to stand it. I'm doing this."

"You don't mean to say you are willing to sink a hundred dollars a week in this team?"

"If necessary to make it a winner—yes."

"Well, may I be hanged!"

Bart sat down on a chair, utterly flabbergasted.

Within an hour the whole of Maplewood knew what Frank Merriwell had done, and Merry's first act as manager of the ball-team created a sensation.

"The fellow is daffy!" declared more than one.

"Begorra! it's just loike him!" chuckled Barney Mulloy.

"You pet he vos shust like id!" cried Hans Dunnerwurst. "Uf he vanted to, he wouls paid a t'ousan' tollars a weeck a minute in."

"But who is going to back him in this outrageous piece
of business?" demanded the Honorable Artemas Hammerswell. "Why, I never heard of anything so foolish!"

"Now's the time for you to get in your work, governor," said Herbert, giving the old man a nudge. "He has shown himself incapable of being manager of the team by this first act."

"That's right—that's right, my son! A meeting of the directors shall be called this afternoon, and we will take care of him."

"You must call it right away, if you want to undo what he has done. Somebody else must be given authority to stop this fellow Derringer before he starts."

"I'll attend to it," assured the ex-senator.

And thus it came about that Frank was notified to attend a meeting of the directors that very afternoon.

The meeting was held in a room of the hotel, and the five men who had been chosen as directors were present. Four of them were summer visitors in the town. The fifth was a resident, and a man of some means.

Frank noticed that Herbert Hammerswell was present. Hodge had also been invited to attend.

Artemas Hammerswell called the meeting to order. Then he rose and said:

"Gentlemen, I presume you are somewhat surprised at this sudden call for a meeting, but it became absolutely necessary that one point should be settled before anything further is done in connection with the scheme of running a ball-team here in Maplewood this
summer. This is a small place, and therefore the patronage of the games must be limited. Not enough money can be taken at the gate to support a team, which makes it necessary for some of us who wish to see the sport to stand behind the team."

The others nodded, and Hammerswell continued:

"A number of persons have promised support, but that means if we are able to place a team in the field that can win games. A poor team would soon disgust and discourage the most enthusiastic admirers of the game. Mr. Hodge, who is a capable man, told me some time ago that he believed we could get together such a team. He said it could be done if Mr. Merriwell could be secured to pitch. Mr. Merriwell was in Paris, but he cabled, on hearing from Mr. Hodge, that he would come at once. He is here, and I understand that he has brought three capable players with him.

"So far so good; but one point has not been settled definitely. We have been chosen as directors of the team, because it was known that we were willing to place our money behind it. We can choose a man to manage the team. From what I have seen of Mr. Merriwell, I should say he might make a thoroughly capable captain, but it is seldom advisable to have one and the same individual act as manager. I believe it will be well to choose somebody who will not play to act as manager—somebody who can sit on the bench and see that things go right. Of course, none of us older men care for that position. That being the case, I propose that my son Herbert, who is thoroughly conversant with
all the intricate details of the game, be selected to manage the Maplewood ball-team. I hope you will agree with me that such a selection will be wise.”

Then he sat down. It was plain by the faces of the other men present that this had been expected.

In a moment, Bart Hodge was on his feet, a hot flush in his dark cheeks.

“Gentlemen,” he cried, “I wish to say something right here. I believe it was originally understood that Mr. Merriwell was to come here as the captain and manager of the team. I spoke of him as the manager when I first talked with Mr. Hammerswell, which I think he will remember. I wrote Mr. Merriwell that he was to act as manager. Not till very recently did I know there was a person who did not understand that he was coming here to take full control of the team. Mr. Hammerswell spoke to me about his son managing the team. At the time, I did not say much, for I thought I would wait till Mr. Merriwell arrived. I have talked with Mr. Merriwell, and I know he will not agree for a moment to act as captain under a manager who will sit on the bench and direct the affairs of the field. During his last season in college, Mr. Merriwell was honored by being chosen as captain of the Yale ball-team, and he filled the position in a manner that won him great credit. It was acknowledged that he knew more about the game than any man in the team. With this knowledge, he is fully equipped for taking control of the Maplewood ball-team and putting it in condition to win games, provided he can have full and free swing. If he is hampered in
any way, he cannot be so successful. I propose that Frank Merriwell be elected manager here and now.”

More than ever Frank wondered at Bart, who was showing his ability as a speaker.

Of course, these words from Hodge created another stir.

Barely was Bart seated when Herbert Hammerswell arose, glancing around in a haughty manner.

“Gentlemen, directors of the Maplewood Baseball Association,” he began, it is with some surprise, don’t you know, that I have listened to the words of Mr. Hodge. One might think that this was to be an ordinary amateur ball-team, under trivial expense, to be run in a slipshod fashion. Instead of that, I understand that it is to be a team that can play against three other nines, made up of semiprofessionals. This team must be run properly, and, therefore, it must have a manager who can look after its interests outside of the diamond. I have no doubt that Mr. Merriwell is capable of handling men on the field, but that is only a small part of the duties of a man who is manager and captain also, you understand. As I shall not play, and as I take great interest in the game, and as my father is the chief supporter of the team, having pledged himself for more than double the sum any other person has agreed to give, I believe it is no more than right that I should be permitted to manage this ball-team.”

That was all he had to say, but he seemed to think that it clinched the nail. When Herbert was seated, one of the directors spoke up:
"What has Mr. Merriwell to say about this? Let's hear from him."

The others nodded, and Frank stood up.

"Gentlemen," he said, "I fear that I came to Maplewood laboring under a misunderstanding. From the tone of Mr. Hodge's communication, I inferred the ball-team here was to be gotten up by us and run by us. We were to take our own risks in the matter, and I was to be manager. With this understanding, I came here. With this understanding, I have attended to an important matter since arriving here.

"But I have something further to say. I have brought some men who came with the same understanding that I entertained. On any other condition they would not have come at all. In fact, I believe eight of the nine men on the team came here believing I was to manage it. I am sure that many of them, perhaps all, will not be willing to play under another manager.

"Mr. Herbert Hammerswell spoke of the many duties which fell on the shoulders of a man who acts as both captain and manager. I am willing to shoulder those duties, and I promise you that I'll do my level best to hold up my end in all ways at all times. That is all I have to say."

It was plain that Frank's words made a strong impression. Artemas Hammerswell saw it, and he rose with great haste and great dignity.

"I am surprised at the stand Mr. Merriwell has taken!" he declared pompously. "I thought he would be grate-
ful at the offer to relieve him of a part of the responsibility, but it seems that he is not. He seems determined to rule or ruin. And, gentlemen, I am afraid it will prove a matter of ruin if he is permitted to do as he likes. He has spoken of attending to a matter in connection with the club since coming here. I presume he means the securing of a pitcher for the team. That very piece of business has demonstrated his utter unfitness for the position of manager. I understand that in order to get a pitcher away from Rockford Mr. Merriwell has wired that he will pay the man one hundred dollars a week and board. This may not be true, but it is the current report. I would like to ask Mr. Merriwell if it is true?"

"It is," answered Frank quietly.

Every director drew a deep breath.

"Gentlemen," said Artemas Hammerswell, with a wave of his hand, "that shows you whether Mr. Merriwell is capable of acting as manager. There will be two games a week in Maplewood. The gate receipts will not, at the outside, average more than fifty or sixty dollars a game. The men who are pledged to support the team must stand all expense over and above the sums taken. One hundred dollars a week for a pitcher is more than is being paid some of the better men in the National League. It is outrageous! Gentlemen, I propose that a manager be chosen without delay who will undo this fearful mistake that Mr. Merriwell has made. We cannot and will not pay any man one hundred dollars a week to play ball on this team."
Hammerswell seemed to feel that he had settled the matter, but Frank got up and said:

"There is no need of getting excited over this matter. I would not think of playing ball here unless I felt that the team I played with had at least an even chance of winning the pennant. In winning games the battery is the most important. It is absolutely necessary to have good pitchers. Duke Derringer, the man whom I offered one hundred dollars a week, has a record. He is known as 'The Western Wonder.' Without doubt, he is a great pitcher. Maplewood had first claim to him, but, as Maplewood was not yet admitted to the league, Rockford attempted to get him. Rockford has money to buy men. The manager of that team overbid Mr. Hodge. I determined to settle the matter at once by making Derringer an offer Rockford could not overbid, and so I offered him one hundred dollars a week, provided he arrived here within three days. I believe that was the best thing to do under the circumstances. Now, no one need be alarmed about the sum of money. As long as not enough money is taken at the gate to pay the bills of the team, I will agree to pay Mr. Derringer his hundred dollars each week out of my own pocket. I think this should settle this matter."

And he sat down amid great excitement.

Both Hammerswell and his son looked startled and astounded. They had not fancied for a moment that Frank Merriwell was a fellow of this sort. They had thought and believed that he had come to Maplewood to play ball for what he could get out of the game. They
did not understand a person who would play ball for the sport there was in it and pay a hundred dollars out of his own pocket every week his club went onto the field.

The resident member of the directors, Asher Suttle, a man who was interested in the development of Maplewood as a summer resort, as he was a large owner of land in the town, now rose to his feet.

"He! he! he!" chuckled Suttle. "It kinder seems to me that this does settle the matter. If Mr. Merriwell is willing to pay a hundred dollars a week for a pitcher to pitch on our ball-team, I don't see but he has a puffect right to pay it. He! he! he! I did kinder kick when I heerd on it and reckoned that a part of that hundred dollars was comin' out of my pocket, but I ain't got nary other word to say. If Mr. Merriwell wants to go on hirin' hundred-dollars-a-week men and payin' um, I say, let him go on. We can't raise no row if we git the benefi't by havin' a ball-team that will draw attention to Maplewood. I kinder like the style of Mr. Merriwell, and I think he'll make a good manager for the ball-team, as long's he's willin' to pay his hundred-dollar-a-week men, and I shall vote for him."

Then Suttle sat down, laughing again.

Herbert Hammerswell leaped to his feet

"Why, that is a farce!" he declared. "Nobody ever did such a thing before."

"Frank Merriwell has a way of doing things nobody ever did before," spoke up Hodge, loud enough to be heard by everybody in the room.
“Be good enough not to interrupt me, sir, when I am speaking!” Herbert almost snarled. Then he went on:

“This is a big bluff on Merriwell’s part. He can’t afford to pay that sum, and he will not pay it. He’ll get Derringer here and keep him, and when the season is over the directors of this association will find that Derringer is looking to them for his pay, while Mr. Merriwell is in no way responsible. I hope no one will befooled by such a trick.”

Frank got up at once.

“I think Mr. Herbert Hammerswell does not understand me at all,” he said with the utmost calmness, although Bart Hodge was boiling now and longed to give young Hammerswell a good shaking. “I am not built on the plan he thinks. I came here with the belief that it would be necessary to take some chances in order to run a team here. Sometimes I have a fancy for taking chances, but I had no fancy for taking chances of losing Derringer, who might be gobbled up at any moment for some team who would offer more money than Maplewood, and insist on his signing a contract at once. In a case like that, he would sign without stopping to communicate with us, believing the chances were that we would not give him more than the other team. Now there is not one chance in a thousand that any other team will get him that way.

“As for this little matter of paying him, which seems to have aroused such a flurry, I think that can be attended to without trouble right here. I happen to have some money with me, and I will deposit in the hands
of the treasurer of this association enough to pay Mr. Derringer a few weeks."

Frank took out a pocketbook, which was well filled, and from that pocketbook he took one bill, which he placed on the table before all the directors. There was a general craning of necks to see it.

"Jerusalem!" gasped Asher Suttle. "If it ain't five hundred dollars, I don't want no supper!"

It was a five-hundred-dollar bill!"

"Yes, gentlemen," said Frank, "it is five hundred dollars, which I wish to deposit in the hands of the treasurer of this association, with the statement that Derringer's salary is to be paid from this money as long as it lasts. If he proves himself worthy, so that he is needed longer, more money will be advanced by me before this is gone. I think you will understand now, gentlemen, that I am not here to ruin you by my extravagance. I am here to put a winning team onto the field, and I mean to do it!"

"He will!" nodded several of the directors.

Artemas Hammerswell looked at his son, and he saw that Herbert's face was pale with anger and chagrin. The ex-senator resolved to make one more stroke, but Herbert got ahead of him.

"I don't believe the directors have a right to accept this money!" he cried.

"Hey?" came from Asher Suttle. "Why not?"

"They can't accept it without a vote."

"Yes, they can."

"How can they?"
“We’ve agreed to accept any sum anybody may willingly contribute toward the support of the team.”

“But this sum is contributed with restrictions as to the manner in which it shall be used.”

“That don’t make no difference. It’s to be used for the support of the team, and we can accept it. I move that the treasurer take it without delay and give Mr. Merriwell a receipt for the amount.”

“Gentlemen, as president of this association, I wish to say that such a move will be unwise and not to be considered,” came from Artemas Hammerswell. “It will put us in a bad light, for the report will go out that our players are supporting the team. I have some pride, gentlemen, and I can’t afford this.”

“Well, I can afford it a danged sight better than I can pay part of that hundred dollars a week,” chuckled Suttle.

“This hiring a man at a hundred dollars is folly——”

“Not so much folly as it might be,” said another of the directors, Piper Snow. “Mr. Merriwell made that plain in a very few words. The man is needed, and, without doubt, he will come in a hurry now. We must be prepared to go into the field right away, if we wish to get in at all, for the other places are kicking over the delay and threatening not to admit us. I shall vote to accept Mr. Merriwell’s money.”

“And I!”

“Me, too!”

Three out of the five directors had spoken, and Hammerswell saw the matter had gone against him,
"Very well," he said with a nasty look on his face, "you can take it, if you like, but this business has shown you how Frank Merriwell will run the team if he is chosen manager. He will run it on an extravagant and senseless scale. You can't afford it, and so, of course, you will not choose him manager."

The treasurer took Frank's money and made out a receipt, which Frank accepted and placed in his pocket-book.

"Now," said Asher Suttle, "I propose that we vote for the manager."

"Second the motion," said Mr. Pinch.

"How shall we vote?" sourly asked the president.

"By written ballot," suggested Mr. Snow.

"Very well. Gentlemen, prepare your ballots. I believe that, in a case like this, the president is permitted to vote."

A hat served as the ballot-box and soon the ballots were brought in. Mr. Snow and Mr. Shaw were selected to count them, Shaw being the one man who had not expressed an opinion.

In a moment Mr. Snow said:

"There are five ballots in all, two of which are for Herbert Hammerswell and three for Frank Merriwell."

"That does settle it!" cried Bart Hodge, grasping Frank's hand. "Merry, you are now the manager of the Maplewood baseball-team, and nobody can dispute that!"
CHAPTER XIX.

BARRED OUT.

Herbert Hammerswell showed his rage, and his father flushed with anger at the slight put on his son.

In a moment Herbert was at his father’s side.

“If you stand it, you are not the father I think you are!” he panted.

“But I can’t help it,” said the ex-senator helplessly.

“They have elected him.”

“But you can do something.”

“What?”

“You can let them run their old ball-team.”

“That’s right, and I will!”

Immediately Mr. Hammerswell arose and said:

“You have seen fit to elect Merriwell in preference to my son, even after I have been one of the chief supporters of this move to have a ball-team here. That is gratitude!”

“Have you planked down five hundred dollars in a lump and agreed to pay a hundred dollars a week during the season, Mr. Hammerswell?” asked Asher Suttle, with a grin.

“I have done nothing of the kind, but I have been instrumental in securing a good field, in leveling and rolling the diamond, in setting the bases, in building a fence and grand stand, the latter not yet quite completed, and in carrying this matter through to a successful be-
ginning by looking after many other things. Still you choose to select Mr. Merriwell as manager in preference to my son! Very well! I shall resign from the association at once!"

He said this as if he fully believed that would precipitate disaster upon the association. Then he turned and looked hard at Mr. Shaw, who always seemed ready to follow his lead.

"Er! Ahem!" coughed Shaw. "If Mr. Hammerswell leaves the association, I believe I shall do likewise, as I shall have no further interest in it."

"I move," said Asher Suttle, "that the resignation of Mr. Hammerswell and Mr. Shaw be accepted."

"Which means the dissolution of the association," said Mr. Pinch dolefully, "for no men can be found to take their places. We may as well give up trying to run a baseball-team."

Herbert Hammerswell grinned, and his father looked satisfied.

"Why is it that nobody will fill their places?" asked Frank quietly.

"There are no other men who care to assume the responsibility, as there may be heavy bills to be paid before the season is over."

"Is that the difficulty?"

"Yes."

"Gentlemen, I here apply for a position as one of the directors of the ball-team, and I pledge myself to pay, besides the hundred dollars a week already contributed, double the sum any other man will give."
This was another sensation.

Artemas Hammerswell dropped heavily upon his chair, staring at Frank in amazement.

"He! he! he!" laughed Asher Suttle. "Now, that is what I call all right! It is better than Mr. Hammerswell agreed to do, and it fixes things. I don't think there'll be any trouble to find a fifth man."

"I would propose the name of Bart Hodge for the fifth man," said Frank immediately.

"Again I move," said Asher Suttle, "that the resignation of Mr. Hammerswell and Mr. Shaw be accepted."

"I second the motion;" said Mr. Pinch.

"And I declare the motion carried," said Mr. Snow.

"Now, gentlemen," said Mr. Suttle, turning to Hammerswell and Shaw, "as this is a private meeting of the Maplewood Baseball Association, we cannot continue to do business while you are present, and I presume you will not be offended if we request you to retire."

Hammerswell caught up his hat and cane.

"Come on, governor!" cried Herbert at the door.

"Come away and let these chumps run things. They make me very tired, don't you know. They're a lot of soft marks!"

Mr. Shaw, bewildered by what had happened, got up to follow Hammerswell.

At the door the ex-senator turned to shake his cane at the others and cry:

"Go ahead with your folly! You will regret it, mark my words! You will find you lost your mainstay when I left you. As for this Merriwell, I can see that he is
Barred Out.

going to run everything, and he'll ruin everything, too. He's a crazy-headed fellow, and I wouldn't dare touch a cent of his money."

"His money!" sneered Herbert. "Who knows it is his money? How does it happen that he has so much money to throw away? I'd like to hear him explain how he came into possession of that money."

"Don't talk—don't say another word!" cried Artemas. "Come away, my son, and let them go on the road to destruction."

Then he stalked out, followed by Mr. Shaw, and the door slammed after them.

"Now," chuckled Asher Suttle, "we can go on with our business, gentlemen."

A temporary chairman was chosen, and then Merriwell and Hodge were ballotted in, both being accepted as directors, which again made the board of five members.

"Now," said Suttle, who seemed to consider the whole matter in the light of a joke, "we've got to have a president to fill the place of Mr. Hammerswell, and I motion that Mr. Merriwell be chosen for the position in the regular manner."

This was a surprise, indeed, for Frank.

Bart's face glowed, and he looked well satisfied over the way everything was going.

In a short time, Frank was chosen president of the board of directors. Then some other matters were discussed, and the meeting adjourned.

When Herbert Hammerswell heard what had hap-
Barred Out.

pened, he literally frothed at the mouth. He carried the news to his father in a hurry.

"Governor," he cried, "you have been insulted! What do you think? Well, by Jawve, they elected that fellow Merriwell to fill your place as president of the board of directors!"

"My boy," said Hammerswell, his face turning purple, "they are fools!"

"That's right; but I should think you'd feel like getting even with them somehow."

"How is it to be done?"

"Oh, you ought to be able to find a way."

"Perhaps I can. I'll think it over."

Before night Frank heard from Duke Derringer, who sent a message of just four words. Those words were: "I will be there."

"That settles that matter," laughed Merry. "We ought to be pretty well fixed in the box when he arrives."

With all the team, he went down to the grounds about four o'clock. Frank was pleased by the appearance of the grounds, which were located within sight of the Maple Heights Hotel. The diamond had been well leveled and rolled, while the outfield was in good condition. The grand stand was nearly completed, and there were bleachers for those who did not care to go into the grand stand.

Frank got his team out for practice. The most of them were able to provide themselves with suits of some description. Hodge had ordered some suits, which were expected to arrive in a day or two, at most.
Of course, a large number of spectators came down to the grounds to see what the team could do in practise. Among these spectators were a number of village lads, and Jeff Nash was the most prominent. Jeff chewed tobacco and made uncomplimentary remarks about everybody.

“That big fellow is a lazy whelp,” he said, referring to Browning. “He’s too lazy to be any good on first, if that’s where they mean to play him. The fellow on second is excitable. He wants to get everything that comes into the diamond. The one on third is a better man, but he looks as if he’d get mad and quit. Scott is the best man in the infield, and the outfield is bum. That Dutchman falls all over himself every time he tries to do anything, while the long, gangling chap in center can’t lift his feet fast enough to get round. My honest opinion is that the whole nine is a lot of stiffs.”

Frank batted out some hot ones for the infield to handle, giving Scott, who had been placed at short, a severe trial. Scott showed up pretty well, handling “skippers,” “bounders” and “jumpers” in good style, and getting onto everything in the shape of “pops.” He also took one hot liner that he could barely reach with one hand, and Merry said to Bart:

“If that fellow has a good head in a game, he’s worth something.”

“I’m glad you think so,” said Hodge. “He was the best man I could get, and I had to take him.”

Then Merry tried the outfield. He sent out a skyscraper for Mulloy, and, after a long run, Barney pulled
it down. Ephraim was not so fortunate with his first attempt. He muffed a fly after getting it into his hands fairly.

"I knew it!" sneered Jeff Nash, on the bleachers. "He can't play ball."

Hans, in right field, came next, and the Dutch lad made a frantic run after a short fly, struck the toe of his right foot against his left heel, flopped over in the air, striking on his neck and shoulders and rolling into a sitting position just in time to have the ball come down and strike him on the top of the head, from which it bounded off as if it had hit a rock. Hans gave a howl and clasped both hands over his head, shouting:

"Vot vos id I hit der top uf my head on alretty? Wow! I pelief id drofe me der groundt into, more as zwei feets!"

And the spectators shouted with laughter.

"He can't play marbles!" snorted Jeff Nash.

Frank started back in line, giving Hans another trial, and the Dutch lad seemed to catch the ball in his arms, but he managed to hold fast to it, which gave him great delight.

"Did you seen der pall catch me got time?" he shouted. "Vosn't dot a peauty? Yaw!"

"Oh, yaw!" sneered Nash, squirting forth a mouthful of tobacco juice.

Gallup managed to gather in the next fly, and he threw it home to Hodge, who was on the plate, in a style that made Jeff Nash blink.

Frank gave Diamond some sharp work on third. Jack
was somewhat rusty, but he did pretty well, although he was not acquainted with the peculiarities of his section of the diamond.

Rattleton, at second, made some star pick-ups and some bad fumbles. Every time he fumbled he showed his disgust.

Browning seemed too tired to stir out of his tracks.

"Bruce!" shouted Frank.

Then he batted a ball at the big fellow. It went like a ball out of a cannon, its flight being so swift that the eyes could scarcely follow it.

Bruce gathered it in with his usual lazy manner, without budging out of his tracks. In fact, it seemed astonishing that he could have prepared for it, as he seemed to move so slowly, but he got it easily and tossed it back.

"What do you think of that, Jeff?" asked Si Plunk.

"He caught it because he was too lazy to get out of the way," declared Jeff. "It's an effort for that fellow to breathe. If every ball is thrown into his hands, he may be able to get them; but he won't field his position, for he's too slow to cover any ground."

And Jeff was considered as authority by the other village boys, which led them to regard Frank Merriwell's ball-team with no small amount of scorn.

After thirty minutes of sharp work, Frank took his place in the pitcher's box and set his men to throwing. He gave his orders bruskly, and the ball flew about the diamond as he directed. Hodge put some beauties down to second, throwing so that Rattleton took them about a
foot from the ground, just where they would be easiest to put onto a sliding man. Diamond lined them across from third to first, and Bruce woke up enough to throw a few swift ones, as directed by Merry.

At a signal, Rattleton wheeled about and threw the ball as far out into center field as possible.

Gallup sprinted after it, took it while it was bounding, cut round in a half circle, hearing Merry’s cry:

"Home!"

Then Ephraim Gallup displayed his specialty. He sent that ball home in a hurry, and it was almost a "liner" from deep center. It made the spectators on the bleachers rise up and gasp. Straight into Bart’s hands it came, and Hodge gathered it and made a motion as if putting it onto a man sliding in from third.

"That’s the stuff!" cried Merry. "We stopped that run! Now we are just beginning to warm up a little. We’ll get into gear all right, fellows."

"Well, what do you think of that for a throw, Jeff?" asked Si Plunk.

"It was a great throw," nodded Jeff, with curling lip; "but I’ll bet it was an accident. He couldn’t do it again."

Frank Merriwell heard the words, and, in a minute, he had the ball sent out to Gallup again by Rattleton. It was thrown wide, so Ephraim could not stop it, and the long-legged youth chased it far down the field.

Again Merry’s order rang out:

"Home!"

Again Gallup threw. He did not throw a rainbow,
but the ball seemed to rise higher and higher on a gradually ascending line after leaving his hand. Ephraim had thrown too high, and the ball passed clean over the grand stand, far back of the plate!

“Holy smoke!” muttered Jeff Nash. “What’s that fool got in his arm?”

“That will do,” laughed Frank. “You’ll have to pull ’em down, Ephraim. Hodge isn’t tall enough to reach those. Come in, fellows.”

“Well, ain’t he going to show us some pitching?” muttered Nash, in disappointment. “He hasn’t given his men any chance to bat.”

Frank did give them a turn at batting, but he got some small boys to chase the balls in the field, and he had Joe Scott do the pitching. He stood up and talked to the batters, telling them all to swing slow and easy, so that they could get their “eye in.” Scott had some curves, and Merry had him use them.

Dunnerwurst was the only man who did not seem able to “connect” with the ball at all. He threw himself off his feet trying to hit it, but the best he could do was to pop up some little fouls.

“He couldn’t hit a house,” declared Nash. “I wonder who ever told him he could play ball.”

Merriwell seemed able to hit the sphere with ease, while Hodge was equally as certain. Mulloy hit it once with no seeming effort, and nearly put it into a strip of woods that lay just back of the left-field fence.

Just when the practise was over, Herbert Ham-
merswell and a young man companion came through the
gate onto the field. Hammerswell pointed out Frank
Merriwell, saying:
“There’s the man you are looking for, Mr. Harkness.”
Merry was walking toward them, and he happened to
hear Herbert’s words. He came up at once.

Frank observed that there was something like a tri-
umphant sneer on Hammerswell’s face, but he paid little
attention to Herbert.

“Were you looking for me, sir?” asked Merry.

“Is your name Merriwell?” asked the stranger.

“Yes, sir.”

“Manager of the Maplewood team?”

“That’s right.”

“And president of the board of directors?”.

“Right again,” smiled Merry.

“My name is Harkness,” said the stranger. “I am
president of the League Association, and I belong in
Seaslope.”

“I am glad to meet you, Mr. Harkness,” said Merry,
holding out his hand, which the other accepted.

Harkness seemed to hesitate, and then he spoke
swiftly:

“I presume you know there was a meeting of the
league directors to-day?”

“I heard so.”

“To consider the matter of admitting Maplewood,”
Harkness went on. “It was discussed and voted on.
Maplewood is a small place, you know, and there is not much to draw from here. Besides that, the league has been running some time now, and it would be necessary to make an entirely new schedule and new arrangements if we were to admit another team."

"But there are only three teams in the league now. That makes it necessary for one team to lay idle while the other two are playing. If there were four teams, no such necessity would arise."

"That was considered, Mr. Merriwell. It was an advantage, but the disadvantages more than offset it. Maplewood cannot support a team swift enough to be anything but a tail-ender in the league, and it will not be a drawing-card at the other places."

"I think you are wrong about that, sir. I believe Maplewood can support a team that will make Seaslope or any other team hustle to keep in the race. In fact, I can assure you that such will be the case."

"You assure me! Why, I understand that you arrived here to-day."

"That is true."

"Then how can you give me such assurance? You do not know what the people of Maplewood are ready to do."

"I know what I am ready to do."

"Are you the whole team?"

"He thinks so," muttered Herbert, just loud enough for Frank to hear.

Merry paid no attention to the jealous fellow.
"I am not by any means the whole team," said Frank. I am simply a small part of it."

"I understand that you are a remarkably capable pitcher, Mr. Merriwell, and I presume you will be able to obtain a position on one of the other teams. As for the rest of your men, I have heard that Hodge is all right. But two men do not compose a team, and one man cannot do all the pitching. You must acknowledge that."

"I do not propose to do all the pitching."

"Pitchers come high at this time of the season, and there are not many capable men at liberty. I think you will have trouble to secure another man fit to stack up against the teams in the league."

"I have secured such a man."

"You have?"

"Yes."

"Whom?"

"Duke Derringer, the Western Wonder."

Harkness uttered an exclamation of incredulity.

"Derringer? Why, my dear Mr. Merriwell, he is a high-priced man. Not even Seaslope could afford to negotiate with him. Besides that, Rockford has secured him."

"Who told you that?"

"Mr. Pelt, manager of the Rockfords."

"When?"

"At the meeting to-day."

"Well, Mr. Pelt never made a greater mistake."
"How do you know?"

"I told you a few moments ago that I had Derringer. I am not in the habit of making false statements."

"What proof have you that you have secured him?"

"This."

Frank produced the telegram. Harkness looked it over, and then whistled softly.

"That seems all right," he admitted; "but it is a very remarkable affair. I don't see how Maplewood could get him away from Rockford. You must have found it necessary to pay well to nail him."

"I did."

"Do you mind telling how much?"

"No."

"What was the sum per week?"

"One hundred dollars and board."

"One hun——" Harkness stopped short and stared at Frank, plainly fancying Merry was "stringing" him.

"That is the exact truth," declared Merry. "I made sure that Rockford would not bid over me and get him after all."

"But one hundred dollars—why, it's impossible!"

"I have agreed to pay him that amount, and five weeks' salary has been deposited with the treasurer of the association. Perhaps, Mr. Harkness, you realize that Maplewood is determined to have a corking team at any expense, as long as there is no salary limit."

"Mr. Merriwell, I am sorry for you, but you may as well wire Derringer not to come."

"Why should I do that?"
"Because you will have no use for him."

"No use?"

"Not a bit. The directors of the League Association voted not to admit Maplewood to the league. You are barred out."
CHAPTER XX.

FRANK MERRIWELL’S CHALLENGE.

The report of the action of the league spread swiftly, and in a short time Maplewood knew what had happened. It created great excitement. Two persons were intensely satisfied, and they were Herbert Hammerswell and his father.

“You should have seen Merriwell when Harkness told him Maplewood was barred out, governor,” chuckled Herbert, telling his father about it. “He was the most indignant and disgusted chap I ever set eyes on.”

“Oh, this will take him down!” nodded the thick-necked old man. “This will teach him that he’s not so important. My son, his triumph over you was brief. He’s down now.”

“He may be down, but I’d like the satisfaction of dragging him in the dirt, by Jawesome!” said Herbert vindictively.

But Frank Merriwell was not down. He had received a hard blow, but, without delay, he set about the work of compelling the league to admit Maplewood.

On the following day the Rockford Daily Star contained the following:

CHALLENGE!

“The directors of the Trolley League having barred Maplewood from entering, the reason given being that the town was too small to support a team capable of suc-
cessfully competing with Seaslope, Torrentown, and Rockford, I, as manager of the Maplewood B. B. C., offer the following challenge:

“The Maplewood B. B. C. will play Seaslope, Torrentown, and Rockford one game each, for the sum of one hundred dollars a game, the first game to be played on Maplewood grounds, and the others on neutral grounds which may be selected by the directors of the Trolley League, these games subject to the following agreement:

“First: If Maplewood wins all three games, thus demonstrating beyond question her ability to cope with the teams in the league, she shall be admitted to the league without further parleying or argument.

“Second: If Maplewood wins two out of the three games, the directors of the League Association shall hold another meeting and finally decide by vote whether Maplewood is to be admitted to the league.

“Third: If Maplewood wins but one game out of the three, which, according to the laws of chance, supposing her to be no more than equal in strength to the other teams, is all she should win, she shall, without further talk, withdraw her application for membership in the league, and disband.

“I have deposited the sum of three hundred dollars ($300.00) in the hands of Mr. Benjamin Welch, the editor and proprietor of the Star, as a forfeit in case Maplewood fails to meet any of the terms of this challenge.

“I further wish to state that, in case the league refuses to permit its teams to meet Maplewood in fair and honorable contest under these conditions, thus giving us a chance to win our way into the league by demonstrating our ability, it will plainly show that, instead of regarding Maplewood as inferior, the other towns believe she is superior and dare not meet her in fair and honorable
contest. Such discrimination against Maplewood will be unjust, and must arouse the indignation of all lovers of sport and fair play.

(Signed) "Frank Merriwell,
"Mgr. Maplewood B. B. C.

This challenge created a stir. It was something that could not be ignored, as the league quickly discovered. People were indignant that Maplewood should fancy for a moment that she had been discriminated against. They were also indignant to think that Frank Merriwell could have "the nerve" to fancy he could scrape together a picked-up team that could win at least two out of three games with the crack nines of the league.

There was a clamor for the league to give Maplewood "all she wanted."

"Wipe the earth with her!" shouted the fighters of Rockford. "We're the boys to do it!"

"We must shut her out without a tally," decided Torrentown.

"She will be easy," declared Seaslope.

So there was another hastily called meeting of the directors, and it was decided to give Maplewood the chance she wanted. The secretary was instructed to notify Frank Merriwell to that effect, which he did by telephone.

Then there was deep satisfaction in Merriwell's heart and deep anxiety in the hearts of his friends.

"You are taking big chances, old man," said Rattleton. "Where are your pitchers for three games in succession with these three different teams?"
"Right here," smiled Frank, tapping himself on the breast with his index-finger.

"You?"

"Yes."

"But there are three games to be played in three days!"

"I know it."

"And you mean to try to pitch them all?"

"Yes."

"You can't do it, Frank! You'll ruin your arm!"

"I'll ruin it or win at least two out of those three games!" declared Merry, with a look of indescribable determination on his handsome face.

It happened that Torrentown was the first team pitted against the Maplewoods in the trial contest of three games. The Torrentowns were reputed to be the hardest hitters in the league. Up to date they stood at the head of the league, with Rockford a close second, and Seaslope not far in the rear.

By good luck, Merry received the uniforms Hodge had ordered, so that he was able to place his men on the field in becoming and proper dress.

The uniforms were blue, having a large M on the breasts of the shirts. That M was supposed to stand for Maplewood, but the crowd began calling them the Merriwells at once.

The Torrentowners were dressed in black uniforms, with yellow-and-black striped stockings and sweaters. On the breasts of their shirts was the letter T, and they were known as the Tigers.
After the same fashion, the Rockforders were called the Ruffians, as they were great fighters, and the Seaslopers were designated as Softies, the team being composed mainly of college men.

Merriwell’s challenge had created great excitement in that section, and the trolley-cars to Maplewood brought in crowds, so that the new grounds were packed with eager spectators before the hour for the game to be begun.

The crowd watched Merry’s men practising, and various were the comments, complimentary and uncomplimentary. It was the general opinion, however, that Frank Merriwell had made a big mistake in issuing such a challenge, and that he had “bitten off more than he could chew.”

Frank had been rather hot over being shut out of the league, but he was depending to a great extent on his ability to hold Torrentown down. If the heavy hitters fell on him, he realized that his support might not be all that he could ask, and, therefore, the game might be lost.

But Frank had been trying his double-shoot in secret, and he had found he could use it with all his old-time skill. On that he placed his principal reliance.

Half-an-hour before the time for the game to start, the Tigers arrived in Maplewood, and came directly upon the field, followed by a mighty crowd from Torrentown.

Then there was cheering.

“Here comes the boys!” roared a voice. “They will eat these Merry Men!”
“Hooray for the Tigers!”

“Hooray! hooray! hooray!”

“Slossing is going to pitch!” cried somebody. “The Maple Leaves can’t touch him!”

“He’ll keep them fanning all the time,” declared another voice.

“Oh, this is a cinch for the Tigers!”

Merry met the captain of the Torrentowners and shook hands with him. The captain’s name was Gill.

“I’m afraid,” smiled Gill, with a show of sympathy, “that you have made a bad mistake in this business, Merriwell. You are a good man yourself, but you didn’t know what you were getting up against.”

“All right,” said Frank quietly. “If I’ve made a mistake, I’ll take my medicine. We’re going to try to win this game, just the same.”

“It’s bound to be a case of try, and that’s all. We’re taking no chances.”

“No?”

“No. I’m going to put Slossing in to twirl.”

“He’s your star?”

“Merriwell, if you get a hit off him you’ll be lucky. He ought to be in the National League.”

“You are fortunate to have such a man,” smiled Frank.

“That we are. Besides that, we have some of the heaviest batters I ever saw in a lump. There’s Bickworth, the big fellow. He’ll be sure to drop two or three homers over your fence. You should have set that fence farther back.”
"Perhaps we'll have it moved back after this game," murmured Merry, with a strange twinkle in his eyes.

"Then there's Danny Dickens, the little fellow there. He don't look as if he could knock the ball out of the diamond, but he is a slugger. He makes two or three corkers in a game, and he can run bases with chain-lightning."

"You must have a good team, Mr. Gill."

"I've got the best team ever collected outside one of the big leagues."

"Well, it's a good thing to be satisfied with your team."

"Then you are not satisfied with yours?"

"I didn't say that."

"No, but I thought you meant it."

"I haven't seen my men work, so I shall not express an opinion."

"Oh, but you were daffy to stake your good money on 'em. Why, it's like finding a hundred dollars for us!"

"You know there's many a slip. A game is never won till it's done, and this one isn't begun."

"I see you are trying to keep up your courage. That's right. I hope you will be able to make some kind of a decent showing."

"I hope so."

That was all Frank had to say. A little later, the captain of the Tigers confidentially told Slossing that he had Merriwell scared to death.

"Oh, I gave him a great game of talk!" chuckled Gill. "I'll bet I've sent his heart down into his boots."

"You didn't have to," said Slossing. "It's pie."
"I know it, but I like to do the trick. You mustn't let them get a score."

"They won't make a hit."

"That's the stuff! But you know they have two or three good players."

"I know it, and I know the men. I shall let those fellows down with balls, or something of the sort, and polish off the others. It will be like resting to-day."

"Don't be too confident. Overconfidence is bad, you know."

"Oh, don't talk about that in such a case as this! If we wanted to monkey with 'em, we could let 'em git a dozen scores, and then go in and win out."

"But you don't want to try anything like that. Keep steady, and don't give 'em a show."

The Tigers went onto the diamond to practise, and they showed up beautifully. Their work was of a nature to make the crowd applaud freely. Herbert Hammerswell and his father were in the grand stand. Herbert was beaming with satisfaction.

"Here is where we get revenge, governor," he laughed. "Frank Merriwell will have the starch taken out of him this day, you know."

"It's a sure thing, my son," nodded the ex-senator.

"The Tigers will make Merriwell's scrub nine look like thirty cents in Canadian money."

"You are sure it is bound to go that way?"

"Merriwell hasn't one chance in a thousand. If I had some money to bet, I might make something."
"You couldn't find anybody to take your bets."
"Oh, I might if I offered enough odds."
"Here," said the ex-senator, passing out some bills, 'here are three hundred dollars. You may have to bet five to one, or even more; put the whole of it up if you can find any takers at any odds."
"All right, gov."

A few minutes later, Herbert was ranging along the bleachers, shaking a fistful of bills, and crying: 

"Here is five to one on Torrentown! Here is two to one that Maplewood does not score! Here is even money that not a man of the Maplewoods reaches third base! Come on, you blooming bloods! get into gear and show your nerve!"

"Put up your money!" cried a voice. "There are no fools in this crowd. What do you take us for?"

"Oh, well," laughed Herbert, "I'll do better. I'll bet the whole roll here six to one that Torrentown wins. Where is the man who will take me?"

"Right here!"

Herbert wheeled about. Bart Hodge was behind him. Hodge had seen and heard Herbert, and he had whispered a few words to his mother, who was sitting in the grand stand. Without being observed, she had slipped something into his hand. Then Hodge came down and offered to take Hammerswell's bet.

Herbert was astonished.

"Do you want to bet?" he asked.

"Yes."

"How much?"
"You were offering six to one on Torrentown?"
"Sure thing."
"How much money have you?"
"Three hundred dollars."
"Only three hundred?"
Bart seemed disappointed, and Herbert flushed hotly.
"I rather reckon that is enough for you!" he cried.
"I believe you are a blawsted bluffer!"
"Put up your three hundred dollars, and I will cover it with fifty dollars," said Bart. "Here is Mr. Pinch; let him be stakeholder."
"Oh, it's like finding it, Hammerswell!" shouted a voice.
Herbert put up his money, and Bart promptly counted out fifty.
"Now," said Hodge, "if you have any more you want to risk at the same rate, just bring it out. I have two or three hundred myself that I don't mind venturing."
"Accommodate him, Hammerswell!" cried the voice.
But Herbert did not have the money in hand, and at this point the voice of the umpire was heard calling:
"Play ball!"
CHAPTER XXI.

A DUEL ON THE DIAMOND.

The Tigers went to bat first. Their heaviest batters headed the list, and Bickworth, the slugger, was the first man up.

Frank caught the handsome white ball the umpire tossed to him, and then he proceeded to rub it with dirt. He glanced around to make sure his men were in their positions, and a breathless hush fell on the spectators.

Frank had a beautiful delivery, without many fancy moves. Every move counted, and he sent in a high one for the first ball.

Bickworth let it pass.

"Get 'em down!" was the howl that went up.

Frank put his second over in just the same place.

"Two balls," called the umpire.

"Get 'em down!" roared the crowd.

But Frank seemed determined to keep it up, for he gave Bickworth yet another ball, and the big fellow remained motionless.

The crowd groaned.

"He don't dare let Bick hit it!" derisively howled many voices. "He knows Bick will knock the cover off."

Hodge came up under the bat, putting on the cage. Then he seemed to give Merry a signal, but, in truth, Merry was doing all the signaling, telling Hodge
the positions he assumed just what kind of a ball he would deliver.

"Bickworth will walk!"
"He has Merriwell in a hole!"
"Is this the great Yale pitcher?"
"Why, he's a mistake!"
"He ain't got no license to pitch!"

If Frank heard all this derisive talk, he made no sign. Up in the grand stand beside Mrs. Hodge he saw a dark-haired, handsome girl, who was watching him with breathless interest, perfect confidence on her face. He knew that Inez felt sure he would lead his team to victory.

"I will!" vowed Frank, in his heart.

Then he sent in a beauty that cut the heart of the plate. It was a straight one, and, as he had judged, Bickworth did not swing at it, preferring to "take one."

"Play the limit," instructed Gill, and Merry concluded that Bickworth might stand another. However, he made certain before getting into position that Bickworth seemed in no particular readiness to strike, and then he cut the plate once more.

"Two strikes!" cried the umpire.

A sudden hush fell on the crowd. The next pitched ball would decide it.

Bickworth looked at Gill, and Gill nodded.
"He'll swing at this one," decided Frank.

Then Merry sent in one of his famous double shoots. It started like an "in," but before reaching the batter it
A Duel On the Diamond.

turned to an “out,” and Bickworth did not come within ten inches of it when he struck.

“Three strikes—batter out!” cried the umpire.

Then a roar went up from Maplewood.

“Well, I don’t know!” thundered a big fellow, as he stood up on the bleachers. “There goes one of the Tigers’ big men, and he didn’t cut any ice!”

Bickworth was disgusted.

“I ought to have lined out one of those others,” he said. “He’ll never fool me that way again!”

Danny Dickens followed Bickworth. He was a little fellow, and he was also a hitter. Something told Merry that Dickens was a good man to be very careful about.

Frank motioned for Bart to stay up under the plate, and he started with a double shoot immediately, giving it a strong “in” with a change to a sudden “out.” Danny jumped back to get out of the way, but the ball passed over the center of the plate.

“One strike!” called the umpire, who had been instructed before the game to watch Frank’s double shoots closely, as they were very deceptive.

Dickens kicked like a steer.

“That ball must have passed this side of the plate,” he declared. “It was an ‘in.’ I had to jump to get out of the way.”

“Oh, wash your eyes!” shouted a Maplewood boy on the bleachers. “You jumped at a shadow.”

The umpire called Danny down, and the game went on.

With the very next ball, Frank reversed the curve.
and Dan stood with his bat held idle, thinking the ball must pass two feet beyond the plate. Instead of doing that, it jumped in and “cut a corner.”

“Two strikes!” decided the umpire.

Danny flung down his bat and did a war-dance.

“What kind of a razzle-dazzle is this?” he shouted.

“What am I getting?”

Hodge tossed the ball back to Merry.

“Come,” said the umpire sharply, “you are delaying the game by your kicking. Get into line or I’ll give you a rest on the bench.”

Dickens picked up his bat, without doubt the most disgusted fellow in Maplewood.

“It’s a soak!” he muttered.

Then Frank sent in another, and Danny struck at it desperately, fanned, sat down in the ground, and looked dazed.

“Three strikes—out!” decided the umpire.

Now there was excitement in the grand stand and on the bleachers.

“What do you think of that, Herbert?” asked the Honorable Artemas.

“He can’t keep it up,” declared Herbert. “It’s pure accident now.”

Inza Burrage heard the words, and, happening to be acquainted with Hammerswell, she said:

“It is not an accident, and he can keep it up. He will strike out the next man, Mr. Hammerswell.”

“If you were a man, I’d like to bet you a hundred dollars on that.” said Hammerswell. “The next man
is Gill, the captain of the team, and he never fails to make a hit."

Gill came to the plate. Frank sent over one that looked easy, and Gill went after it. He fouled, and Hodge was unable to reach it.

"Oh, you are finding him now!" cried several. "He'll be easy in a minute!"

Gill thought so. He had confidence in himself—too much confidence. He fanned at the next and the next. Both were double curves, and they astounded Gill.

Then Frank struck him out with a drop.

The Tigers had not touched the ball during their first time at the bat.

And the Maplewood crowd was roaring its delight—roaring, roaring, roaring!

Browning was the first man at bat for Maplewood. He had been doing his best to "get his batting clothes on" by practising. The big, lazy fellow was interested now, and he was ready to suffer any agony of soul or body in order to assist Frank Merriwell in winning.

Slossing gave Bruce a "teaser," but the big man did not bite at it. Then Slossing tried one close to Browning's knuckles, but Bruce let that pass.

"Two balls," decided the umpire.

The next was a high one, directly over the plate.

Browning hit it, and he put it clean down against center-field fence, from which it rebounded. A fast runner would have made three bases on it, but Browning only got two.
And now there was some shouting. For a few moments nothing but the yelling of the excited crowd could be heard. When it quieted, a disgusted Torrentown rooter was heard to say:

"Aw! that's nuthin'! It was an accident. Won't another one of the whole raft touch Slossing."

The Tigers' pitcher was angry. He realized that he had made a mistake in giving the big Yale man the ball he did.

Frank had placed Hodge second on the list, and Bart came to the plate. He was rather pale, but a look of grim determination rested on his face. Bart was not a slugger, but he was known as a "sure hitter," and Frank felt he would be the man to "bat round" Bruce.

Slossing, however, had heard of Hodge, and knew what he was doing. He teased Bart along for the limit both ways, and then, with the tally two strikes and three balls, he caused Hodge to pop up an easy infield fly, which short took down.

Then came Mulloy. Barney was a hard hitter, but Slossing made him fan three times, and he went to the bench.

"The big fellow is anchored on second!" was the derisive cry from the Torrentowners.

Bruce began to fear that this was true. When Jack came up, he begged him to get in a hit. Diamond was nervous. He knew how much depended on him, and he proceeded to strike out, just the same as Barney had done.
Then it was the opportunity for Torrentown to roar, and it made good use of the opportunity.

"We must hold them down!" whispered Bart to Frank. "If they ever get a lead on us, the jig is up. You must do the trick right in the box, Merriwell."

"I'm here to do my best," was the quiet answer.

Frank showed that he was perfectly cool. He took the men in order once more, striking out two of them, and throwing out one at first.

Excitement—it ran riot. It was just the sort of a game to arouse baseball enthusiasm in Maplewood.

Rattleton was the first man up this time. Frank saw he was too eager, and tried to caution him, but Harry could not heed, and he struck out.

Then came Gallup, and he got against the ball hard, lining one out to left, which was gathered in with ease.

Two men were out when Frank Merriwell came to the bat. Slossing tried to work him, but Frank worked Slossing, and walked to first on four balls.

Then came Scott. Frank took a desperate chance, and stole second on the first pitched ball, but it was for nothing, as Scott flied out.

In this manner the game ran for seven innings, without either side getting beyond second base. And the excitement increased with each moment.

Once it seemed certain that the Torrentowners had fallen on Frank. The first man got a safe hit, and the next one put a fly into right field where it seemed to be beyond the reach of Hans.

The Dutch lad sprinted after it, fell down, sat up,
caught it, held it, and then threw to first, without rising, for a double play, as the man on first had run for second.

The throw did not reach first, but it came bounding down to Browning, who picked it up before the runner could get back and the double play was made.

"One of the biggest accidents that ever happened," declared Herbert Hammerswell.

"This game doesn’t seem to be so one sided," observed somebody. "What do you think about it now, Hammerswell?"

"Oh, the Maplewoods can’t score, anyhow, for Torren-town won’t let them. They are simply prolonging the agony. The Tigers are bound to score pretty soon."

His prediction came true. In the very next inning, Frank made a mistake, and gave Bickworth a ball just where he wanted it. The heavy hitter put the ball over the fence, trotting round the bases and coming in.

"That settles it!" laughed Hammerswell. "The jig is up! The Merry Boys are cooked, and they won’t be so merry, don’t you know."

Frank felt that he had made a big blunder. He knew he would be responsible if the game was lost, and it made him feel “sore.” But that made no difference in his pitching, and he struck the next two men out, retiring the side with one run.

In their half of the eighth, the Maplewoods came very near scoring. They filled the bases without a single man being out. It seemed that Slossing was “in a hole,” but he had a good head, and he kept it. He made two
men pop up short flies, and then he struck the next one out.

“That was Maplewood’s only chance,” was the general verdict. “She won’t get another like that.”

But all confessed that it had been a great game, and that it seemed too bad Maplewood could not win.

As the Tigers went to the bat for the last time, Gill said:

“Now, fellows, let’s see if we can’t clinch this thing by a few more runs. Merriwell’s arm must be getting tired, and we ought to fall on him.”

It did seem that Merry had grown tired, for the first batter got a hit, and the next bunted for a sacrifice, but “beat the ball” to first, thus making a hit of the bunt.

Hodge was feeling discouraged. It seemed to him that fate was against them, and he muffed the next ball Frank pitched, letting it roll past him. This advanced both men a base each, leaving them on second and third.

“Ha! ha! ha!” laughed Herbert Hammerswell. “Here is where Torrentown settles the whole business.”

Frank heard these taunting words, and he settled back on his double shoot again. The swiftness with which he struck out the next three batters made the spectators gasp.

“He’s a great pitcher,” was the universal decision; “but he can’t win games all by his lonesome.”

The Maplewoods came to bat for the last time. Diamond was the first man up.

“Don’t lose your heart, old fellow,” smiled Frank. “It’s only one score to tie, and that may come easy.”
"Oh, I'll do all I can!" muttered Diamond, his face set. "It's a beastly shame, Merry! You never pitched a better game in your life!"

"Oh, I don't know! I gave Beckwith his homer by pure carelessness. I can't blame anybody for losing the game. I am the only one to blame."

Diamond faced Slossing, who grinned triumphantly.

"I don't think you've hit the ball to-day," he said. "It's too bad. Try that."

"All right!" Jack snarled out the words, and he "nailed" the first pitched ball fair and square on the trade-mark.

It happened that the left fielder was loafing back in the field, hardly expecting anything of the kind, but the ball came straight at him, and he could not help getting it.

Diamond was down to first when the ball was caught, and he felt fierce enough to express himself in violent language, but restrained the desire. Then came Rattleton, and Harry fanned.

The crowd prepared to depart. Some did leave the ground. Everybody seemed to feel that there was not a chance in ten thousand for Maplewood.

Ephraim Gallup came up. Slossing laughed in his face, and made the mistake of thinking he had an easy thing. Ephraim caught the second ball pitched on the end of his bat, and he put it over the fence in the track of Bickworth's homer.

Roar! roar! roar—grand stand, bleachers, and bench united in the tumult, while Gallup, a broad grin on his
face, trotted round the bases and came in, thus tying the score.

Herbert Hammerswell turned pale, but forced a laugh. "This simply makes it more interesting," he declared. "It will be an extra-inning game."

Frank was the next man up. He had two strikes called on him before he swung at a ball. Then it happened that he got one just where he wanted it, and he lifted it for the left-field fence. It brought every man, woman, and child within the enclosure up standing. Oh, such a shout as went up!

"It's over the fence!"
"It's a homer!"
"That wins the game!"

"Didn't you toldt me he couldt done id?" yelled Dunnerwurst, falling off the bench and striking on his neck.

Ephraim Gallup executed a wild war-dance, swinging his cap in the air, and yelling to slit his throat.

Bart Hodge was shaking as if he had the ague, his eyes fastened on the ball, while he prayed that it might go over the fence. Frank raced to first and kept on to second. Before he reached second, however, the ball struck the very top of the fence and bounded back into the field.

The left-fielder of the Tigers sprinted for it, got it, sent it to third.

Frank and the ball reached third at about the same moment, but Merriwell was safe.

"It's a shame!" gurgled Rattleton. "If that ball had gone four inches higher it would have been a home run."
Joe Scott was up. He had not made a hit for the day. Barney Mulloy was coaching at third, and Frank sent him in to tell Scott to keep cool and take everything possible, as Slossing might be a little wild after the excitement.

Scott did as directed, and he got his first on balls. The next man came to bat, and Scott took chances on a steal to second, even though two men were out.

The catcher seemed to send the ball down to second to catch the runner, as that would end the inning.

Frank had been playing off third for that very move, and he made for home with all the ginger he could put into his legs.

Again the great crowd rose and gasped.

But the crafty catcher had not thrown to second. He had thrown the ball to short, in order to lead Frank off third, and short sent it back like a streak.

No one, however, had counted on Merriwell's speed on his feet.

He could start at high speed, which gave him a chance, and he strained every nerve and muscle. After starting, Frank realized that the ball had not gone to second, but he believed there was a bare chance to reach the plate ahead of it, and he fairly flew over the ground.

He saw by the position of the catcher that the ball was coming back and that the catcher was confident of putting it onto him.

He gathered every bit of energy in his body for the last mighty effort.

“Slide!” roared a hundred throats.
To win the game, Frank Merriwell slid. It was one of the handsomest pieces of base-sliding ever seen by anybody present. He struck the ground easily and gracefully, and yet at high speed, and he shot forward as if the base-line had been greased for the occasion.

Plunk! the ball struck the catcher's hands, and he nailed it onto Frank.

But, at that moment, Frank was lying with his hand resting on the rubber plate.

"Safe home!" rang out the umpire's voice, and then pandemonium broke loose, for Maplewood had won!

Frank had won, and won as he always has and always will, by intelligence, grit, and ability. That Maplewood's score was not a piece of luck, but due to Frank's leadership, he was to prove before the season ended.

This was but the first of the duels on the diamond. Ere Frank entered Yale, he was to prove, as he had proved in London and Paris, that he was himself the unflinching American on the field of sports as on that of honor, "True blue" every time!

THE END.
YEARS IN ADVANCE OF ALL OTHERS!

THE

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