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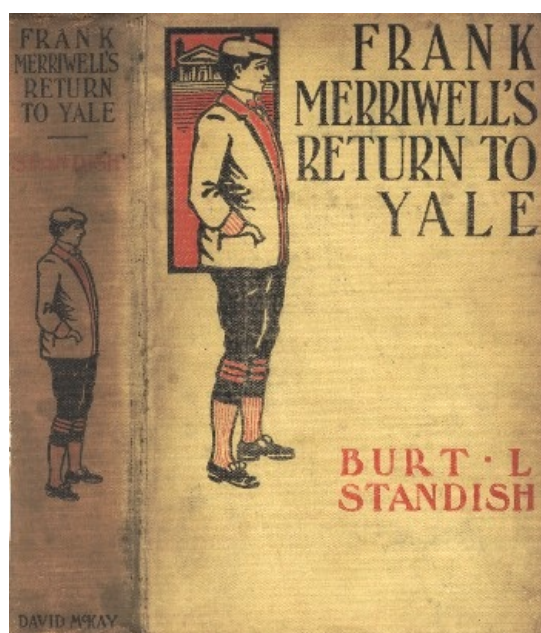
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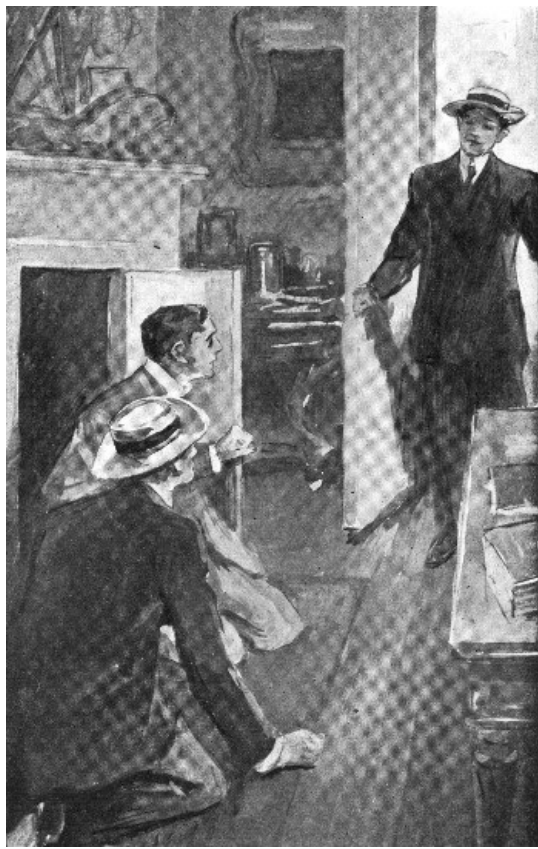
BY BURT L. STANDISH

AUTHOR OF "Frank Merriwell's Schooldays," "Frank Merriwell's Trip West," "Frank Merriwell's Chums," "Frank Merriwell's Foes," "Frank Merriwell Down South," etc.

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Frank Merriwell's Return to Yale



"The door opened and in walked Frank Merriwell."

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FRANK MERRIWELL'S RETURN TO YALE.

CHAPTER I.

GREETINGS ON THE CAMPUS.

"Ah, there, Merriwell!"

Frank Merriwell was crossing the campus at good old Yale, and this cry, in a familiar voice, sounded from Durfee Hall.

He turned his eyes toward the favorite dormitory, and seated at an open window on the ground floor he saw his classmate, Jones, he of the famous nickname, "Dismal."

"Hello, Dismal," called Frank, "aren't you going to come out and shake hands with a fellow?"

"I would if it wasn't for the shower," responded Jones, whose usually solemn face was graver than ever.

"Shower?" repeated Frank, looking up in surprise at the perfectly clear sky.

"I see that you've just arrived, so that you probably haven't noticed it," said Dismal, coming out of his window to avoid going around through the hall.

He came slowly across the grass plot that lay between him and Frank and held out his hand, saying:

"How are you, Frank? I'm glad to see you."

Frank, who had just come from the railway station, had a gripsack in each hand. He set them down upon the grass and shook Dismal's hand warmly.

"There it goes!" exclaimed Dismal, with something like animation, "the shower's begun again."

Frank's brows wrinkled in perplexity.

"I don't see any signs of a shower," he said.

"That's because you haven't been here all the morning," returned Jones, solemnly. "I've been sitting there in my window for fully three hours watching it; it's been a perfect rain of gripsacks on the campus. Every fellow that comes along stops to shake hands with everybody he meets, and every time he stops, down goes his gripsacks."

Frank laughed.

"You're the same old cheerful joker, Dismal," he said. "But you're beginning early. If you keep up this sort of thing you'll actually get caught laughing before the end of the junior year."

There was a faint shadow of a smile on Dismal's face as he responded:

"Well, anyhow, Frank, I'm glad to see all the fellows come trooping back. Are you glad to get here yourself?"

"Why, of course I am."

"Had a good time during the vacation?"

"I always have a good time," said Frank. "Don't you?"

"Oh, yes, in my way. To tell the truth, I spent most of the summer dreading the day when I should have to come back to the confounded old books, and lectures and examinations; but I got here yesterday, and now I'm dreading the time I shall have to go away again."

"Then I see that you're sure to enjoy yourself during the junior year," said Frank, stooping to pick up his gripsacks.

"When I've got my room in order I'll come around and go to luncheon with you."

"Do!" replied Dismal. "I'll go back to my window seat and watch the shower. Hello! there comes Browning, and he's loaded down with gripsacks, too. My, but there'll be a perfect torrent!"

Big Bruce Browning came up with friendly words of greeting, and as Dismal had predicted, he set down his gripsacks in order to get his hands free.

"It's getting worse and worse!" remarked Dismal, as if worried about it, "for here comes Rattleton and Diamond from one direction and Harold Page from another."

The last named students were on their way, just as Frank had been, to their respective rooms, and each carried more or less baggage, except Diamond, who, being something of an aristocrat, had sent all his traps to his room on a wagon.

Seeing Frank standing near Durfee, they all turned toward him, and in a moment there was a lively exchange of greetings and small talk.

Four of these students, Merriwell himself, Jack Diamond, Bruce Browning and Harry Rattleton, had not been long separated, to be sure, but after a sporting trip which they had undertaken across the continent, it was like meeting after a long absence to find themselves together again at Yale.

It was the beginning of a new college year, and members of all classes were trooping back to begin their work.

While these juniors were discussing all manner of things that interest students, such as the prospects of the football eleven, the make-up of next year's crew, and the coming elections into secret societies, members of other classes were scattered about the campus chatting in much the same way.

Among those who appeared upon the famous quadrangle were many who belonged to the incoming freshman class. It was easy to recognize them, for, as Rattleton observed:

"You can tell a freshman with the naked eye."

They were either proceeding in a fearful hurry, as if they thought they were in danger of getting in late to an examination, or they were standing in awkward idleness looking at the strange buildings and evidently not knowing which way to turn and dreading to ask anybody a question.

The juniors smiled indulgently as a group of three or four candidates for the freshman class passed them.

The newcomers were discussing an examination from which they had just come, telling each other how they had answered certain questions and wondering if they would get marked high enough to pass.

"I can sympathize with them," remarked Diamond. "I know just the kind of shivers they're suffering from."

"What jolly good subjects those fellows would be for a quiet hazing," remarked Page.

"You mustn't forget," said Frank, "that we're juniors now, and therefore out of it so far as hazing is concerned."

"That's right," added Browning, "the freshies are nothing to us; they're far beneath us."

"Except in one sense," said Frank. "The sophomores, you know, will get even for the hazing we gave them, by taking it out of the freshies, and so it becomes our duty, in a way, to take care of the freshmen and see that they get fair treatment."

Speaking of this it may be well to explain that in all colleges the juniors take this attitude toward the freshmen.

As a rule the freshman receives the attention of a junior with a great deal of gratitude, but also as a rule he does not find that it amounts to very much.

The junior is ever ready to give him a good deal of solid advice, and a great deal more ready to get the freshman to do errands for him, and all manner of odd jobs that the freshman is quite sure to do, until, as the boys say, he tumbles to the fact that after all the junior is really making game of him.

"Speaking of hazing, though," said Page, suddenly, "I've got a new room."

"Have you? Where is it?" asked Rattleton.

"It's up High Street a way, in one of the oldest houses in New Haven."

"Good room?" asked Browning.

"Capital! I've got to do some grinding this year and the room will suit me exactly for that, but there'll be hours when the books can be forgotten, and then you fellows'll find that the room is a corker for cards or any sort of jollification."

"I don't see what that's got to do with hazing," remarked Merriwell. "You said that the hazing reminded you of it."

"Yes, I'll tell you why, or rather I'll show you. There's something about that room that would be perfectly immense if we were sophomores now. Come down and see it, will you?"

"Better wait a week," said Browning, picking up his bags, "I'm busy now."

"How extraordinary!" remarked Dismal Jones. "If the faculty should hear that Browning was busy they'd give him a warning!"

Browning frowned in mock anger and Frank, putting on an expression quite as solemn as Dismal's own, and laying his hand on Dismal's shoulder, said:

"The fact is, boys, Jones has become ambitious. He knows that the election of class-day officers is only a little more than a year away, and he's getting himself into training for one of the positions."

"Oh, go on, it isn't so!" exclaimed Dismal.

"That's just his modesty," continued Frank, "for of course he doesn't want to push himself forward, but he's quietly waiting for his friends to recognize his great ability, and as we're his friends we just want to boom him from now on, and I take this occasion of nominating Dismal Jones, Esquire, as class wit."

Rattleton burst into guffaws of laughter, while the others smiled.

"The idea is humorous enough to elect him!" said Diamond.

"Well, if he's going to be a candidate," added Browning, "we must put the campaign through in proper fashion. We must organize a Dismal Jones Club and have an emblem.

"I move that we all wear crape upon our left arm and mourning bands upon our hats until the election."

"Great Scott!" howled Rattleton, "the time for mourning will be after Jones is elected."

Jones listened to this joking with stolid good humor; never a smile lingered on his face, but his solemn eyes showed no resentment.

"It's all right," he remarked when they gave him a chance to speak, "you fellows think you've got me on a long string, but I'd like to bet that if I should run for a class office, I wouldn't be last in the race!

"Of course," he added, hastily, "I haven't really any insane notion of doing such a thing."

The students laughed again, picked up their gripsacks and prepared to separate.

"Say!" called Page, eagerly, "what about coming down to see my room?"

"Oh, we've got a whole year ahead of us," growled Browning.

"I'll run down in the course of an hour or two," said Frank. "I don't think there's anything to do at my room, and I'll be glad to learn the way to yours. What's the number?"

Page told him, and Frank exclaimed:

"Why! some of the professors live there, don't they?"

"Pretty much the whole house," responded Page, "is let out to students and instructors; I believe Prof. Babbitt has his room there——"

"Babbitt!" interrupted Rattleton; "he's the most unpardonable crank in the whole faculty."

"Well, I shall let him alone, and I've no doubt that he will let me alone," returned Page. "He's a good deal of a hermit, I'm told, and I don't think that his being in the same house will make a particle of difference to me. Anyhow, there's the room and I want you fellows to see it."

"I'll be down in a little while," said Frank, and the others also promised to come in the course of a day or two.

CHAPTER II.

IMPRISONED IN A CHIMNEY.

Frank found that there was nothing whatever in his room to demand his attention, and so, after he had unpacked his grips and put away their contents, he went down High Street to call on Page.

The house in which Page had taken a room was made of stone. Its walls were very thick, the ceilings low, and everything about it made it seem like a relic of the last century.

This is indeed what it was. In former days it had been the residence of one of the wealthiest men in New Haven, but that was long ago; for years it had been used wholly as a lodging house.

Page's room was on the second floor. It was very large and cheerful. Three windows looked out on the street and in each of them was a broad seat provided with heavy cushions.

On the opposite side of the room there were two old-fashioned benches built against the wall. Between the ends of these benches and right in the middle of that side of the room was one of the ancient chimneys of the house.

It came out three or four feet into the room and gave the place an antique and interesting appearance. Page had hung a lot of ornaments in the way of fencing foils, boxing gloves, baseball bats, and other materials used by students, upon this chimney.

After Frank had taken a general look around the room he said:

"It's a nice old den, Page, and I think the chimney there is the best part of it. What a pity that there isn't a fireplace. There ought to be, and it strikes me that there was at one time."

Saying this, he knelt down before the chimney and examined the stones of which it was made. These had been painted white. Frank thought he could see a line that indicated what had once been an opening. Page watched him in silence.

"There certainly was a fireplace here at one time," said Frank, rising, "and if I were in your place I'd have the stones cut away so that you can use it again. An open wood fire there would look immense in winter."

"That's a good scheme, Frank," responded Page, "and it was that chimney that led me to speak of the room. I didn't know it when I hired the place, but since I've got in I've discovered that—well, I'll show you."

With this he stooped over by the chimney, put his hand upon what appeared to be a little projection from one of the stones, turned it, and opened a door.

Within the door there was revealed an old-fashioned fireplace, deep and high. All it needed was andirons and poker to make it complete.

"Well, that's funny!" exclaimed Frank.

"Isn't it?" returned Page. "I got on to the thing wholly by accident. When I was hanging up some of the things there I stumbled and caught hold of that little projection for support."

"The thing turned in my hand, and the first thing I knew the door was open. It opened a little hard, showing that the thing hadn't been used for a long time."

"Didn't the owner of the house speak of it?"

"I don't think he knows anything about it."

"Have you told him?"

"Not much!"

"Why not?"

"Well, because it just struck me that such a place as this was a kind of a secret worth keeping. You can see for yourself that it was the evident intention of the person who set up this door that it should be a secret. The hinges are perfectly concealed, and it has been fitted in and the edges painted in such a way that only the closest inspection would give a fellow a suspicion that there was any opening there."

At this moment there was a knock, and Browning came in.

"I thought you were coming next week?" exclaimed Page.

"Well, I found I'd nothing better to do than run down here. What's that you're looking at?"

The boys explained the matter to him, and in his slow way he admitted that if they were sophomores it would be quite possible to utilize this secret door in the course of hazing freshmen.

"As we're not in the hazing business now," he said, "I can't see any use for the place, Page, except for you to hide in when your creditors call."

"Huh!" retorted Page, "it's my habit to keep my bills paid."

"It'll make you unpopular if the fellows know that."

"I was telling Page," said Merriwell, "that if I had the room I'd take down that door entirely, get

some andirons and burn a log of wood on a winter evening."

"That's a good scheme," returned Browning, "but if I should do anything of that kind I should never get a stroke of work done here; this room was never meant to study in, but it's an ideal loafing place."

With this he threw himself upon one of the window seats and looked out. The others took places on the other windows and for a few minutes their conversation turned upon college topics.

Then Browning, who was a little restless, as most students are immediately after a vacation, said he would have to be going. Page urged him to wait, but he shook his head.

"By the way," he said, with his hand upon the door, "I've got some news."

"Well?" said both the others together.

"I regret to say it isn't pleasant news, but it may be important to you two; it certainly is to me."

"Spring it!" exclaimed Page.

"Cut the preface!" said Merriwell.

"Babbitt has announced an examination for juniors in mathematics."

"What!"

Merriwell and Page were so surprised that they sat down suddenly. Browning remained standing by the door.

"It's a fact," he said.

"But what can that mean?" asked Merriwell. "We had our regular examination last spring."

"I know we did, but Babbitt's going to have another just the same."

"Where did you learn it?"

"On the bulletin board, of course. The notice was put up not more than an hour ago."

"When is it to be?"

"Three days from now."

Page looked blankly at Merriwell.

"I never was any good at mathematics," he said, "and after a summer without a thought of it I don't believe I could do an ordinary sum in multiplication."

"Well," responded Frank, doubtfully, "it can't be that the examination will have any serious consequences for us fellows if we passed last spring."

"There's no telling how serious Babbitt may make it," said Browning. "The notice on the bulletin board, of course, doesn't give any explanation, but I met Frost, the fellow who graduated a couple of years ago, you know, with high honors in mathematics, and who was made instructor in one of the lower departments of that course."

"I knew Frost quite well when he was a student, so I asked him if he knew anything about this."

"What did he say?"

"He smiled a little queerly and answered that Professor Babbitt had his own ideas."

"In other words, Frost wouldn't tell?"

"Oh, no, that's not it; Frost is a member of the faculty now, you see, and of course he has to speak very respectfully of the older men."

"I got a very distinct idea that Frost regarded Babbitt's examination as all nonsense, but he did explain to me what Babbitt's idea about it is."

"That's what we want to know."

"It's just this way," said Browning, sitting down. "It seems our class is enlarged by the addition of quite a number of men who have graduated from or studied at other colleges."

"They have applied for admission into the junior class, and there's got to be an examination for them, of course; in fact, the examination for such candidates is going on now."

"That's quite a usual thing," remarked Merriwell.

"Yes, certainly, but Babbitt has declared that the examination of last spring was very unsatisfactory. He says men can't go ahead in mathematics unless what they have done before is thoroughly learned, and he proposes to find out just what sort of talent there is in our class before he begins a year's work."

"He'll find out what I can't do!" groaned Page.

"Probably he knows that already," said Merriwell.

"That's the substance of it, anyway," added Browning. "Babbitt's idea is to strike an average as to what the class can do and proceed from that."

"Then I shouldn't think," said Merriwell, "that the examination should have any terrors for us."

"You'd think," exclaimed Page, "that Merriwell looked at an examination as he would a plunge in the surf, just a little dip for the fun of it, and it's all over. It won't be so with me."

"Don't worry," responded Frank, "you've got three days in which to cram."

"And that's just what I'll do, I'm thinking."

Page dropped his chin upon his hands and looked gloomily at the floor.

"I'm sorry to give you unpleasant news," said Browning, rising, "but I told you I thought it was important. So long."

With this he went out.

"Oh, well," said Page, after a moment, "I'm not going to be knocked out by that! I'll just go into the examination and do as well as I can and take chances; that's what the rest of us have got to do."

"That's the best way to look at it," Frank answered, "and I don't think I shall bother my head with cramming for it."

"If I were you, Page, I'd go down to some of those second-hand stores on the street and see if you can't pick up a pair of old-fashioned andirons. You don't want to get new ones, you know, for a place like this, they wouldn't seem appropriate."

"That's so," Page answered, with a queer smile, "I believe I'll adopt your suggestion at once. How would you place them?"

"Why, just as they are placed in every other fireplace," Frank answered, "one on each side; that is, if the old chimney will draw."

"Perhaps it won't," said Page.

"I hadn't thought of that," continued Frank. "It may be that the place was closed up because the chimney was defective. Let's see if we can find out."

So saying, he knelt and entered the fireplace. Once inside it was easy to stand upright, for the chimney was broad, and as he looked up he could see that it ran with a slight incline clear to the roof.

"There's nothing to prevent a fire from being built here," he said, with his eyes turned upward. "Such a chimney as this would draw like a furnace."

Page made no response.

"I declare," Merriwell added, "it makes me wish that winter had come so that I could see a roaring old blaze of logs here. Doesn't that strike you about right?"

As Page made no response, he turned to look at his classmate, and then discovered that the secret door to the fireplace had been closed.

With his eyes turned upward and seeing the little patch of light at the top of the chimney he had not noticed that the light from the room had been shut off.

"Hello, there!" he called, feeling along the wall to find the door. "I'm no freshman."

There was no sound from Page's room. Frank found a match in his pocket and struck it. From inside it was easy enough to distinguish the outlines of the secret door that concealed the fireplace.

It was not possible, however, to discover any way by which it might be opened. The latch was the kind used on doors, but strong, and with no knob on the inside.

Frank pushed against the door with some force. It did not yield in the least degree.

"Seems to me," he thought, "that Page has a queer idea of fun to lock me in like this. I've a good mind to kick the door down."

He thought a moment before deciding to do this, and reflected that it would hardly be a good-natured way of treating the joke.

If Page meant to have some fun with him by making him a prisoner, the joke would be all the more successful if Merriwell should get mad about it and break open the secret door.

"I think," thought Frank, "that I'll get even with Page for this in a way that will surprise him."

His match went out just then and he began to feel in the darkness of the stones that made the chimney. They were untrimmed stones, so that the interior surface was very irregular.

Just above his hand, but within reach, was an iron bar crossing the chimney; it was put there to bind the walls.

Frank drew himself upon this and then, being in the narrow part of the chimney, was able to work his way upward by clinging with hands and feet to the rough edges of the stones.

It was slow progress, but not difficult, and sure. The only question would be whether the opening at the top of the chimney would be large enough to permit of his crawling through.

He had got about halfway up when he halted in his journey. He had heard voices, and he recognized both of them.

He knew that he was on the level of the room above Page's, and he realized that the sounds of talking came to him distinctly because there was a fireplace there that connected with this same chimney.

The voices he heard were those of Prof. Babbitt and Instructor Frost.

"The fact is, Frost," Babbitt was saying, "I'm aiming this examination at certain men in the class, and I've no hesitation in saying so. There's that fellow, Merriwell, for example; I'd like to force him to do more studying."

CHAPTER III.

TURNING THE TABLES.

"This is growing very interesting," thought Frank, bracing his knees against the stones of the chimney so that he could hold his position easily.

"Why, I thought that Merriwell ranked high, professor?" said Frost.

"He's no fool," growled Babbitt, "and if he would study hard I presume he might lead the class in scholarship, but as it is, he spends most of his time in athletics and skylarking."

"Oh, not quite so bad as that!"

"Yes, it is. He's naturally bright, and by a very little attention to his lessons he's able to get marks that enable him to pass along with fair standing, while most of his time is given to anything but work. It isn't right that anybody should get through Yale so easily; it's bad for the rest of the students."

"I have an idea," said Frost, quietly, "that Merriwell's example isn't regarded as a bad one by other members of the faculty."

"Ah, you're just as bad as the students themselves in your fondness for that scamp!" exclaimed Babbitt. "He seems to fascinate everybody he meets except me."

"Yes, I think you're an exception."

"I believe you are trying to be sarcastic, Frost, but it doesn't make any difference; my mind is set on making an example of Merriwell so that the other fellows in his class who follow his lead will be frightened into studying harder."

"Do you then mean that this examination is aimed directly at Merriwell?"

"Not quite so strong as that. There are others, of course, but he's a natural leader, and I don't at all fancy the easy way he takes things, and then bobs up at examinations with enough knowledge to work out his papers."

"I should think," suggested Frost, "that that was all the professors could require of a student."

"That's because you're young!" snapped Babbitt. "You ought to forget that you've been a student ___"

"Excuse me, professor, but I think just the contrary. It seems to me that the more an instructor remembers of his student days the better he will be able to get along with his classes."

"All right, then, you stick to your theory, and I'll stick to mine. Meantime, look at this paper; that's what I asked you to call for."

"Is this the examination paper that you're going to set before Merriwell's class?"

"Yes."

There was then a silence of some minutes during which probably Mr. Frost was studying the examination paper. At last he remarked:

"Well, I've looked it through."

"What do you think of it?" asked Babbitt.

"Do you want my honest opinion?"

"Of course I do! Why else should I get you up here?"

After a slight pause Mr. Frost said: "It seems to me that the examination is very one-sided."

"Eh?"

"Why, it is all aimed at a certain line of work, and doesn't cover anything like all the work done in the course of the year."

"Well, I have my reason for that!"

"I supposed so."

"I know that fellow Merriwell's weakness; I know just where he's likely to be faulty, and if he can pass that paper he'll do better than I think he can."

"Why, Prof. Babbitt," exclaimed Frost in an indignant tone, "it looks as if you were purposely trying to trip Merriwell so as to get him disciplined, or dropped!"

"The faculty can do with him what it likes," remarked Babbitt, crossly, "when I've handed in the marks on this paper."

"I must say it doesn't seem to me to be fair," said Frost.

"I don't care for any opinion of that kind," retorted Babbitt.

"Then I don't see why you asked me for any at all."

"Well, well," and Babbitt seemed to be struggling with his temper, "you and I won't dispute about it. You've got your work and I've got mine. I asked you about this paper because I thought you'd sympathize with me in my design."

"I can't sympathize with you in it, Prof. Babbitt, and I wish if you're going to give an examination that you would give one of the usual kind, including in the questions, problems that cover the entire year's work, and so get an idea——"

"The idea I want to get will come from the answers to these questions, Frost."

"Then I suppose I couldn't persuade you to make up another paper?"

"No, sir; I'm going to take this to the printer at once, and by to-morrow morning the copies will all be here in my room, where I shall keep them until the hour for the examination."

"I'm sorry you told me about it," said Frost.

"Why?"

"Because I think well of Merriwell and the others——"

"I suppose you'd like to warn them of what's coming."

"Prof. Babbitt!"

Frost spoke in a loud tone; he was evidently very angry.

"Oh, well," exclaimed Babbitt, "don't fly in a rage at that suggestion; of course I know that you won't betray any secrets of the faculty. I simply said that I supposed you'd like to warn that rascal, Merriwell."

"You've no right to think even as much as that!" returned Frost, "but you may be very sure that whatever I wish to do I shall not expose the questions on that paper. Good-day, sir."

"Good-day," said Babbitt, and immediately afterward there was a slamming of a door.

Then Frank heard the professor grumbling to himself, but what he said could not be made out. A little later there was the sound of a door opening and closing again. Prof. Babbitt had doubtless started to the printer's with the examination paper.

Frank then resumed his trip up the chimney. He had heard no sound from Page's room, and he was just as determined as before to turn the joke upon his classmate.

As he passed the level of Prof. Babbitt's room he saw that the fireplace of the chimney had been closed in the same way as in Page's room, but in this case the door was not a secret one, and at the moment it stood partly open. This was what enabled him to hear so plainly the conversation between the instructors.

When he came to the chimney top he squeezed through without much difficulty, and dropped out upon the roof.

The next question was as to getting down to the street, but to an athlete like Frank, there was little difficulty in that problem.

New Haven is often called the City of Elms. There were a number of these and other trees growing about, and one of them extended its branches toward the roof of this house in such a

way that Frank could grasp it.

He took hold of it with the idea of climbing along to the trunk of the tree, and then shinning down, but the branch bent under his weight until his feet were not more than ten feet from the ground.

Accordingly Frank let go and came down with nothing more than a bit of a jar. He had landed in the yard beside the house, from which he saw that an alley led between buildings to an adjoining street.

His hands and clothes were grimy with soot.

"If I should go through High Street this way," he thought, "and should meet Page, he'd have the laugh on me in earnest. I'll just skip out the other way, get into my room and clean up and then give him a surprise party."

Accordingly Frank hastened through the alley and so to his room. He met nobody on the way with whom he was acquainted, and as soon as he was in his room he washed his hands and face thoroughly and changed his clothes.

"So, then," he thought in the midst of this operation, "Prof. Babbitt wants to make an example of me, does he, and he knows my weak points, eh?"

"Luckily, I know my own weak points, too, so far as mathematics is concerned, and in the next three days it strikes me that I can do a bit of grinding that will enable me to give the professor a surprise party. If my guess is right as to the kind of examples that will be put on that paper, I shouldn't wonder if I could give the other fellows a lift, too."

Meantime, Harold Page, having made his friend a prisoner in the fireplace, had gone from his room for the purpose of finding some other fellow whom he might bring back to share in the fun of Frank's discomfort.

As his room was at some little distance from the campus, he did not expect to find anybody on the street near it, so he started on a run in the direction of the college, for it was not his intention to keep Frank a prisoner more than a few minutes.

He had not gone very far before he met a classmate, whose name was Mortimer Ford. Ford was not a very popular fellow, although it could not be said that anybody had anything special against him.

He was acquainted with Frank and the particular crowd that chummed with him, and sometimes took part in their doings, but on the whole he was rather outside the circle in which Frank had been a leader from the start.

If Page had had his wish, he would have met Rattleton, or Browning, or Diamond, or some of the others more closely associated with Merriwell, for he knew that they would enjoy the trick with better humor than anybody else.

When he saw Ford his first impulse was to go and look up somebody else, but Ford called out to him:

"Hello, Page, how long have you been back?"

"Oh, I came back a week ago," Page answered, "and engaged a room, got it in order, and then went away again. I came back for good this morning."

"Glad to see you," and Ford shook hands. "What are you hurrying for?"

"Oh, nothing much," responded Page, awkwardly.

"I didn't know but you were trying to run away from that examination that old Babbitt has got up," said Ford. "Say! that is a nasty blow, isn't it?"

"It will bother a good many of us, I reckon."

They were standing on the sidewalk, and while they were talking Page was keeping his eyes out for some other friend.

There were no other students in sight, and he began to feel a little ashamed of the small trick he had played on Frank.

"I guess I'll go and let him out," he thought, "Ford will do as well as anybody else to see the fun."

So he said aloud:

"Come down to my room a minute, Ford; I've got something to show you."

"I wish it was a case of beer," remarked Ford, falling in with him and walking along, "or perhaps it's something better than that?"

"It's nothing to drink, but it's something better than that, just the same."

"Tell you what I wish it was."

"What?"

"Babbitt's examination paper."

"Great Scott! why don't you wish you owned the earth?"

"I do."

"You might as well wish that as to think of getting hold of Babbitt's paper. There isn't a secret society in Yale, you know, that is closer than an examination paper. There's hardly a case on record where one has been got in advance."

"Oh, I know it," said Ford, in a mournful tone; "of course it's hopeless to think of getting hold of the paper, and I hadn't any idea of trying to, but that's the only thing that's worrying me just now, and so I spoke of it."

"Merriwell doesn't seem to think the thing's going to be very serious," said Page.

"He wouldn't think anything was serious," answered Ford.

Just as they were entering the house where Page had his room, Prof. Babbitt came out. They had seen Instructor Frost go out and turn in another direction a moment before.

The students touched their hats to the professor, wished him good-morning, and passed in.

Prof. Babbitt grumbled a surly reply, and turned away toward the college.

Page wondered as he went upstairs whether Frank had kicked down the secret door to the chimney.

"It would be just like him," he thought. "Confound him! I wouldn't much blame him if he did!"

The minute he came into the room he glanced at the chimney.

"It's all right," he said to himself, and he felt a little triumphant. "It isn't often a fellow can catch Merriwell, and although it's a small kind of a trick, it will be something to speak of hereafter."

"Well, this is a snug sort of place," remarked Ford, looking around the room. "The ceiling is a little low, but the window seats are broad and you've got soft cushions. I don't see anything the matter with this; where's your bedroom?"

"Over there," responded Page, pointing to a door. "What do you think of this?" and he pointed to the chimney.

"It takes up some room," was Ford's comment; "but you've got plenty of that to spare."

"You know what it is, don't you?" asked Page.

"A chimney, I suppose?"

"Exactly, and it follows that it's hollow."

"I suppose so, unless it's been filled up."

"It hasn't been filled up," said Page. "When they put modern heating into the house they closed up the fireplace that was here, and I had some notion of opening it again, but I've decided not to."

He spoke now in a loud tone of voice, hoping that Merriwell would hear him.

"Why not open the fireplace?" asked Ford.

"Because I've got a pet that I want to keep there."

"A pet?"

"Yes. It's just the place for it——"

"What is it, a big dog?"

"No, though it's big enough."

"Queer place to keep a pet," remarked Ford. "How can you get him in there?"

"Why, he's in there already."

"What! Now?"

"Certainly."

"I don't hear anything."

Page was on the broad grin, and Ford crossed the room out of curiosity. He struck his hand smartly on the chimney, whereat Page exclaimed:

"I wouldn't do that, you might frighten him."

"But what in the mischief have you got there?"

"I'll show you in a minute. Now, then, old boy, want to see the light? Does you want to come out

for a little time?"

Page spoke soothingly as if he were addressing a small cat.

"Shall I let him come out?" he went on, mockingly; "shall I let him have a little taste of fresh air and sunlight, poor thing?"

He listened as he spoke for some sign of Merriwell and it bothered him a little that he got no reply.

Ford looked on in wonder.

"Don't be so long about it!" he exclaimed. "Open up the thing if there's any way to do it, and let's see what you've got."

"All right, then; don't be frightened if he should run out suddenly," answered Page.

He put his hand on the knob of the secret door, and threw it open; then he stepped back, smiling broadly.

"There isn't anything there!" exclaimed Ford.

"What!" and Page got down on his knees and thrust his head into the fireplace.

Of course he realized in an instant what had happened. He knew that Merriwell must have climbed out at the top.

"Great Scott!" he thought, "if Frank should know that I brought a fellow up here to see the foolishness, how he would turn the laugh on me."

"Has the thing, whatever it is, vanished?" asked Ford.

"Gone completely!" answered Page in a tone of disappointment. "He must have flown out of the top of the chimney."

Ford got down, too, and looked up.

"Why, yes," he said, "if it was a bird, of course it would get out that way. You ought to have known better than to put a bird in such a place. What was it, a parrot?"

"No, not exactly," said Page. "I guess I won't say what it was until I've made some search for it."

At this moment there was a knock at the door. Page, still on his hands and knees, answered "Come in."

The door opened and in walked Frank Merriwell.

CHAPTER IV.

READY FOR THE TEST.

Page got up looking very sheepish.

He expected that Frank would begin to turn the laugh on him. Nothing of that kind happened, for the first moment Ford and Frank were speaking together.

They had not met since the close of the last term, and they shook hands in a friendly way, and made polite inquiries about each other's vacations.

"What have you got here?" asked Frank, then, stepping toward the fireplace with a queer look at Page.

The latter had not the nerve to answer.

"I suppose it used to be a fireplace," said Ford. "It looked when I came into the room just as if there was no opening into the chimney at all, but this door fits very closely."

"Were you trying to use the chimney as a telescope when I came in?" asked Frank. "I saw you were both on your knees, looking up."

"No," replied Ford, "Page had something in there, he won't say what it was, some kind of a pet, I believe, and it has flown out."

"No wonder," remarked Frank, dryly; "it would be a pretty poor kind of a pet that wouldn't fly out of a place like that."

"If it was an unusual kind of a bird," suggested Ford, "why don't you give notice of it to the police? It sometimes happens that they recover missing pets."

"Oh, I guess I won't say anything about it," responded Page, blushing furiously.

Frank could not control his laughter, so he threw himself into a window seat, and looked out,

having his back to the other two.

"What are you laughing at, anyway?" asked Ford.

"Oh, at my thoughts!" chuckled Frank. "I think Page ought to offer a thousand dollars or so reward for his missing pet."

"You hold your tongue, Merriwell," said Page, "and some time or other I'll make it right with you."

"Are you two fellows putting up some kind of a job on me?" exclaimed Ford, suspiciously.

"Oh, no, on my honor!" exclaimed Frank, quickly. "I was just thinking of a little joke that you don't know anything about."

"Aren't you going to spring the joke?"

"No, I'm going to keep it to myself."

Page looked immensely relieved, while Ford, after a doubtful glance at both of them, turned his attention again to the chimney. He pushed the secret door back into place and then opened it again.

"Mighty funny idea, isn't it?" he said, half to himself. "Certainly, nobody would ever believe that that fireplace could be opened without a pickax."

"I supposed it was solid," responded Page, "and got at the secret entirely by accident."

"Opens easy, doesn't it?"

Ford kept opening and shutting the door.

"If this was in the olden times," he said, "when men had to hide from enemies, what a racket it would be to shut one's self in here and then climb out through the chimney."

Frank turned his back again to conceal his chuckle, while Page answered that he thought it would be a good scheme. Then he added:

"I think I'll take the door down and make a fireplace of it."

"And not get your bird back?"

"No. Hang the bird!"

"Well, of course, that's for you to say. As for myself, I'm going to get over to my room and look up mathematics for a while."

"I shouldn't think you'd need to," said Frank.

"Oh, a man grows rusty after three months away from the books, you know," answered Ford, "and an examination always makes me nervous, anyway. So long."

With this he left the room.

"Say, Merriwell," said Page, the moment the door was closed, "I don't know whether to feel obliged to you, or be as mad as a hornet."

"I don't see any reason for either feeling."

"Well, I am obliged to you for not turning the laugh on me when you had the chance to, and I ought to be mad for your getting out in the way you did."

"What should you have shut me in there for," asked Frank, "if you did not expect me to use my wits?"

"I just did it on impulse," Page answered, "and had no intention, anyway, of keeping you there more than a few minutes."

"It's all right, Page, I didn't mind it a little bit. I went straight out."

"I see you did."

"Now, see here, Page," said Frank, seriously, "I want to ask a favor of you."

"Granted."

"Keep that door closed during the next few days."

"What, the door to the fireplace?"

"H'm! h'm!"

"Why, yes, I'll do that, but why? I shouldn't have it open more than a minute or two at a time to show the fellows."

"Don't do that."

"Not show it to the fellows?"

"Not to anybody."

"I said I'd grant your favor and so I will, but what in the world is on your mind?"

"I'll tell you," said Frank, with a little pause, "after the examination."

"Babbitt's examination?"

"Yes."

"All right I suppose you've got some first-class trick you want to tell, and you haven't got time to get it in shape until the examination is over, is that it?"

"That's asking too much, Page. I'll tell you all about it later; meantime, it is a fact that men like you and me have got to put in some pretty hard licks if we want to pass that examination."

"Oh, thunder and Mars!" groaned Page, "I've made up my mind not to think of it. It's impossible for me to cram up on a whole year's work in three days."

"It might not be necessary to."

"How else can a fellow stand a chance of passing?"

"Well, suppose we should study just one part of the subject, and let the rest of it go?"

"And then there might not be a single question on that subject, Frank."

"Yes, and again they might all be on that subject."

"It isn't likely."

"But it might be so, Page."

"Do you mean to say, Frank, that you'd recommend a fellow to take a kind of gambling chance like that on an examination paper?"

"Well, not as a general thing, but seriously I do think it would be a good scheme this time. You see, Babbitt is springing this examination unexpectedly, and everybody knows that he's got queer ideas. Now I think it would be quite like him to center the whole examination on one topic."

"Why should he do that?"

"Well," answered Frank, slowly, "with the idea, perhaps, of catching the fellows by surprise."

"He don't need to take all that pains for me," said Page, dismally; "he could floor me if his examination was made on the simplest things. If I was like Ford, now——"

"Oh, Ford doesn't need to worry, of course. He led the class in mathematics last year, didn't he?"

"Yes, and the year before, too. The idea of his being worried about the examination is all nonsense."

"I know it is," said Frank, "except that he's got his ambition up to keep at the lead; that's a natural ambition and decent, and I suppose he'll do a lot of grinding to get ready for the exam."

"I'd grind, too, if I thought there'd be any use in it."

"I believe there will, Page, and if you don't mind following my lead, I'll tell you what subject to grind on."

"Do you mean to say that you're going to cram up on just one part of it?"

"Exactly, and what's more, if you'll agree to it, I'll come over here with my books and we'll grind together. We'll get Browning, Rattleton and Diamond, and one or two others in our crowd, and do the job together."

"It's a bully idea!" exclaimed Page, "if it would only work. Gee! but wouldn't it be just great if we should happen to hit on the topic that old Babbitt has chosen and every one of us write a perfect paper?"

"I can't think of anything that would suit me better," Frank answered.

"Then let's try for it. It's just a chance, but I'm with you, Merriwell."

"All right, then, and you'll remember you're to say nothing about that fireplace, and you're not to open it until after the examination!"

"I'll remember, but you won't forget to tell me what it all means?"

"I'll let you into the whole business after Babbitt has examined the papers."

It was not a very difficult matter for Frank to persuade his closest friends to join him in preparing for the examination by studying hard on one particular topic.

They were so in the habit of following his lead that although they all regarded the effort in the same way that Page did, that is, a gamble, they were willing to take the chances if Merriwell was.

Frank was almost perfectly certain that it was not a gambling chance, because he remembered well enough how he had been faulty in that topic at the spring examination, and if Babbitt was going to try to trip him, that was the subject surely that he would select for his purpose.

Three days was none too long for the boys to refresh their memories on the subject and prepare themselves well on this one topic.

They started in in the middle of the afternoon and worked together under Frank's direction until dinner time.

He proved to be as hard a task master as Babbitt himself could have been. The boys were not exactly surprised at that, for it was natural for Frank to do with all his might whatever he undertook, but they joked him a good deal while at dinner about turning professor.

"That's all right," Frank answered, "you can have your joke. If we come out on this as I expect to, you'll be glad enough that you adopted my plan."

"I must say I rather enjoy it," said Diamond, frankly. "Studying by one's self is dull work, but when there are half a dozen or so grinding away, somehow the time passes more quickly."

In the same way they worked until late that night, and began again early the next morning.

Diamond offered the use of his room as a meeting place, and Puss Parker, who had been let into the scheme, suggested that they come to his room, too. Frank said no.

"We began in Page's room," was the way he put it, "and we might as well work it out there."

"His room is so far out of the way!" grumbled Browning.

"A little walk won't hurt you any," responded Frank. "I'd much rather keep at it there, for I'm used to the room."

So it was agreed that the grinding should continue at Page's, and it did until the day of the examination.

They had other duties to perform, of course, during these days, but the regular work of the college had not entirely begun, so that most of their time could be put in to preparing for their examination.

They allowed none of the other students to interrupt them, and for that matter, most members of the junior class were grinding in much the same fashion.

They had only one caller during the entire period. This was Ford, but he did not find them at work. They were just returning to the room from dinner on the evening before the examination, when they met Ford leaving the house.

"Ah, Page, I was just up to see you."

"Sorry I wasn't in," Page responded. "What was it, something special?"

"Oh, no," answered Ford, a little doubtfully, with a glance at the others in the party; "let it go until some other time."

"If it isn't important, then," said Page, "I wish you would, for we fellows are——"

"Sporting your oak, are you?"

"That's it exactly. We're trying to get up on mathematics and so we don't admit any callers."

"All right, then," said Ford, "I'm doing much the same at my own room. Good luck to you."

Frank did not keep the boys at work late that evening. They had pretty well covered all the ground that he had chosen, and he believed that they would be better able for the test the next morning, so at ten o'clock he ordered them to their rooms, and they obeyed as readily as if they were a crew training under their captain for a race.

At nine o'clock the next morning all the junior class assembled in one of the big rooms of Osborn Hall. Prof. Babbitt was there ahead of them with a number of assistants to look out for keeping the students in order and to prevent any possible attempt at cheating.

The students found their places by means of slips of paper on the top of each desk. Merriwell was a little amused to notice that he was placed far from the friends with whom he usually associated.

"I wonder if Babbitt thinks I would cheat?" he thought.

There was a bundle neatly done up in brown paper on the professor's desk at the head of the room. He stood near it until all the students were in their places, each with a pad of blank paper before him, and a number of sharpened pencils.

Then the professor broke the string with which the bundle was tied, and calling up his assistants, handed them several papers each to distribute.

They were the papers from the printer containing the fatal questions.

CHAPTER V.

ONE OF THE MISSING PAPERS.

Three or four minutes passed while the assistants were distributing some papers. Then one of them approached the professor and said:

"I need two more for my section, sir."

"Well," said the professor, looking around the room, "if you're short two, somebody must have two to spare."

Nobody said anything.

"Which of you," asked the professor of his assistants, "has two more papers than necessary."

No one answered. Prof. Babbitt looked very savage.

"I counted that bundle of papers just as soon as it came from the printers," he said, sharply, "and there was just the number called for. The printers never make a mistake, and I'm sure they haven't this time."

Still there was silence in the room.

"Gentlemen," said the professor, this time addressing the students, "see if any of you have an extra paper accidentally stuck to the one on your desk; there must be two spare papers here somewhere in the room."

Every student took up his paper, felt of it, shook it, but without result; the room was certainly two papers short, and two students sat, therefore, with nothing to do.

The professor frowned.

"I'm certain," he exclaimed, "that I made no miscount. Mr. Jackson," turning to one of the assistants, "count the students here."

Mr. Jackson counted and found that there were one hundred and forty-six.

"That's it," said Prof. Babbitt, "and I had one hundred and forty-six papers. This is very extraordinary."

He glared savagely about the room, his glance resting longest upon the desk where Merriwell sat. Frank was already busily engaged in working out the first problem.

Most of the other students had already gone to work, but some of them were idly watching to see what the professor was going to do, and hoping that he would postpone the whole examination.

This may have been in his mind; but if so, he thought better of it.

"We shall have to go on," he said, presently. "I will write out two papers for those who are short."

He did so, and in the course of a few minutes all the students were at work.

Frank could not help but smile when, after a rapid glance at the problems on the paper, he saw that he had hit exactly the subject chosen by the professor to floor him. The questions were all confined to the one topic which he and his friends had been studying on.

"Now, unless they lose their heads," he thought, "they'll all write a perfect paper."

He had previously warned them not to be in a hurry during the examination.

According to the custom at Yale a written examination of this kind lasts for three hours, that is, three hours is the longest time during which any student is allowed to work at the problems.

If he has not finished in that time, he has to stop. If, however, he should get through the paper in less time, he has the right to withdraw from the room.

"Now boys," Frank had said, "if you find that you can work all the problems take them slowly, so that you make sure that you get them right, and then, if you get through before the time is up, hang around a while.

"It might cause the professor to think queer things if he should see us get up after an hour and a half or so and walk out; he would wonder how we did it, and of course we don't want to let him suspect that we crammed on one topic."

The boys understood the wisdom of this advice, and Frank's only anxiety now was lest Rattleton or Page should get excited at the ease of the paper and write too hurriedly.

The others he knew would be cool.

Believing that the professor would watch him more narrowly than anybody else, he made a good deal of pretense at being puzzled over his problems, and worked each one out separately on a piece of paper before transferring the problem on the paper which was to be passed in as his examination.

There was nothing very unusual in this method, for most of the other students did much the same thing. The only point about it is that it was unnecessary in this case for Frank to do it at all, because the problems were so familiar that he could have worked each one out at the first trial.

Early in the examination Ford, who had a seat in the back part of the room, raised his hand.

Prof. Babbitt saw him and nodded.

The raising of the hand implied that Ford wanted to ask a question. He was a favorite with Prof. Babbitt naturally, and so the professor gave him leave to go up to the desk and make his inquiry.

Ford walked down the aisle with an examination paper in his hand, and as he passed Frank's desk his hand struck a little pile of blank papers that happened to be lying on the very edge, and knocked it to the floor.

He stooped quickly, saying: "Excuse me," in a low voice, and replaced the papers.

Prof. Babbitt, of course, was looking that way at the moment.

"You would do your work just as well, Merriwell," he exclaimed, sharply, "if you didn't spread it all over your desk. Your examples won't work out any easier for taking up the whole room with them."

Frank colored; it was unusual and extremely unpleasant to be rebuked in this way before the entire class. He had not realized that he had left his blank papers so carelessly but even at that, he knew that the rebuke was not deserved.

"The professor has just as good reason," he reflected angrily, "to scold Ford for being careless."

There was nothing to say about it, but it made Frank bitter, and all the more determined to make his paper so correct that the professor could not help giving it a perfect mark.

He pushed his loose papers together in a pile squarely in the middle of the desk and resumed his work.

No one heard what Ford asked the professor; it was some question concerning the paper, and when the professor answered it, it was in a tone of surprise.

"I should hardly think that the question was necessary," he said, "though of course I don't blame you for wanting to be careful about it."

Ford muttered that he wanted to be sure that the problem was correctly printed on the paper, and when the professor told him that it was, he bowed and returned to his desk.

Few of the students paid any attention to this matter, and those who did promptly concluded that Ford was so anxious to lead the class that he got nervous and had therefore asked some question that any child could have understood.

The incident was soon forgotten, and for an hour or two the students worked away at their papers in silence.

The only thing that troubled Frank was that he could have completed the entire paper within an hour if he had tried.

As it was, he had worked out every problem except the last on his loose sheets of paper, and transferred most of them to his regular examination paper by the end of two hours.

He was greatly relieved to notice that none of his best friends had left the room. A few students had gone out, probably because they were utterly unable to answer the questions.

For the sake of killing time, Frank had already written out the last problem on loose paper twice, and he was now at the bottom of his pile with one sheet of blank paper left.

He glanced at the clock; almost an hour to spare. He finished his regular paper up to the last problem, and then, drawing the one remaining blank sheet toward him, began again to work that out.

Again and again he had seen Prof. Babbitt looking sharply at him, and more than once the professor had walked by his desk in the course of his strolling around the room.

Twenty minutes passed, and Frank believed that it could be of no use to waste time longer, so he crumpled up the loose sheet on which he had been working in his left hand, and started to work out the problem on his regular examination paper.

Just then Prof. Babbitt turned up from around the corner of another desk, brought his hand down upon Frank's left hand, and held it there.

"Now, then, Merriwell," he exclaimed in a thundering voice, "I've got you. This will mean your expulsion from Yale, sir, and nothing short of it."

Frank had looked up with a start of surprise at first; now he drew back and looked the professor in the eye, defiantly.

"Don't you say anything to me, sir," exclaimed the professor, sharply.

"I hadn't thought of saying anything," responded Frank, in a dignified way.

"Keep quiet, sir! what have you got in your hand?"

"My pencils."

"You're impudent, sir; I mean, of course, your other hand."

Frank's face turned first pale, and then red, and then pale again; all the students and assistants in the room were looking at him. He knew that the professor suspected him of some low trick, and it cut him deep to think that he should be accused in this public way.

"I've got a piece of blank paper there," he said, slowly, "on which I have been working out the last problem."

"Oh, indeed," returned the professor, sarcastically. "A piece of blank paper, eh? You're quite sure it was a piece of blank paper?"

"It was until I began to figure on it."

"Oh, you're quite sure of that?"

"I am, sir."

"And I can tell you, and I'll make an example of you to the whole class in so doing, that when you thought to conceal that paper by crumpling it up in your hand, I caught sight of the under side of it."

Frank made no response. He had not the slightest idea what the professor was driving at.

"I tell you, I saw what it was in an instant," added the professor.

"Very well, sir," said Frank, rather sharply, "I've nothing to say."

"Oh, you haven't! Very well, then, what's that?"

The professor pointed to the printed examination paper which lay on the desk in plain sight.

"I don't intend to be treated like a schoolboy, sir," exclaimed Frank, starting to rise, and making an effort to draw his hand away from the professor's. "If you have any accusation to make against me, you can lay it before the faculty, but I will not sit here to be browbeaten and insulted in this fashion."

He drew his hand away, but in so doing made no effort to keep his grip on the paper that he had used for figuring.

The professor snatched the paper as it was falling, smoothed it out, and held it up before the entire class.

"You see, young gentlemen," he cried, "Merriwell has been doing his examples on the back of one of the stolen examination papers."

Frank fairly gasped when he saw that this was the fact.

When the professor had announced that the two papers were missing, he had looked with the utmost care all through his desk to see whether one of the missing papers had somehow got laid down there, and was certain that only one had been given to him; yet here was one of the papers, and he had been unconsciously working out an example on the back of it.

"We shall lay this matter before the faculty at once," said Prof. Babbitt, sternly; "and meantime, Merriwell, you may leave the room."

CHAPTER VI.

THE PROFESSOR'S CASE.

Frank held his head high as he walked out of the room. There was a flush upon his face, but nothing there or in his manner to indicate his real feelings.

They were in truth very much confused. He was simply bewildered at the discovery of one of the examination papers on his desk.

How it got there he could not imagine. His heart burned with rage at the way in which Prof. Babbitt accused him in the presence of all the class, and he felt, too, how hopeless it would be to clear himself in the face of this damaging evidence.

Expulsion would follow, unless there could be some explanation of the matter.

Frank knew that he could explain nothing, and the thought of the disgrace that awaited him was very hard to bear. With it all, however, there was a consciousness of absolute innocence that gave him strength to leave the room much as if nothing had happened.

"My best friends will know that I am not guilty of any such conduct," he reflected, "and the rest of them may think as they like."

At the outside door of the hall, he paused, in doubt as to what he should do next. Knowing that Babbitt, already disliking him, would insist on his expulsion, Frank was inclined to go straight to his room and pack up his belongings.

The event had made everything about the college extremely distasteful to him, but it was only for a moment, and then he realized how sad he would feel at having to go away from good old Yale forever.

"It won't do," he said to himself, emphatically. "I must make some kind of effort to clear myself; there's no hope of persuading Babbitt that I'm innocent, but there must be members of the faculty who would believe me, and it would not be right to go away without trying to show them that I've been straight in this. If I should leave without making the hardest kind of a defense, everybody would be justified in believing me guilty."

With this thought in mind, Frank debated for a moment whether it would not be well to go straight to the office of the dean and tell him all he could about it.

"That won't do," he concluded, "because Prof. Babbitt will report the matter to the dean at once, and if I should go there first, it would look as if I were trying to get an advantage by assuming frankness. No, the only thing to do is to go over to the room and wait there until I'm summoned; that will come soon enough, but I wish the summons were here now."

Frank's wish was gratified. He had just come to a decision as to what he should do, and was going down the steps of the hall when one of the instructors who had acted as an assistant at the examination came hurrying after him.

"Merriwell, wait a moment," he said.

Frank turned and touched his hat.

The instructor looked worried, and his voice trembled a little as, laying his hand on Frank's shoulder, he said:

"Merriwell, Prof. Babbitt has sent me to tell you to report at the dean's office as soon as the examination is over."

"Very well," Frank responded, "I'll be there."

"I hope," added the instructor, hesitatingly, as he looked earnestly into Frank's eyes "that there's an explanation of this thing, Merriwell."

"So do I," Frank responded, "but what it is, is more than I can tell now."

The instructor sighed and returned to the examining room.

Frank saw several students approaching whom he knew and, not caring to have any conversation with them, he started away at a rapid pace. There was a full half hour to pass before the examination would come to an end.

He put it in by walking about the city at such a distance from the college buildings that he was not likely to meet any acquaintances.

It was a dreary walk, for all the time he suffered the thought of disgrace as well as the maddening perplexity that accompanied the discovery of the examination paper on his desk.

"One might almost think," he reflected, "that Babbitt had put up this job on me for the sake of squeezing me out of college, but I don't think Babbitt is mean enough for that. The paper probably got there by some confounded accident. I certainly cannot account for it on any other theory."

Just as the city clocks were striking noon, Frank entered the campus and proceeded to the dean's office. The dean gave him an inquiring glance as he entered.

"Prof. Babbitt told me to report here at this hour," said Frank, quietly.

"Ah!" returned the dean, "Prof. Babbitt is conducting an examination, I believe, which should be over at this time; doubtless he will be here in a moment. Sit down, Merriwell."

Frank took a chair in a corner of the room, and waited, while the dean kept at work at his usual affairs.

Fully a quarter of an hour passed before Prof. Babbitt came in. When he did so, he had his arms full of examination papers, and he was accompanied by a man whose face was vaguely familiar to Frank, but whom he did not know by name.

It was a resident of New Haven whom he had seen on the street from time to time during his college career.

Babbitt gave Frank a scowling glance and remarked:

"Ah! I see that with your customary nerve you're here. We will settle this matter, therefore,

without delay."

The dean laid down his pen and looked up in surprise.

"What is the matter, Prof. Babbitt?" he asked.

"I am compelled, dean," returned the professor, "to accuse Merriwell of cheating in an examination. I hardly need say that I should not make the charge unless I had ample proof to sustain it."

The dean looked over his glasses at Frank in a way that showed that he was not only shocked, but vastly surprised; then he gave an inquiring glance at the man who had come in with Prof. Babbitt.

"Excuse me, dean," said the professor, "this is Mr. James Harding. I thought that you were acquainted with him."

"I have not met Mr. Harding before," responded the dean, "although his face is familiar."

"I'm glad to make your acquaintance, sir," said Harding.

The dean rose and both shook hands. Then the dean hesitated a moment and said:

"Won't it be as well, Prof. Babbitt, to postpone the inquiry as to Merriwell until——"

"No, excuse me," interrupted the professor, "I've brought Mr. Harding here for a purpose. He can tell you something that has a bearing upon Merriwell's case."

"Oh, very well. Step this way, Merriwell."

The dean sat down, and Frank advanced to a place in front of his desk. Babbitt's mouth was open to talk, but the dean ignoring him, turned to Frank.

"This is a very grave charge to be laid against a student, Merriwell," he said, "and I can't tell you how it grieves me that you should be suspected."

"We have all had a high opinion of your honor. I will add frankly that I hope you can clear yourself."

"Thank you," responded Frank, huskily. "I'll try to, for I'm absolutely innocent, but I'm afraid there's nothing else that I can say in my defense."

"That can hardly be possible," responded the dean. "What are the circumstances, professor?"

"Why, the case is as plain as day!" exclaimed Babbitt, quickly. "This examination was set as a test for the class, a special test, I may say, and on the strength of it I expected to require certain students, like Merriwell and his particular friends, to go over a portion of last year's work."

"I knew from the examination of last spring just where they were weak, and I drew up this paper in such a way that the students themselves would be readily convinced of their weakness and so be the more willing to study."

The dean nodded to show that he understood.

"Now, then," continued the professor, "I had the papers printed by the college printer in the usual way, with just enough copies to go around."

"I counted the papers when they were delivered at my room by the printer, and found them to be one hundred and forty-six in all. I tied the papers up in a parcel and left them in my room until this morning, when I took the parcel to Osborn Hall. There I opened the bundle and when the papers were distributed, it proved that two were missing."

Prof. Babbitt paused, as if expecting the dean to make some comment. He did not do so, but looked straight ahead, and so the professor went on.

"I must say that I instantly had my suspicions of Merriwell, for during the past three days he has been frequently at the house where I have my room."

"I kept my eyes on him during the entire examination, and I could easily see that he was not conducting himself as usual. He used up a great deal of paper and was evidently nervous."

"At length I took a position back of his desk, where I could watch what he was doing without being observed. Presently I saw him work out the last problem on the examination paper, and work it out correctly, too."

"Then, as he crumpled up the paper on which he had been figuring, I caught a glimpse of the other side of it. I pounced upon his hand and discovered that he had been figuring upon the back of one of the missing question sheets."

The professor's voice had a triumphant ring when he came to the end of his little speech. There was evidently no doubt in his mind that what he had discovered would be sufficient proof to the dean of Frank's crookedness.

The dean pursed up his lips and looked absently up at the ceiling for a moment, and then turned to Frank.

"If I understand the professor correctly," he said, slowly, "you had two of the question papers on your desk instead of one?"

"Yes, sir," Frank responded.

"How did the second one get there, Merriwell?"

"I don't know, sir."

Prof. Babbitt snorted contemptuously.

Frank flushed and glanced at him angrily, but held his tongue.

"Didn't the professor make any inquiries when he discovered that two papers were missing?" asked the dean.

"Yes, I did——"

"Let Merriwell answer, please."

"He did," said Frank, "and I examined my desk, as I thought, thoroughly, to see if an extra paper had been placed there by mistake. I found none and went to work without any further thought on the matter. I worked out the problem on the back of the question paper without knowing what it was until the professor pounced on me."

"And is that all you can say about it?"

"Everything, sir."

The dean turned to Prof. Babbitt and said:

"I can't deny that the discovery of a paper under such circumstances is very suggestive, but I take it for granted that you have some explanation of your own to offer as to how Merriwell got possession of it?"

"Indeed I have, and that is just why I brought Mr. Harding here," replied Babbitt. "Tell the dean what you saw, Mr. Harding."

"I suppose," said Harding, "that it was simply some harmless prank of students at first, for we who live in New Haven are quite accustomed to such things, don't you know?"

"I don't think I do," replied the dean, sharply, "for I haven't the slightest idea what you're talking about."

"Come right to the point, Mr. Harding!" added Babbitt.

"Well, sir, I live in the house next to the one occupied by Prof. Babbitt and some of the students.

"One day I was astonished, as I happened to be looking out of my window, to see a young man climb out of the big chimney at the top of Prof. Babbitt's house.

"He went around on the roof for a moment, looking for some way to get down, and at last caught the limb of a tree which bent under his weight until he could drop safely to the ground.

"Then he hurried away through an alley that led to another street. There was no doubt that he was trying to escape observation."

"Had you ever seen this student before?" asked the dean.

"Many times, though I never knew his name until now——"

"I was the student," interrupted Frank, quietly.

"The impudence of that confession," exclaimed Prof. Babbitt, hotly, "is enough to drive a man crazy! The great chimney in that house, dean, hasn't been used for many years, and the fireplaces have been boarded up, but an athlete like Merriwell could go up and down easily and you can see how he could effect an entrance by going into the fireplace of the room under mine, which is occupied by one of his friends, and so climbing up through the chimney to my room——"

"May I ask a question?" interposed Frank.

"Certainly," responded the dean.

"Mr. Harding," said Frank, "what day was it when you saw me climb out of the chimney on the roof?"

Harding was silent a moment, and then said:

"I hadn't given the matter any thought until a few moments ago, when Prof. Babbitt met me and remarked that he was in great trouble because a student had somehow entered his room and stolen a paper.

"I then told him what I had seen and he asked me to come here and tell the same thing to you. I think that this thing occurred on Tuesday."

"Are you quite sure?" asked Frank.

Mr. Harding took some envelopes from his pocket and looked them over.

"Yes," he said, "I had an important letter come a few minutes after that, and I see by the postmark here that it was delivered on Tuesday. I am certain that it was Tuesday."

"I only wish to say," said Frank, turning to the dean, "that it was on Tuesday that Prof. Babbitt took his question paper to the printer. The printed examination papers could not have been delivered before Wednesday at the earliest."

CHAPTER VII.

A FORCED CONFESSION.

There was a sarcastic smile on the dean's face as he turned to Prof. Babbitt and asked:

"That doesn't seem to justify your charge, does it?"

"Why—why——" stammered the professor. "At first blush perhaps it doesn't, but, don't you see, it shows that he had found the way to my room, and the fact that he was idling away his time in Page's room beneath ever since, is proof enough that he was waiting his chance to go up again."

"I'm sure he got the paper, for I have taken a glance at the answers given by him and his particular crew of friends, and I find that every one of them passed perfect papers, and, without cheating, not more than one of them could have answered more than one problem."

"You see, Merriwell," said the dean, "the circumstances point very unhappily——"

"I know they do, sir," said Frank, "and I feel miserable about it, but there's an explanation of how I and my friends have passed perfect papers, that I'm perfectly willing to state."

"Do so, then."

Frank thereupon related Page's joke just as it happened. He told all about the conversation he had overheard between Babbitt and Instructor Frost, and then described how he had got his friends together and led them in studying up the subject.

"It may be that you call that cheating," he concluded, "but you must understand that none of us knew what problems the professor was to put upon the paper."

"We only knew the general subject which he had chosen for the examination, and we set to work to make ourselves solid on that subject, and it seems that we did so."

"Why, yes," responded the dean, with a queer smile. "I must say that if your story is correct, the professor has nothing to complain of. He wanted to compel you to work up on points that you were weak on, and it seems you did so."

"Of course it was a very unusual thing for you to get the warning as to what the subject of the examination was to be, but if the professor himself gave the warning——"

"Who would have dreamed," exclaimed Babbitt, "that a rascally student was listening in the chimney!"

"Tut! tut!" exclaimed the dean, "don't use harsh language, professor. I don't think the situation justifies it. According to Merriwell's story, he was in the chimney without any idea of listening to you, and I think any of us who can remember our student days will admit that if we had been in the same position we would have done substantially what he did."

Prof. Babbitt bit his lip. It was not at all pleasant for him to find that Frank had a friend in the dean, who, next to the president, is the highest official in the college.

"All this," he muttered, "doesn't explain the fact that two examination papers were missing!"

"True," answered the dean, "and we shall have to think that over. Merriwell, will you step into the next room for a short time, please?"

Frank obeyed, and he felt certain that he read in the dean's eyes perfect belief in his story.

"It'll come out right somehow," he thought, as he closed the door upon the dean, Babbitt and Mr. Harding.

He could hear their voices in earnest conversation for fully a quarter of an hour. They were doubtless discussing the discovery of the extra paper upon Merriwell's desk, and Frank wondered what conclusion they would come to about it.

Meantime, another event was taking place that led to a solution of the mystery.

One by one the students finished their work on the examination papers and left the hall; few of them went away from the door; the most gathered there talking excitedly about the accusation against Merriwell.

There were some who professed to believe that Merriwell had been up to a sharp trick, and had actually stolen the question paper, but the great majority indignantly denied it.

There are many students who would have no scruples against cheating at an examination, but few would think of descending so low as to commit theft for the purpose.

Frank's friends were in the majority, and very loud in their assertions as to his honorable conduct.

Among the first to leave the room after Frank's exit was Dismal Jones; he stood around with his hands in his pockets saying nothing, but looking from one to the other with a very worried expression upon his solemn face.

Among the last to leave was Mortimer Ford. He walked through the group with a jaunty air, as if confident that he had come out of the examination in good order, and started for his room.

Jones tried to speak to him, but Ford simply said:

"Ah, there, Dismal, I hope you didn't get plucked," and continued on.

Dismal scowled savagely and stood for a moment looking at Ford's retreating form, and then he turned about, and catching Diamond by the sleeve, said:

"See here, Jack! I want to speak to you for a minute."

"What's the matter?" returned Diamond, feeling a little impatient and provoked, for his mind was full of Frank's trouble, and he could not think of talking of anything else.

"It's about Merriwell," whispered Jones, "and I want you and Rattleton and Browning and Page to come here."

He withdrew to one side, and Diamond, with a mystified expression, touched Rattleton on the shoulder and beckoned him to follow.

"What's up, Dismal?" said Rattleton.

"Get the other fellows," replied Jones.

The others were soon drawn from the group of excited students, and then Dismal said:

"I've got the key to this whole thing, and if you fellows will help turn it, we'll get Merriwell out of this scrape in less than no time."

The boys were too astonished to reply, and Dismal went on:

"Yesterday," he said, "a fellow came to me and after a lot of hemming and hawing and beating about the bush, told me that he could put me onto a way to pass Babbitt's examination perfectly; he also said that I could give the same tip to my friends.

"I'm not letting any tips on examinations go by, you can bet on that, and so I made him tell me what the racket was. He said he had got hold of two copies of Babbitt's paper."

"Who was it?" exclaimed the boys, eagerly.

"Wait a minute," said Jones. "He said the printer accidentally struck off more than was necessary, and he got the copies in that way."

"What way?"

"Oh, I don't know, I didn't ask particularly, because"—Dismal hesitated a moment—"because, well, I'm not putting up a front for being a preacher, or a goody-goody boy, but I didn't quite fancy taking part in a cheat like that, and I told him so.

"Besides that, I couldn't see any reasons why he should give this favor to me: he and I have never been chummy, and I don't believe that he got them from the printer, either."

"Well, well, who was it?" demanded Rattleton, excitedly.

"Ford."

"Ford, of all men!"

"Yes, he was the fellow."

"It's just as Merriwell says," said Page. "Ford is crazy to lead the class, and he will take any means for getting a paper."

"How is it going to help Merriwell?" asked Rattleton.

"You fellows must get after Ford," responded Jones, "and make him own up. Do you remember how he passed down the aisle and asked Babbitt a question?"

"Yes."

"And don't you remember Merriwell's papers were knocked off his desk?"

"I saw that something had happened," responded Diamond, "but I sat too far away——"

"Well, the papers were on the floor," responded Jones, "and I'd like to bet a dollar to a button that Ford tucked in that extra examination paper when he picked the papers up."

The boys looked seriously at one another a moment, and then two or three said together:

"Let's call on Ford!"

Away they went at once, and in a few minutes were at Ford's door.

"Come in," he said, when they knocked.

One of them tried the door, but found that it was locked.

"Wait a minute," called Ford, and they heard him crossing the room.

Rattleton heard the scratching of a match at the same moment. Something seemed to go wrong with the key, for Ford fumbled at the lock for a moment before he opened the door.

"Hello!" he said in a tone of surprise. "Come right in."

Rattleton dashed past the others, and ran to the fireplace. There was no excuse for a fire in September, but a tiny blaze was there, nevertheless.

Rattleton put his hand upon it instantly, to beat the flame out, and stood up with a partially burned and charred fragment of paper in his hand.

"What are you trying to do?" demanded Ford, indignantly.

"Dock the loor—I mean lock the door," cried Rattleton, excitedly, to Browning.

The latter immediately closed the door, turned the key, and stood with his back to it.

"We'll settle this thing in a hurry," continued Rattleton, shaking the charred paper aloft; "this is a part of Babbitt's examination paper."

"Well, what of it?" asked Ford, angrily; "why shouldn't a man burn up a piece of paper that he's got no further use for?"

"Because you left the paper you've been at work on with your answers in the examination room!" retorted Rattleton, "and this is an extra sheet. It shows what became of the two sheets that Babbitt missed."

Ford looked from one to another of the students and broke into a laugh.

"Well," he said, "I don't feel called upon to make any explanation to you fellows, but as I understand it, your particular friend, Merriwell, will have a good deal to explain."

"By all that's good," exclaimed Diamond; wrathfully, "you'll do the explaining for him."

"Me?"

"Yes, you, you skulking hound! You had those two papers; here's Dismal Jones, to whom you confessed to having got hold of them. You wanted Dismal to take one, hoping that he would give it away to Frank and the rest of us, so that if any exposure came we'd be mixed up in it. I know your sly trick!"

Ford had turned very pale. He sank into a chair, shut his teeth together, and muttered:

"You're doing a good deal of guesswork; but if you're trying to pick a row go right along; I'm not afraid of you."

"We're not here to pick a row, Ford," said Page; "I'm beginning to see through the whole thing."

"You're about the only one, except Merriwell, who knew how the chimney in my room communicated with Babbitt's, and I remember you were coming away from my room at one time when we were coming from dinner. You had been up there then to steal the papers. You managed to work one of them off on Merriwell's desk to-day. Rattleton there has got a part of the other."

"Well, see here," said Ford. "What does it all mean? Ever since there were colleges, students have done their best to get ahead of the faculty, and if I've succeeded, what's the harm? It isn't hurting you fellows, and no student ever tells on another."

He said this with a haughty air, as if to imply that they would be beneath contempt if they should report his doings to the faculty.

"We're not going to do any tell-taleing—I mean tale-telling," blustered Rattleton. "We're here to make you do that."

"What do you mean?"

"I tell you," said Browning, slowly, and there was a dangerous glitter in his eyes, "I'm not above telling tales in a case like this, and if you don't go straight to the dean and tell him the truth, I'll go and lay the matter before him, and what's more, Master Ford, I'll give you such a thumping that you'll carry the marks as long as you live."

Browning spoke quietly, but there was a businesslike ring in his tone that Ford could not

misunderstand.

The others were very quiet, and they looked at Ford, awaiting his answer.

"You take a mighty high attitude," he muttered.

"Shut up," muttered Browning, savagely. "I for one won't hear any argument about it; you've got to do what we say, or take the consequences. And to make certain of those consequences, I'm going to give you a licking now!"

Browning pulled off his coat, threw it upon the floor, and advanced upon Ford. The others stood aside, their eyes glistening, and their fists fairly itching to take a share in Ford's punishment.

As to the latter, he retreated to a corner, and placed a chair between himself and Browning.

"Hold on," he said, huskily. "You've got the best of me because there are so many of you——"

"I propose to lick you alone!" interrupted Browning.

"All the same," suggested Dismal Jones, slowly, "when Browning gets through with him, I think the rest of us will take a turn one at a time."

Ford was thoroughly frightened.

"I give it up," he stammered. "You force me to it I'll do what you say, and I guess my standing in the class is good enough, as I never have done anything before this——"

"Never been caught at it," interrupted Diamond, sarcastically.

"Don't waste any talk," said Browning; "he's going with us to the dean's office now; Merriwell is probably there at this minute trying to make Babbitt believe in a student's honor."

Saying this, Browning put on his coat and unlocked the door; then he turned to Ford.

"Come along," he said.

Trembling like a leaf, Ford crossed the room, picked up his hat from the table, and went out into the hall.

The other students followed closely after.

As he came to the stairway Ford made a leap. In his excitement he probably hoped that he might be able to run away from these angry fellows, and possibly escape making the confession that they wished him to make.

With an angry laugh they all leaped after him and caught him as he was two steps down the stairs.

The result was that the whole pack of them went tumbling down the flight and landed with many a bruise in a heap at the bottom.

When they got up Browning had his strong hand clinched in Ford's collar until the miserable rascal was almost choking.

In this way he was fairly pushed across the campus, to the great astonishment of all the students who happened to be there at the time.

He was marched straight up to the dean's office, where the students entered without knocking.

The dean was still talking with Babbitt and Mr. Harding.

Frank, in the adjoining room, wondered what all the commotion was about. The dean wondered, too, and said sharply:

"Gentlemen, gentlemen, what does this mean?"

"It means, sir," said Browning, respectfully, "that an infamous outrage has been attempted, by which an honorable student is made to suffer. Ford will explain."

Ford did explain with many cringing appeals for mercy, and with many protests against the violence with which the students had treated him.

The dean listened with growing indignation, while even Babbitt was stirred to anger against his favorite student.

The upshot of the matter was that Babbitt withdrew his charges against Frank, and even went so far as to make a sort of apology for having suspected him.

Ford's case went before the whole faculty at its meeting that evening, with the result that he was suspended for one year.

"I never was so relieved in my life, Merriwell," said the dean, as he shook Frank's hand, "for if it had been proven that you had done this thing, I am afraid I should have lost all faith in students, but——"

And there was a sly twinkle in his eye.

"I think we shall have to recommend that Prof. Babbitt stuff his chimney with bricks and mortar, or else move to a new room."

"He needn't fear that I shall invade the chimney again," responded Frank; "I'm only too glad that the matter has turned out so that there is no doubt about me."

"Well," said the dean, thoughtfully, "you ought to learn some kind of a lesson out of the experience, I suppose. Let's take it for granted, Merriwell, that you'll give your mathematics a little more attention this year."

Frank, smiling, assured the dean that he would do so, and there the matter ended.

At a later time Page asked Frank why it was that he had insisted on the fireplace being kept secret until after the examination.

"Because," said Frank, "I had got a tip there that was too valuable to lose. If you had shown the opening to everybody, it struck me that perhaps Babbitt would hear you. With his suspicious nature, he might conclude at once that we had good papers because, somehow, we got into his room and found the questions."

"As it happened, you see, the showing of the fireplace resulted in even worse than I feared. It gave Ford his opportunity, and one of the reasons why I insisted on studying in your room was to prevent any such thing by having your room occupied all the time."

"That scheme failed, because Ford watched his chance and got in while we were at dinner."

"I'll have my door fitted with a combination time-lock!" exclaimed Page; "he could have unlocked it as it is now with a button hook."

"You'd certainly better put on a better lock if you think of keeping pets in the chim——"

"Oh, come off, Frank! I thought I'd heard the last of that."

Frank laughed pleasantly, but from that time on he never mentioned the subject.

"It's just as well," he said. "I think we are lucky to get out of the affair so easily."

"Right you are," answered Browning. And then, after a pause, he continued: "Got a letter this morning. Important news."

"Of what?" asked several.

"About the intercollegiate games to come off in New York. Friend of mine at Princeton says they are bound to beat us."

"Not on your life!" came in a chorus; and on the moment the affair of the examination papers was forgotten and all of the boys were talking about the contests to come off and wondering who of the Yale students would take part.

CHAPTER VIII.

PICKING OUT A TEAM.

"One, two, drop!"

At the word there was a sudden thud as four bodies fell to the ground. Immediately afterward there was a creaking and a sound of straining as the four prostrate men pulled with all their might at a rope.

Then there were long breaths and grunts, and presently one of the four exclaimed:

"I say, Merriwell, I didn't suppose you were going to say 'drop' until you had counted three!"

"You had no business to suppose any such thing," responded Frank, seriously, and yet with a smile; "the man who gives the word in a tug of war sometimes doesn't count at all, and you've got to get used to falling at one word only."

"It will be a pistol shot in New York, won't it?"

"That isn't decided on. You didn't get the rope under your knee when you fell, Taylor."

"I know," responded the one addressed, "and that was because the word 'drop' came before I was ready for it."

"Look out for it next time, then. That will do for the present."

At this word the four young men stood up and looked at Merriwell to await his next command.

They were in the gymnasium at Yale. A corner of the main exercise hall had been set apart for them and screened so that their work could not be seen or interrupted by other students.

Four short pieces of wood had been nailed to the floor at intervals of about five feet. At each of these blocks or cleats a student stood with his hand upon a rope that was tied to a post a few feet distant from the nearest cleat.

These four were stripped to the thinnest of athletic costumes, but Frank, who stood by directing their work, was in his usual street clothes.

He was training the four to represent the college in a tug of war that was to be one feature of some intercollegiate games to take place early in the following month.

The contests were to consist of all kinds of indoor exercises, as the season for outdoor sports had come to an end.

There was to be leaping, wrestling, trapeze and horizontal bar work, maneuvers on the giant swings, fencing and so on.

The entries for these events were not limited to any one class; freshmen could contest as well as seniors, and as a matter of fact many ambitious fellows in the freshman class were in training for the big event.

Every day the wrestlers got together in the gymnasium and varied their work at the machines by wrestling with each other.

The leapers, too, made daily efforts to jump a little higher or a little farther than they had the day before, while those who made specialties of tricks upon the bar and trapeze spent hours every day in perfecting themselves in their feats.

The students talked of little else when they met on the campus, or in one another's rooms of an evening.

Four colleges were to be represented in the meet, namely: Yale, Harvard, Cornell and Princeton. The contests were to take place on neutral ground, and for this purpose the big Seventh Regiment Armory in New York City had been engaged.

The college year had hardly begun before arrangements for this athletic meeting were under way.

As is usual in such matters, where the whole college is concerned, the management was given to a committee of upper classmen.

There were three on this committee, Jack Rowland, and Bed Hill from the senior class, and Frank from the junior.

It was not Frank's intention to take any active part in the contests, although he was well known throughout the college as a first-class, all-round athlete.

It seemed to him better that the contests against the other colleges should be made by those who were specialists in one line or another. He talked this matter over with his particular friends shortly after the term began.

"It won't seem quite right to see you out of it," protested Rattleton, "for when we had our sporting trip across the continent you were always coming in at the last minute to pull victory out of defeat, no matter whether we were jumping, running, playing ball or horse racing."

"That's another story," Frank replied. "When we were sporting it across the continent there were only nine of us, and we were not all Yale students at that. Here there are several hundred healthy men to choose from."

"I don't think there's much doubt that out of all the students now in college there is some one who could beat me at any one thing I might undertake to do, from wrestling to trapeze work."

"But," said Diamond, "if you should go into training for any one event, I think you'd come out on top."

"And that's what I don't care to do!" retorted Merriwell. "I'd rather be an all-round man than be able to do just one thing; I shouldn't know which to choose if I were to start in training."

"But we may lose a cup in some branch of sport if you don't go in."

"Oh, no, I think not. Besides that, there's going to be one event in which I can take a kind of share, and where perhaps I can be as useful to Yale as if I were contesting."

"What's that?"

"The tug of war."

"Is there going to be a tug of war?"

"Yes, siree!"

"Who's going to be on the team?"

"Will it be on cleats or on the level floor?"

"Will it be on the ground?"

These and many other questions of a similar kind were asked so rapidly that Frank had no chance for a reply. At length he explained that the team had not been chosen, and that anybody might be a candidate.

"The managing committee," he said, "has asked me to take charge of the training, and we're going to have trials in a corner of the gymnasium every afternoon. As soon as the team is made up, we shall get down to daily practice."

It was perfectly natural that the tug of war should arouse more interest throughout the college than any of the other events.

Of course it was important that one or another student should be in training to meet the best wrestler or jumper from the other colleges, but the tug of war was an event in which the whole college was represented.

There is never anything like a team event to arouse the enthusiasm of students.

A tug of war team consists of but four men, to be sure, but at that they are supposed to be, and generally are, the strongest men in the college, and so students of all classes looked to them for holding up the glory of the college.

There was another thing that made the tug of war team especially interesting at this time. For two or three years Princeton had been very successful in the tug of war, whether pulling against other colleges or against outside athletic organizations.

It had happened that three very strong men in a certain class had gone onto the team in their freshman year and had stayed there ever since.

That was greatly to the advantage of the Princeton team, for with three men on it who were perfectly used to each other, and who had had a great deal of experience, the team was not only powerful, but it made every other team afraid of it.

There is a great deal more in this than those who are not athletes imagine. A team that has the reputation of always winning is apt to strike terror to the hearts of its opponents and rattle them so that they cannot do their best.

Princeton naturally was very proud of its tug of war team and perfectly confident of carrying off the prize for that event. This was understood not only at Yale, but at Harvard and Cornell, and at each of these three colleges there was a determination to "down" Princeton if possible.

So it happened that when the managing committee at Yale announced that they would examine candidates for the tug of war team, there was so much interest in it that a perfect mob of students gathered at the gymnasium eager for a place upon the rope.

Rowland and Hill, the senior members of the committee, were inclined to dismiss the whole crowd and then quietly pick out four men according to their own judgment, but Merriwell opposed this policy.

"There may be perfect giants concealed in that crowd," he said, "and if there's only one, we want to discover him. Give them all a trial."

"But it would take weeks," exclaimed Hill, "to arrange those men in teams and make them pull against each other until we could sift out the best four!"

"I don't think we need to have them pull against each other to find out what they're worth," Frank responded.

"What other way is there?" asked Rowland.

"I have an idea that I can sift that crowd in a week."

"Well, then, you'd better try it."

So it was agreed that Frank should undertake to examine the candidates for the team, and to superintend its training.

His plan for examining the applicants caused a good deal of amusement at first, but it proved to be remarkably effective as well as a great time saver.

In a tug of war, as in many other sports, it is not only brute strength that tells, but quickness and skill. Frank believed a good deal more in the head work of tugging than he did in solid muscle.

"If a man can't drop right every time," he declared, "he isn't fit for the team. If he can drop right, he's got the making of a tugger."

To test this he had a rope fastened securely to a post, and the candidates in squads of four took hold of this rope and dropped half a dozen times at Frank's command. He gave brief explanations of what was necessary for them to do, to each squad before giving the word; then he watched the men go down, showing them where they had been in error and had them try again.

It took no more than half a dozen minutes for as many trials and then another squad was brought on.

In this way he easily tested from thirty to forty men an hour, and so in the course of three days

had given every candidate for the team a chance.

After that it was an easy matter for him to strike off the list fully three-quarters of the candidates; that left from twenty to thirty who might still be useful.

These men he tried in groups of four also, but continually shifted the men from one group to another so as to find out which of them worked together to the best advantage.

At length, after ten days of patient examination in this way, he had Rowland and Hill come behind the screen and watch the efforts of six men who had been selected as the best team workers in the whole college.

The matter was discussed very frankly, not only by the members of the committee, but by the candidates themselves, for everybody was anxious that the best possible team should be selected and nobody would have been offended if he had been left off.

It was decided at last that Bruce Browning should be the anchor of the team. He had been Frank's choice almost from the start, for he was heavy and cool, and from past experience Frank knew that Bruce could be quick if it was necessary.

It is the anchor in a tug-of-war who does the head work for the team.

"I'd rather have a good anchor and three weak men," said Frank, emphatically, "than three giants on the rope directed by an anchor who is either excitable or slow."

Everybody agreed that Bruce was just the man for the Yale anchor, and after a good many trials Taylor, of the senior class, and Jackson, of the sophomore, were assigned places on the rope; that left one vacancy.

Merriwell recommended that the other three men who had stood the test so far be trained equally, so that two at least could rank as substitutes in case of sickness or other difficulty.

The committee and the members of the team suggested that Frank himself should take the vacant place on the rope.

"Everybody knows you've got the muscle and the head, and with you and Bruce on the rope, we'll have as perfect a team as possible."

Frank hesitated a little before accepting this suggestion, but he finally yielded, for without conceit he felt that he could be more useful than the others, and he had a natural eagerness to take an active part in the contest.

Nevertheless, he continued to direct the training of the team, using Rattleton as a substitute on the rope while he stood by and gave orders.

In this way he got the men so that they could fall at the word and fall right, and when this had been gained he took Rattleton's place and gave over the direction of the movements of the team to the anchor.

After that there was a good deal of practice in pulling at voluntary teams from among the students.

It proved that there were no four students in the college who could stay on the cleats half a minute against the team that Frank had selected and trained; so practice teams were made up of five, six, and sometimes eight men.

The dead weight of eight men proved to be a little too much for the regular team, although the latter was never pulled off the cleats.

All in all the Yale students were greatly satisfied with their tug of war team, and as the time for the intercollegiate contests approached their confidence grew.

They believed that they would be able to get away with Princeton, and it did not seem to strike them at all that the other colleges were in it.

CHAPTER IX.

HUNTING FOR A FRESHMAN.

The contests were to take place on a Wednesday evening. On the Monday previous all the Yale athletes went to New York.

Special permission from the faculty had to be obtained for this absence from the college, but there was no difficulty in getting that, as there is hardly a professor at Yale who does not have a strong interest in athletic events.

As New Haven is but two hours' ride from New York, it might have been possible for the students to attend to all their duties on the Wednesday, and still get to New York in time for the events, but that would never do for the contestants.

Nobody knows better than men who train how easy it is for an athlete to get thrown out of order by a change in diet and air. The finer the training the greater care there has to be.

Therefore, the managing committee for Yale felt that it was absolutely necessary to give the contestants at least two whole days in New York City, in order to get used to the slight change that would result in their leaving familiar quarters in New Haven.

Students who were not contestants in the intercollegiate sports were not allowed to leave New Haven so early, and so it was a comparatively small party that went with Frank and the other members of the committee to rooms that had been engaged for them in the Murray Hill Hotel.

It would probably have amused an outsider if he could have known the great care taken to prevent those students from being harmed by illness or anything else.

They were grown men and able to take care of themselves ordinarily, but from the time they went into training they were like so many children in charge of a nurse.

They were informed as to just what they could eat and what they must let alone. Not one of them was permitted to smoke, and every one of them was required to do just so many hours of exercise of some kind every day.

While they remained in New Haven it was no very difficult matter to see to it that every one of the contestants obeyed the regulations of the managing committee.

In New York it was not quite so easy, for the members of the committee were a good deal occupied in discussing arrangements with the committees from other colleges who were quartered at different hotels.

When it happened that all the committee had to be away from the Murray Hill at the same time, the oversight of the Yale crew was left to Browning, who was the most experienced athlete among them.

There was not much for him to do, for each one of the contestants had a programme of exercise laid out for him.

There was to be just so much walking, and at certain hours, and the rest of the time, except for meals, was to be put in in resting.

It was understood that as often as possible the entire crowd should walk together, and this they did on the first evening after their arrival.

They went up Fifth Avenue to Central Park, and walked rapidly for fully an hour among its winding paths; then they returned to their hotel, had baths, and went early to bed.

During the next day, Tuesday, the contestants were left pretty much to themselves, as the members of the committee were away most of the time.

After one of the meetings with the committees from other colleges, the Yale managers, finding that a number of things had to be done, divided up the work and separated.

Three or four hours later Rowland and Frank met on the way to the hotel where their companions were staying. They reported to each other what they had done, and then fell as usual into discussing the prospects for victory.

"I saw the Cornell tug of war team out for a run," said Rowland.

"Ah! What do they look like?" Frank responded, without much show of interest.

"Beef!" said Rowland.

"Not dangerous, then, eh?"

"Why, no, I presume not. They look as if they could carry you fellows around on one hand, but it seemed to me they were clumsy in their running."

"I don't fear them," said Frank; "I'd heard from some other fellows that Cornell was counting on weight more than anything else, and as you know, I take more stock in head work."

"There's this to think of, though," remarked Rowland, "if a beefy team gets the fall on you by the fraction of a second, you simply can't stand it. That's the time when dead weight will tell."

"The Cornell beefeaters won't get the drop on Yale," returned Frank, quietly.

"No, I guess not, and for that matter, so far as I can hear, there seems to be no doubt in anybody's mind that the real contest will be between Yale and Princeton."

"Have you seen the Harvard men?" asked Frank.

"No, but we know all about them, don't we?"

"I think so. They're a game lot, but I don't think they can stand against us. The fact is, Rowland, I'm thinking more of the other events than of the tug of war just now."

"So? I would have supposed you would be capable of thinking of nothing else."

Frank shook his head.

"The tug of war doesn't worry me a little bit," he said, "but as one of the managers I should feel pretty badly if we fell down on everything else."

"Oh, we're not going to fall down; there are two or three events, you know, in which we are almost certain to win. The high leap, for example——"

"That's just what I've been thinking of," interrupted Frank.

"Why, are you afraid of Higgins?"

Higgins was a member of the freshman class who had shown most unusual power in jumping, and had easily beaten all the other Yale students who had tried for that event.

"I hear that Cornell has a man named Stover," said Frank, "who thinks he can beat everybody at the high jump."

"Yes, I've heard of him, too," Rowland responded, "but what of it? Higgins has broken the record in private practice——"

"That doesn't make it certain that he will do as well at the armory."

"No; but he's in good condition, isn't he?"

"First rate."

"Then I wouldn't worry about him."

"I'm not worrying exactly, and in any case, if our fellows do their best and we get beaten, there's nothing to complain of."

At this point in their conversation the two arrived at the Murray Hill Hotel. They went at once to the suite of rooms that had been engaged for the athletes, and found most of the contestants reading or dozing.

A few were out for a walk. All the students asked eager questions as to the final arrangements and so on. After several questions had been asked and answered, Rowland remarked:

"There'll be hard times in Princeton this winter if the orange doesn't get most of the cups."

"Are the Princeton men offering odds?" asked Browning.

"Not quite so strong as that, but they're putting up loads of money."

"Is the betting any heavier than usual?" asked Frank.

"Perhaps not," Rowland answered, "but if not I must have come across the betting crowd. It seemed as if they had begged and borrowed every dollar they could lay hold of and had brought it here to put up on the different events."

"How is the betting going?" asked Browning.

"I didn't pay very much attention to it, but it seemed to be about even as between Princeton and Yale on the tug of war, and on some of the other events the Princeton men were asking for odds rather than giving them.

"What impressed me most was that it looked as if it was the Princeton crowd that had the most money."

"Why," asked Frank, in a surprised tone, "it wasn't the Princeton contestants who were doing the betting, was it?"

"No, but some of the students."

"That's queer."

"Why?"

"Here it is Tuesday afternoon and the Princeton fellows who are going to see the contests are not due before to-morrow afternoon. It doesn't seem to me probable that the Princeton faculty would let the general run of students come up here at this time any more than the Yale faculty would allow our men to come."

"Can't help that," said Rowland, "there's a raft of Princeton men in town going around with orange ribbons in their buttonholes and hunting for chances to bet money against Yale, Harvard and Cornell."

Frank made no response, but remained for a moment in thought, while the others continued to talk about the betting. Presently Frank asked where Higgins and Mellor were.

Mellor was another freshman athlete. He was a giant in stature, and one of the best wrestlers that had ever been seen at Yale.

There was a good deal of confidence that he would win the cup for wrestling, for from all that could be learned of the wrestlers representing the other colleges, there was no one who could

compare with him in strength, and his skill seemed to be all that would be needed.

"They're taking in the town," answered Browning.

"What!" exclaimed Frank, aghast.

"Oh, not in any improper sense," said Browning. "They're just out for a walk, and I didn't see any objection to their taking it in such a way that they could see some of the principal streets."

"No, that's all right," responded Frank, in a tone of relief; "when are they due back?"

"In about half an hour."

More than half an hour passed, and neither Higgins nor Mellor had shown up at that time. Rowland and Hill were away on some other business concerned with the management.

Frank was getting anxious. He could not have said exactly why, for so far as Mellor and Higgins were concerned, he had a good deal of respect for them, but he was fearful of accidents, as if they were little children unable to care for themselves.

He did not betray his anxiety to Browning or the others, but remarked after a time that he had another errand to do, and went away, leaving instructions that no contestant should leave the hotel until his return.

Then he went down to Madison Square and stood for a moment looking doubtfully at the several hotels in that vicinity. He knew that the Princeton athletes had had rooms engaged at the Fifth Avenue, but this thought was not in his mind at the moment.

"The Hoffman House," he was thinking, "is one of the most celebrated hotels in New York, and a place to which all strangers like to go."

As it was the time of year when days are short, it was already dark as night, although it was yet some time before the usual evening dinner hour.

Frank strolled across to the Hoffman House, and went in at the main entrance. A number of men were in the lobby, but apparently there were no students among them.

He went slowly past group after group, and turned at length to the barroom.

This place was famous at that time for its remarkable collection of valuable paintings and statuary; it was often referred to jocosely as the "art gallery." Every stranger in New York regarded it as one of the most interesting sights of the town.

It was pretty well filled with customers when Frank entered, but everything was quiet and orderly.

At the farther side of the room, and partly concealed by the bar, which took up the very middle, was a group of young men just on the point of leaving by the door that opens upon Twenty-fifth Street.

"Too bad you've got to hurry," one of them remarked in a pleasant voice.

"I'm overdue at the hotel already," said another, "and must get back before they become anxious about me."

Frank could not see the speaker, but he recognized the voice as that of Higgins.

"He has no business in here, confound him!" thought Frank, angrily. "No one but a freshman would go into a barroom even out of curiosity, at such a time as this."

He crossed the room, intending to speak to Higgins and walk back to the hotel with him, and give him some earnest advice on the way.

Higgins was a little in advance of the group as they went out, and so Frank did not catch up with him before they were all out upon the sidewalk.

He noticed that all the men who had been speaking with Higgins wore orange ribbons in their buttonholes, but it struck him, too, that somehow they did not look like students.

He had no time to reflect upon this doubt, for just as he stepped out upon the dark street he saw one of the crowd pretend to stumble and fall rather heavily against Higgins.

"I beg pardon," this man said, quickly.

"It's all right," Higgins responded, as he staggered to the curb under the force of the shove.

At that instant Frank saw another in the crowd making a movement which showed that he was going to trip Higgins and cause him to fall.

The attempt was not made, for acting instantly upon his impulse, Frank leaped from the doorway and caught the fellow a terrible blow upon the side of the face.

It sent him reeling halfway across the street before he finally lost his balance and fell full length.

The attack was so unexpected and sudden that most of the others in the group did not stir for a second.

There was one exception to this.

It was a man who had edged forward in order to make sure of tripping Higgins if the first man should fail, and he was so intent upon accomplishing this that he did not stop when Frank's form shot past him to attack the other.

Therefore when Frank wheeled about to defend himself in case the others should fall upon him, he saw this man just in the act of giving Higgins a violent kick upon the shins.

It was all happening so quickly that at this instant Higgins had just made his reply to the apology of the man who had shoved him, and was only beginning to regain his balance.

The kick in the shins did the business for him. He fell upon his hands and knees, and just then Frank struck out again.

He was never so thoroughly aroused in his life, and his blows fell like rain upon the Princeton man's face and chest. The latter would have suffered a square knockdown if he had not been standing so that he fell against his comrades.

The others, recovering a little from their first astonishment, made a feeble effort to close in on Frank, but it would have taken more than them to stop him then.

He beat them off vigorously, striking without mercy at any one who came within reach.

"Cheese it, there's a cop!" exclaimed one of the party suddenly, and they all took to their heels.

Higgins by this time had got up and was supporting himself against a lamp-post.

"Can you walk?" asked Frank, quickly.

"I guess so," responded Higgins, so surprised that he could hardly speak.

Frank took him by the arm and marched him back to the barroom, through which they went to the lobby, and then out by the ladies' entrance upon Twenty-sixth Street.

The scrimmage had taken place so quickly and quietly that it had attracted no attention within the barroom, and as Frank and Higgins were not followed, it seemed probable that the cry of alarm about a policeman coming was false.

CHAPTER X.

THE FINDING OF MELLOR.

"Now, Higgins," said Frank, rather sharply, as they were well out on Twenty-sixth Street, "what have you been up to?"

"Why," answered Higgins, hesitatingly, for he had not yet half recovered from the surprise of the event, "nothing but swapping boasts with those Princeton fellows and refusing to drink with them."

"It's small business for a Yale student to boast of what he can do," exclaimed Frank, in disgust.

Higgins bit his lip and said nothing; although he was a freshman of but few months' standing, he had already learned that in athletic matters the word of a manager is law, and that a student in training would no sooner dispute his manager or trainer than a soldier would dispute an officer.

"And did you refuse their drinks?" demanded Frank in the same sharp tone.

"On my honor, Merriwell, I did. Do you suppose I would take such risks just previous to——"

"Don't talk to me about risks," Frank interrupted; "here it is only the day before the contests, and you're not back at the hotel at the time you're ordered to be."

"I know that," Higgins responded humbly, "and I'm sorry for it, but I didn't realize how the time was going by after I got in with those fellows. They're very pleasant chaps, and I must say that I can't understand for the life of me why it was you sailed into them so."

Frank was too irritated to explain for a moment. It was very seldom that he spoke as sharply as this to a comrade, and he would not have done so on this occasion if he had not been so anxious for the success of Yale in every possible event.

As they walked along he noticed that Higgins was perfectly steady, and although there was a slight flush on his face, there was no sign that he had been drinking. The flush undoubtedly was due to mortification and excitement.

"See here, Higgins," said Frank, at length, in a quieter tone, "don't you know that those Princeton students, as you call them, were trying to disable you?"

"I never dreamed of such a thing."

"It's a fact."

"How do you know, Merriwell?"

"I saw the attempt made, and for that matter you got kicked in the shins and tumbled over, didn't you?"

"Yes, but I supposed that was an accident of the scrimmage."

"It was nothing of the kind; it was a put-up job, and if I hadn't sailed in it might have lamed you so that you couldn't jump. That was what they were after."

"Whew!" exclaimed Higgins. "I think I'm a good Yale man, if I am a freshman, and I hate Princeton and all the rest of them, but, on my honor, Merriwell, I didn't think that a student of any college would resort to such a low-down trick."

"I don't believe it, either," said Frank.

"Well, that——"

"What made you think those fellows were students?"

"Why, they said they were; they gave the year of their class, which made them out to be seniors. They had big wads of money that they wanted to bet, and they got into conversation with me by asking what odds would put up on myself in the high jump."

Frank grunted to express his disgust, and asked:

"Did they talk like students?"

"I thought so."

"I don't believe they were," said Frank, "for there was something in their manner that didn't make them seem like students, and besides that, I can't believe any more than you that Princeton men would try to win out in these contests by deliberately disabling any of our fellows."

"Of course, I can understand how, in an exciting match like a game of football, a man's temper might get the best of him, but to try to lame a fellow in cold blood hours before the beginning of the event is a little too much for me to think of when it comes to a student, whether he's from Princeton, Harvard or anywhere else."

"Then, who were these fellows?" asked Higgins.

"They may be New York gamblers, for all I know," Frank answered, "but in any case I think they are men not connected with Princeton in any way, who are trying to make sure of their bets by disabling the leading contestants in the other colleges."

"Then but for you I suppose I might have been seriously lamed?"

"I don't know, Higgins; I'm taking no credit for what I did, but I hope you see that you made a grave mistake in not coming back to the Murray Hill on time."

"I do, and will look out that such a thing doesn't happen again."

"Where's Mellor?" asked Frank, suddenly.

"I don't know."

"Didn't he start out with you?"

"Yes, but we didn't keep together long."

"Where did he go?"

"We separated at the corner of Thirty-second Street and Broadway. I was for going down Broadway, but he said that he wanted to see something of the Tenderloin district."

"The Tenderloin!" exclaimed Frank, with a groan.

Instinctively he hurried his steps.

"Hasn't Mellor turned up yet?" asked Higgins, hurrying along with him.

"No, and unless he's more careful than you were there's no telling what mischief he may have got into."

Higgins looked as penitent as if he had been guilty of a serious crime. The flush on his face had entirely gone now, and he was quite pale.

"See here," exclaimed Frank, cheerfully, "you've had your scolding, so now brace up and forget it. If you feel the slightest soreness from that kick, give yourself a good rubbing when you get to the hotel, and go to bed."

"Aren't you coming?" asked Higgins, for Frank had stopped short.

"No."

"What shall I say to the fellows?"

"Nothing; or you might tell them that I met you and ordered you to the hotel; if they ask for me, you don't know where I am, and that's all there is to it."

Higgins nodded and went on obediently to the Murray Hill.

Frank, boiling with indignation and sore with anxiety, set off toward the corner of Thirty-second Street and Broadway. He had no foolish idea that he would find Mellor there, but as that was the last place where he had been seen, it seemed to be the most sensible point from which to begin a search for him.

When he arrived at the corner he looked about a moment and then entered a hotel, and going to the telephone closet, rang up the Murray Hill and asked for Browning.

"Bruce," he said, when he heard a familiar hello in the receiver at his ear, "has Mellor returned?"

"No, but Higgins has."

"All right. Good-by."

"Hold on, Frank."

"Well?"

"Are you coming back soon?"

"I don't know."

"Rowland and Hill expect you to take a run with us up the avenue this evening."

"I'll be there if I can."

"What are you up to, anyway?"

"That's my business, old fellow; say nothing about it, but if I don't turn up, go ahead with your run without me."

With this Frank hung up the receiver without giving Bruce any further chance to ask questions.

His object in not explaining what he was about was to prevent any of the contestants from worrying. He was pretty sure that Higgins would not speak of his own adventure, and he did not care to have even cool-headed Browning suspect that there was anything so serious in the wind as a deliberate plot to disable Yale athletes.

It seemed to Frank as if he had never been in so serious a situation. There had been times in his travels when one adventure or another had brought him in danger of his life, but at such times his mind was usually easy; now he was oppressed by responsibility and anxiety for others.

The credit of Yale depended upon the good showing at the intercollegiate games; whether they won or lost was not so much of consequence as that the Yale crowd should do their best.

As one of the managers, Frank felt responsible for the good condition of every man in the party.

He set out down Sixth Avenue looking to right and left and glancing in at the door of every saloon he passed.

Near the juncture of Sixth Avenue and Broadway are a number of places where gamblers resort, and it was in one of these that Frank half suspected and feared to find Mellor.

Business was lively in all these places at this hour. Men of all conditions were at the bar discussing all manner of sporting events.

Once in a while, as Frank made his way through the crowded barrooms, he overheard some remark about the coming college games, but it did not seem as if the professional sports took very much interest in them, and nothing occurred to give him any clew as to Mellor's whereabouts.

He continued on down the avenue, running through every place he came across, until he got as far as Twenty-third Street. There he paused, feeling rather discouraged.

It is worse than looking for a needle in a haystack to hunt for a man in New York.

Farther down the avenue there were other saloons, but he had already passed out of the district most frequented by gamblers.

He had no other theory on which to pursue his search, and it seemed to him that it might be better to return to the hotel and let Mellor turn up or not, as it might happen.

A public telephone sign caught his eye across the way, and he again went over and rang up the Murray Hill. This time it was Rowland that he asked for, and when Rowland was at the 'phone Frank told him briefly that he was on the hunt for Mellor.

"Don't mention it to anybody," Frank added, quickly.

"Have you any idea what's become of him?" asked Rowland.

"Mighty little," answered Frank. "But if he hasn't returned to the hotel yet I'll make another short

trip before I give it up."

Mellor had not returned, and the conversation with Rowland was not continued.

Frank retraced his steps up the avenue, but this time he did not make so careful a search as he had before; he simply glanced in at various doors and passed on.

At length he turned in at Thirtieth Street, intending to call at a drinking resort on Broadway, which was known to be popular with gamblers.

He had taken but a few steps when a sound of laughter attracted him and he paused suddenly. It came from his right hand.

He noticed that he was standing near the side door of a saloon which he thought he had thoroughly investigated on his downward trip.

He remembered then that he had not looked in at any of the so-called private rooms at the back.

This laughter evidently came from such a room, and he was quite certain that he distinguished Mellor's voice. He waited a moment until the laughter ceased and then he heard this in thick accents:

"Shet 'em up 'gain! I c'n rasshle any man 'n Nighted Shtatesh, drunk er shober."

It was Mellor's voice, and Frank's heart sank like lead. For one miserable instant he was in doubt as to what he had better do.

His disgust and anger were so great that he felt like leaving Mellor to his fate, for it would serve the freshman right to let him continue filling himself up and so lose all chance of making a decent appearance in the contests of the following evening.

Then it occurred to Frank that after all there might be some little hope that Mellor could pull himself together sufficiently to make a good effort.

In any event he was a Yale student, and as such Frank felt bound to look after him; so after the slightest hesitation he entered the side door of the saloon and opened a door leading into the small room from which had come the laughter and the sound of Mellor's voice.

He saw the big freshman with a silly smile on his face seated at a table, holding an empty glass unsteadily in his hand, and trying to talk with three companions, each of whom wore a rosette of orange-colored ribbon upon the lapel of his coat.

None of the three had been in the crowd with Higgins, so far as Frank could remember their faces.

They did not look up when Frank entered, for they supposed, as Mellor himself did, that the bartender was coming in to get an order.

"Fill 'em up!" said Mellor, stupidly, rapping his glass upon the table. "Letsh have 'nother round."

His eyes were bleary, and although he glanced at Frank he failed to recognize him. The latter stood still for a second or two to control his indignation; before he spoke the bartender entered with a bottle of champagne, the cork of which was already drawn.

"I suppose it's the same, gents?" he said, in a businesslike tone.

"Shame old Shampaggeny water," returned Mellor, holding his glass upside down.

One of the men at the table reached over and righted Mellor's glass, which the waiter promptly proceeded to fill.

"Here'sh ter good ol' Yale!" stammered Mellor, bringing the glass to his lips with the aid of the man who had helped him to hold it steady.

Frank could remain quiet no longer. He reached over the table, and with a sweep of his arm knocked the glass from Mellor's hand and sent it flying against the wall, where it broke in a hundred pieces.

CHAPTER XI.

A REPORTER'S INFLUENCE.

The wine spattered in the face of the man who was helping Mellor. The latter looked up in stupid wrath, and then it dawned on him suddenly that the interruption came from his manager.

He gasped, hiccoughed, sat back in his chair and tried to rise. Meanwhile the other two fellows with the orange rosettes had sprung to their feet, and were trying to push Frank from the room.

In this the waiter joined them, and, for a moment, therefore, Merriwell had his hands full. They were lively hands, though, and in much less time than it takes to narrate it he had struck out

right and left and landed stinging blows upon the faces of two of his antagonists.

The bartender, who was a heavy fellow, who had probably had plenty of experience in dealing with tough customers, set down the bottle of wine and attacked Frank with great fury.

He made the mistake of supposing that he could hustle the intruder out by mere force, and in so doing he put up both hands to catch Frank by the shoulders.

This gave the athletic student a better opportunity than he could have asked for. In quick succession the bartender got two blows, one full upon the mouth, and the other on his neck.

He went down on the floor with a thump, and catching at the table for support, overturned it. The bottle of wine fell upon him and drenched him.

The others, who had staggered back under the force of Frank's first blows, now tried to push their way out. The room was a very small one, and there was but one door.

It was evident that they were not there for fighting, and had no wish to defend their drunken companion, no matter what Frank's object in making the attack had been.

As Frank's only anxiety was in getting Mellor away, he did not attempt to stop the others from going out.

The rumpus attracted the attention of everybody in the main room of the saloon, and by the time the bartender had been sent to the floor a dozen or so others, most of them customers of the place, came crowding up to see what was the matter.

"Letsh not fight, Mer'well," said Mellor, with a tremendous attempt at dignity. "Letsh not get mixed up in a row."

He, too, tried to walk out, but the way was now barred with other bartenders who had come to the relief of their comrade.

They might have fallen upon Frank and beaten him badly, for they far outnumbered him, if it hadn't been that at that moment a policeman took a hand in the affair.

He had been passing the side door of the saloon at the very moment when Frank struck the glass from Mellor's hand.

He had entered at the first sound of a ruction, and had been in time to get a glimpse of Frank as he struck the bartender to the floor.

There was a lot of excitement and confusion for a moment, during which Frank stood with his fists still clinched and his jaws shut hard together, waiting for the next turn.

Everybody connected with the saloon denounced him as an intruder, and the one who had made all the trouble.

Frank thought hastily of explaining the real situation, but he refrained from doing so, as that would surely make the whole thing public, and he did not want any such disgrace to be attached to Yale's part in the intercollegiate games.

So when the policeman roughly put him under arrest he submitted quietly and went to the station house. A couple of bartenders followed, dragging the almost helpless Mellor with them.

Yale's champion wrestler at that moment was too far gone to realize fully what was taking place. He staggered along between the bartenders, protesting that there had been a "mishundershtanding," that he was a gentleman, and that as soon as the matter had been explained he would return to the saloon and "set 'em up" for everybody.

Frank walked in silence, feeling extreme humiliation, not for his arrest, but for the disgrace that a Yale athlete was bringing upon his college.

When they stood before the sergeant in the station, the policeman told briefly how he had heard a row in progress in the saloon and had got there in time to see Frank doing all the fighting.

The sergeant looked at the bartenders, and one of them said:

"This man," pointing to Mellor, "was entertaining a party of friends in the back room when the other chap came in, and without saying a word tried to clean the place out. Everything was peaceable and quiet until he came in."

The sergeant took up a pen, and looking at Frank, asked:

"What is your name?"

"Frank Merriwell," was the quiet response.

"Huh!" grunted the sergeant, as he wrote the name, "I thought from your looks you would say Jones of nowhere. What is your residence?"

"New Haven."

"Have you got anything to say for yourself?"

"Not at present."

The sergeant looked surprised, and hesitated a moment before he asked a number of other questions.

They were such questions as are always put to prisoners concerning their age, their reasons for being in the city, and their own account of what had happened.

Frank gave his age, but to the other questions refused to reply. Accordingly the sergeant ordered both him and Mellor to be searched, and after a vain attempt to get any information out of Mellor, both were locked up.

A considerable crowd had collected in the main room of the station house during this, and Frank remained quietly in his cell until he felt certain that all the curiosity seekers had gone out.

Then he called to a doorman and asked if he might speak to the sergeant or the captain. It took a little persuasion to get permission to do this, but Frank got it finally, and was taken upstairs again.

The main room of the station was then deserted by all except the doorman and the sergeant. The latter looked at the young prisoner inquiringly.

"I'd like to send for somebody," he said, "and will pay liberally for a messenger. You've got my money, and therefore know that I can pay any decent charge."

"Yes," said the sergeant, "you're well heeled. Who do you want to see?"

Frank thereupon gave the name of a Supreme Court judge. The sergeant's eyes opened wide.

"What do you want of him?" he asked.

"He'll come down here in a hurry," Frank answered, "if he knows that I'm locked up."

The sergeant sat back in his chair and thought a moment. It was perfectly plain to him that Frank was not intoxicated, and his whole manner was that of a gentleman.

The sergeant was probably wondering whether the name Merriwell might not be a false one, and whether this prisoner might not be the son of the judge mentioned.

While he was wondering what he had better do about it, a young man entered the station with a businesslike air, and stepping up to the big desk, said:

"Good-evening, sergeant, anything going on?"

Then he caught sight of Merriwell, and exclaimed:

"Great Scott, Merriwell, what are you doing here?"

"I'm a prisoner, Mr. Matthews," Frank responded.

The young man stared at Frank for just an instant, and then turning to the sergeant, said:

"Anybody in the captain's room?"

"No," was the reply.

"Come in here," said Matthews, taking Frank by the arm and walking him across the room.

When they were in the captain's room, Matthews shut the door, motioned to a chair, and sat down opposite Frank.

"Now, then," he said, "what's got into Yale?"

"Mr. Matthews," Frank responded, "I hate to say that I'm sorry to see you, but a newspaper man is the last man in this whole world that I would care to tell this story to."

"Well, but see here, Merriwell," responded Matthews, earnestly, "a newspaper man isn't a born fiend, you know; I'm not likely to forget that I'm a graduate of Yale, and I certainly am not going to hurry off with an item to my paper that will bring you into any disgrace.

"Yale graduates are getting to think a good deal of you, Merriwell, and I brought you in here to see if there might not be some way to help you, not to get a sensational item."

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Matthews," said Frank, "but I had an idea that when a man became a reporter he could think of nothing but news and things to write about."

"That's business," said Matthews, "sure enough, but I'm an old Yale man, at least I'm older than you, but I graduated only a couple of years ago, you know, so sing your song and let's see if there isn't something I can do."

Thereupon Frank told the reporter all about his difficulty. He explained how Mellor was hopelessly drunk in a cell, and how he had got arrested while making an attempt to get Mellor away from his companions.

"By Jove!" said Matthews, under his breath at last, "I don't blame you for doing what you did, Merriwell, but perhaps it would have been better if you had avoided a row and simply induced

Mellor to go out with you."

"I don't think I lose my head very often," Frank responded, "but I must confess I did then. It was just maddening to see him soaking there with three scoundrels who had undoubtedly set out to get him filled up. Anyhow, there's no use regretting what I did, for here I am, and next to having Yale win in the contest to-morrow night, I'd rather keep this thing from becoming public."

"I can fix that easily enough," said Matthews, confidently. "The sergeant doesn't know that you're a Yale man, and even if he should, I'll prime all the other reporters who cover this district at night, and get them to say nothing about it. You needn't worry on that score, Merriwell, the only thing to do is to get you and Mellor away from the station house."

Frank then told how he had wanted to send for the judge referred to.

"He's known me since I was born," he explained, "and was an intimate friend of my father. There's no doubt that he would believe me, and I suppose his word would go with the police."

"Yes, it would, but it's a long way to his house, and he may not be at home. The captain will be in in two or three minutes, and we'll see if I haven't got influence with him."

In less time than Matthews had supposed, the captain came in. To Frank's great astonishment, the reporter easily persuaded the captain to release the two students.

It is not very often that a police captain has an opportunity to do a favor to a newspaper man, and when a chance does occur, he's quick to take it, for the reporters of New York newspapers can make or unmake a policeman's reputation.

The only thing in the way of letting the students go was the fact that the bartenders in the saloon where the fight occurred had made a charge against Frank.

That was quickly fixed by the captain, who went himself to the saloon and suggested that the charge be withdrawn.

Of course the suggestion of the captain was enough. The bartenders were glad to withdraw the charge if he advised it.

Therefore Frank had not been a prisoner half an hour before he and Mellor, accompanied by Matthews, were rolling across the city in a closed cab on their way to the Murray Hill.

When they arrived there they used a good deal of caution about going in, for Mellor was quite as stupid as he had been at first, and both Matthews and Merriwell were anxious to prevent anybody from becoming aware of his condition.

They got him into the Turkish bath there without observation, and gave an attendant a liberal fee to look after him for the night.

CHAPTER XII.

ON THEIR GUARD.

The other Yale men were out for their evening run when Frank was at last ready to join them.

He did not try to follow them, for he had been so disturbed by the excitement of his adventure with the police, that he thought it best to rest; so when the students returned they found Frank in bed, and no one disturbed him.

Next morning early he got Rowland and Hill together and explained the whole affair to them. They were indignant, mad and disgusted all together.

"We'll send Mellor back to New Haven on the first train!" exclaimed Hill.

"It would serve him right," added Rowland, "if the faculty should hear of this and expel him."

"The faculty mustn't hear of it," said Frank, decisively. "The thing I've worked for most in all of this is to prevent any sort of disgrace, and if Mellor can be put into condition for making a wrestle, it'll be better for all of us that he should go into the contest."

"He'll never be able to last a single round," groaned Hill.

"If he should go down at the first catch," said Rowland, "everybody would suspect that he was out of condition, and then what would come of it?"

"Well, perhaps he isn't so badly off as you think," suggested Frank. "He may be able to put up a good front. Let's go down and see how he is."

The suggestion was adopted at once, and the three went down to the Turkish baths. The assistants who had been feed to look after Mellor said that the student was asleep on a couch.

Frank and the others went to the sleeping room and stood by the couch looking at Mellor in silence for a full minute.

As he had been very carefully rubbed and thoroughly steamed the night before, and as he had been sleeping for many hours, he looked now quite as well as usual.

The three managers looked at each other and nodded. They understood each other; it was better that Mellor should be allowed to appear in the wrestling match that night, even though he was almost surely doomed to defeat.

They were about to withdraw when the wrestler opened his eyes.

"Hello, boys," he said, suddenly, and he sat up.

"How are you feeling?" asked Merriwell.

"Bully!" replied Mellor, with emphasis. Then his face flushed and he looked down at the floor.

"I guess you remember what has happened," remarked Hill, contemptuously.

"Yes, I do," responded Mellor.

"What do you think of yourself?" asked Rowland.

"You're a fine man to carry Yale's banner to victory, aren't you!" demanded Hill, savagely.

"Hold on, fellows," interrupted Frank; "there's no use in rubbing it in. How did it happen, Mellor?"

"Oh, it's just my confounded foolishness," Mellor replied, with a groan; "I wanted to see a little bit of city life, but I had no idea of drinking. I had heard of a place where all sorts of toughs resorted, and I went in there simply to look on."

"Better have stayed in the hotel," muttered Hill.

"Go on," said Merriwell.

"Well, there was quite a crowd there, and among them were two or three Princeton students."

"How do you know?"

"Why, I saw the orange colors that they wore, and I heard them offering bets on Princeton to other men who were standing around."

"Did you speak to them?"

"Not until they spoke to me."

"How did that happen?"

"Why, one of them caught my eye, looked at me sharply, and then asked politely if my name wasn't Mellor, and if I didn't belong to Yale. I felt kind of flattered at being recognized——"

"It made you think you were a great man, didn't it?" exclaimed Hill

"Oh, keep still!" said Frank. "Let him tell his story; this is important to all of us."

Mellor ground his teeth and exclaimed:

"You can't make me feel any worse about this than I feel already."

"We don't want you to make any confession, Mellor," said Frank, gently; "that isn't what we're after, for, unfortunately, I know only too well what you'd have to confess to."

"The point we want to get at is, what these Princeton men said, for I'm inclined to think that there's something of a conspiracy on foot to down Yale and the other colleges by unfair means."

Mellor looked a little puzzled, but answered:

"After I had admitted who I was, the fellow who spoke to me asked how I felt about the wrestling match. I told him I was all ready to meet Princeton's best man, and then he asked if I was betting any money on it. I shook my head, and he said 'that's right.'"

"What followed?"

"Oh, there were a number of polite remarks, and the crowd got around; the Princeton men suggested that it would be pleasanter if we were by ourselves, and I felt that they were right."

"They were so decent about it that I had no hesitation in going into a back room with them. There they asked if I was taking anything."

"Did you say you were taking everything that came your way?" asked Hill.

"No, I didn't. I told them I was in training, and could take nothing but Bass' ale."

"Huh!" grunted Hill.

"Did they set up a bottle?" asked Rowland.

"Yes. It was about the dinner hour, at which time I was allowed to take ale, and I thought that it would do no harm; of course it was wrong—I admit it now, but at the time I thought a single glass

of ale wouldn't hurt me, and it would be more polite to these chaps to go through the form of drinking with them. So they had a bottle of champagne, and I drank ale."

Mellor hesitated.

"You seem to have had your head about you," remarked Frank. "How did you happen to get to drinking champagne?"

"I don't know," he answered, gloomily; "the ale seemed to make me half drowsy, whereas usually I don't feel any effect from it at all, and I guess I thought that a drop of wine would brace me up."

"I see it all!" exclaimed Frank.

The others looked at him inquiringly.

"Knockout drops!" he said.

"By Jove! I bet you're right!" exclaimed Rowland.

"It was anything to get the Yale champion fuddled and they knew well enough that he wouldn't take more than one glass of ale, so unless I'm greatly mistaken they drugged his ale and got him completely unbalanced."

"It's a monstrous outrage!" cried Rowland.

Hill looked contemptuous and said nothing.

Merriwell turned to Mellor with the remark:

"Lie still a while longer and get breakfast when you want it. I'll see you in your room later, and if you think you're going to be fit, we'll have you in the contest to-night just the same."

"Great Scott!" cried Mellor, "you wouldn't bar me out of that, would you?"

"We were thinking of it," said Hill.

"You'll have to pull yourself together, Mellor," said Frank, seriously, "for unless you can make a good showing we don't any of us want you to appear."

Mellor bowed his head upon his hands, and the others left him. As soon as they were out of hearing Hill said:

"Perhaps it's nothing better than could be expected of a freshman, but anyhow, we've got to bring this matter to the attention of the Princeton managers at once."

The others agreed, and they went to the Fifth Avenue Hotel, where they found the Princeton managers at breakfast.

The case was not explained to the Princeton men in full, but enough was said to make them certain that Yale had reason to suspect a trick on the part of men wearing Princeton colors.

The indignation of the Princeton managers was too great for expression; one of them was so hot-headed that he wanted a row at once with Merriwell for seeming to suggest that Princeton men could be capable of such treacherous conduct.

Frank hastened to assure him that no Yale man thought such a thing possible.

"We think some rascals are playing off under Princeton's colors," he said.

The Princeton managers were sure that this must be the case, for no students had accompanied them to the city excepting those who were to take part in the contests.

They declared their intention of keeping their eyes open for men wearing the Princeton rosettes, and promised to do everything possible to have such men arrested, if any charge could be brought against them.

So there the matter had to rest. There was no doubt that the Princeton men were in earnest, and that they would do what they could, but that did not seem to promise very much.

The scoundrels who were anxious to make money by betting on Princeton could not be arrested for simply wearing an orange rosette, and there was no way of preventing further trouble, therefore, except for Yale men to hang together and take the greatest care not to put themselves in the way of strangers.

It was agreed by Frank and his companions that nothing should be said to the contestants about the matter, for fear that they might get nervous, and so be unfitted for doing their best in the evening's games.

The day passed, therefore, very quietly for the Yale athletes. They went in a body to a gymnasium and had two or three hours' practice, and in the afternoon they had a walk through Central Park.

Mellor appeared to be quite himself, except that he was silent, and that he looked solemn. The other students supposed that this was due to his anxiety about the wrestling match, and no questions were asked, although there were a few good-natured jokes about his nervousness.

He took all the jokes quietly, and made no retort.

Nothing happened during the day to give the Yale managers any new anxiety. They kept their eyes open all the time for a sight of the bogus Princeton men, but failed to see them.

When at last evening came, and they went up to the Seventh Regiment Armory for the great contest, they felt that with the possible exception of Mellor, everything was in as good condition as could be hoped for Yale victories.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE WRESTLER.

There was an immense crowd in the Seventh Regiment Armory that evening. Nearly everybody present was a friend of one or another of the colleges represented in the contests, and excitement ran high.

The seating had been arranged so that Yale students and their friends occupied a solid tier of seats upon the side of the hall near the center.

Directly across the hall, in a similar tier, were the students and friends of Harvard.

On the same side with Yale was the Cornell crowd, and directly opposite them the Princeton crowd.

The rest of the spectators sat as near their favorite college as they could, with the result that long before any of the games began, the building fairly roared with college cries mingled together, each crowd trying to outdo the others.

It seemed as if there would be no lungs or voices left to cheer the athletes, but if any one had such a fear it must have been because he was not acquainted with students' voices.

An excited Yale or Harvard man can give the college cry somehow when he would be unable to conduct a conversation above a whisper.

The very middle of the hall was left vacant. All the contests were to take place there, and, therefore, in full view of all the spectators.

The athletes had their dressing-rooms at the ends and sides of the building, and there were so many of them that each college had a number of rooms for itself.

The Yale managers took their men up to the armory about half an hour before the call for the first event.

Dressing-rooms had been picked out in advance, and the men belonging to the tug-of-war were put into one room by themselves.

The Yale crowd in the audience cheered frantically when they recognized their companions marching across the floor to their dressing-rooms.

Shortly after that the Princeton men came in, and then there was a wild howling from the other side of the room.

So it went on, and so it continued all through the evening, for there was hardly a moment when there was not something going on to arouse the enthusiasm of one college or another, and if by any accident there was a hitch in the proceedings, there was plenty of excited students in each faction to stand in front of the tiers of seats and lead their comrades in cheering on general principles.

As there were many events, and many entries in each one, the programme was put through rapidly, and as often as possible, two or more events were being contested at the same time.

The object sought for by each college was to gain as many victories, or in other words, first places, as possible, but in some events, like wrestling and fencing, where only two men could contest at a time, it was necessary to have two or three and sometimes four bouts in the same event.

This was not the case in such a sport as leaping, for there all the men could compete at the same time, and one set of trials decided the matter.

In wrestling it was necessary to draw lots to decide which colleges should compete first.

Then lots were to be cast to decide which college the winner of the first bout should wrestle with, and so on.

Each wrestling bout consisted of three rounds, with a short rest between each two.

As three rounds at wrestling is likely to tire any but the very strongest man, the next bout was set down a full half hour later on the programme in order to give the winner time to rest.

It was the same with the tugs of war. One tug was put upon the programme early in order that

the winners of it might have time to recover their breath and be in condition to meet the next comers.

It would be an impossible task to describe all the many events that succeeded each other rapidly that evening. Every one had its interest and importance, although in the audience at large, as it had been at Yale, the tug of war was watched for with the greatest anxiety and excitement.

There may be space, however, to indicate the outcome of one or two minor events in which Frank and his companions were especially interested.

The first thing on the programme consisted of the contests in high jumping and the first bout in wrestling. The jumpers went through their work at one end of the floor, while the wrestlers struggled at the other.

The drawing of lots resulted in putting Mellor of Yale against Grant of Cornell for the first try.

The Yale managers almost groaned aloud at this piece of ill luck. If there was anybody among the wrestlers representing the other colleges that they feared, it was this same Grant.

He was fully as large and muscular as Mellor, and had easily downed everybody who had met him in his own college.

With Mellor in good condition the Yale men would have believed that the chances were at least even for his victory; as it was, those who understood the case were certain that the Yale freshman would be turned down quickly.

Of course the managers said nothing openly after the lots were drawn, but they exchanged views in private just before Mellor went out to begin his work.

"Tough luck," remarked Frank, between set teeth.

"I wish we had sent him back to New Haven," grumbled Hill.

"It's a confounded shame," exclaimed Rowland, "that Mellor couldn't have had a chance to meet Sherman of Harvard first. He could probably throw Sherman even if he were still half full, and that would give him some kind of a standing, but now he'll go out there and get turned down so dead easy that everybody will laugh at Yale, and the rest of our fellows will get rattled."

"I don't think the rest of us will get rattled," said Frank, "and perhaps Mellor won't be such an easy victim as you think."

"Let us hope that he gets at least one fall," muttered Hill.

There was no time for further talk about the matter, and they went out to the main hall to see the event.

At the upper end of the floor Higgins was taking his first leap, but the managers paid little attention to him. They hoped he would win, but they were confident that whatever happened he would make a good showing, and they could not take their eyes from their champion wrestler.

Mellor was still looking as solemn as if he were at a funeral. His face was rather pale, and he sat in a chair at one side perfectly motionless until the call came to enter the ring.

Grant of Cornell, on the other hand, was laughing and chatting with his managers, and his face was pink with health.

At the call he bounded from the chair and pranced into the ring nimbly, and as the Yale managers looked him over they felt worse than ever.

Mellor got up slowly and walked, as if he dreaded the ordeal, out to meet his adversary.

"That's right, Mellor," whispered Frank, as the wrestler passed, "take it easy and don't get excited."

Mellor gave Frank a grateful look. It was the only encouraging word he had received from his managers since his foolish scrape.

He shook hands with Grant, and then stepped quickly back to his position. It was a catch-as-catch-can match, and for an instant the two big fellows stood warily watching each other before they advanced.

Meantime Yale and Cornell were setting up a chorus of howls to encourage their respective champions.

The two got together with a sudden jump that surprised everybody.

It was expected that Grant would take the offensive, but it seemed that Mellor decided upon the same policy, for the floor fairly shook when they met and began a mighty struggle.

Frank's eyes glowed, and his heart seemed to rise to his throat as he watched the muscles stand out on Mellor's arms and back.

"There's big stuff in that fellow," he said, half aloud.

"If he only had staying power," retorted Hill, in disgust, "but he's wasted all that in his jag."

The words were hardly out of Hill's mouth before there was a heavy thud, as the two wrestlers went down; then such a roar went up as the building had not yet heard, for Yale's man was on top. Mellor rose quickly and ran to his dressing-room, followed by his managers, who overwhelmed him with compliments.

He said nothing, but stood up to be rubbed and taken care of.

"You took him completely by surprise that time, Mellor," said Frank. "Now the next time he'll be on his guard for that, and you'll have to pursue different tactics."

Mellor nodded.

He did not appear to be suffering from loss of breath or any sort of exhaustion, so the managers left him with his trainer to see how the jumping was getting on.

They arrived upon the floor just as another terrific chorus of Yale cries went up.

Higgins had cleared the bar after every other contestant had failed.

It was a grand start for Yale. One first place had been gained, and with Mellor's success it looked as if another was certain.

The floor was quickly cleared of the posts that had been set up for the jumpers, and the Harvard and Cornell tug of war teams came on for the first pull.

In this, as in the wrestling, the order of the trials had been decided by lot.

Leaving the tug of war for the moment, we will glance at Mellor's further work as a wrestler.

While Harvard and Cornell were getting into position for their tug, he went out again to the floor for his second set-to with Grant.

As Frank had predicted, Grant was wary this time; he waited for Mellor to take the offensive, and the latter was slow in doing so. They got together at last, and for a few seconds each struggled vainly to overcome the other.

Then they stood still, and those who were giving their especial attention to them felt the greatest excitement because the men were evidently tremendously in earnest, and very evenly matched.

After a good deal of dancing about the ring, and many a vain attempt to bring on a fall, Grant got in a sudden trip that brought Mellor to his knees.

Then, exerting all his weight and force, Grant crowded the Yale man down until his side was on the floor.

No fall could be counted until Mellor's shoulders were both squarely on the floor, and, therefore, Grant was crowding with all his might to prevent his antagonist from turning on his face.

When a wrestler lies over on his stomach with his arms outstretched, it is almost impossible to turn him.

It looked as if Mellor were trying to get into this position, for then Grant would be compelled to stand off and give him a chance to spring up.

Grant, of course, was trying to do just the reverse, for having Mellor so nearly down, he did not care to give him a chance to get on his feet again.

Just how it was done it was hard to see, but suddenly Mellor seemed to rise as if he were on a trap that rose by the force of a concealed spring.

With a wonderfully quick movement he broke his hold and got a new one, and before anybody realized what his attempt meant, he had turned his antagonist over and brought Grant's shoulders squarely down upon the floor.

Then the building shook with howls. Yale had won the first bout in wrestling, and at the same instant Harvard had beaten the Cornell tug of war team.

The Yale managers were happy. It seemed now as if Mellor were certain of carrying off the cup for wrestling.

According to the fall of lots he was to tackle Sherman of Harvard next.

Sherman was a comparatively slender, but very wiry fellow. He was considerably under Mellor's weight, and as the latter had shown unusual skill it was thought that the Harvard man would prove an easy victim.

So he did in the first round. Mellor downed him almost as easily as he had turned down Grant, but as it proved that was the end of the Yale freshman's staying power.

He had put all his force into the two set-tos with Grant and the first with Sherman; when it came to the second set-to with the latter there was a long, exciting struggle, which ended in Mellor's going under.

He showed his exhaustion plainly after that, and his limbs quivered when he went out for the third set-to.

He struggled well, and really made a good showing, but the Harvard man downed him at last, and with that defeat Yale's chances for coming out ahead in the general tournament were badly damaged.

Nevertheless Frank and the other managers felt that Mellor had made so good a showing that nobody would suspect that he had disobeyed regulations and unfitted himself for making the contest.

CHAPTER XIV.

A TRICK.

As might be expected, there was a big chorus of shouting when the Yale and Harvard teams came out for their trial in the tug of war.

Matters had been running rather evenly between the four colleges; each had gained at least one first place, and there was no reason for the friends of any college to be discouraged about the general result.

The Harvard men seemed to be as fresh after their victory over Cornell as if they had not exerted themselves.

They appeared to have about the same weight as the Yale crew, and were made up in much the same way; a particularly heavy man as anchor, and three lighter but evidently very muscular fellows upon the rope.

It had been decided that the fall should be at a pistol shot.

As there are several ways of conducting a tug of war, it will be well to explain that in intercollegiate games, when held indoors, the contestants always brace themselves upon cleats.

The rope which they hold lies loose upon the floor between the two teams. At a point midway between the two sets of cleats there is a chalk mark on the floor.

A ribbon is tied around the rope at the point where it crosses this mark.

When the men have fallen it is their object to pull the rope away from their opponents, and so bring that ribbon further and further toward their cleats.

In a closely contested match it sometimes happens that the position of the ribbon will not vary more than two or three inches during the entire tug.

The time is taken, and at the end of four minutes the victory is awarded to whichever team has the ribbon upon its side of the chalk mark.

In this pull with Harvard, Frank's training proved to be of the greatest value. He had laid the greatest stress upon the fall.

When the pistol shot came the Yale team dropped like one man to the general eye.

It seemed as if the Harvard team dropped at exactly the same instant, but when the excited spectators looked at the ribbon on the rope, they saw that it was fully six inches upon the Yale side of the chalk mark.

After the fall there was a silent moment of hard tugging upon each part, but the ribbon did not budge.

Meantime Bruce was manipulating the rope that ran around his belt, and keeping his eyes fixed upon the Harvard anchor opposite.

"How is it, Bruce?" whispered Frank.

"We've got 'em," muttered Bruce, in reply.

Frank said nothing, for in the course of training he and Bruce had discussed this matter so many times that Frank knew well what policy the anchor would pursue.

It is often said that a miss is as good as a mile, and in the case of a tug of war an inch is certainly as good as a yard.

It might have been possible for the Yale team by constant tugging and by occasional surprises to get the ribbon much farther over to their side, but that was not the policy that had been decided on.

If the team should win, there was Princeton still to be pulled, and every ounce of strength would be needed then; so, having the advantage of Harvard, the boys simply held to the rope, using only enough strength to keep what they had gained.

It cost them a good deal of effort to keep it.

About a minute had passed since the fall, when the Harvard anchor suddenly gave his men the word, and leaned far back upon the floor.

It was a mighty tug. Slowly but apparently surely the ribbon moved toward the Harvard cleats.

Bruce caught the end of the rope in a knot, and muttered:

"Hold hard!"

The boys did hold hard, but in spite of that the rope gradually slipped through their hands.

"It can't last long," whispered Bruce, "keep cool."

A few seconds of such mighty tugging was indeed all that any team could stand, and presently the Harvard men rested, having gained three or four inches.

To many of the spectators it seemed now as if the ribbon was even with the chalk mark, and the Harvard crew were setting up wild cries of triumph.

The Yale team, however, had been lying low. Bruce and his men had simply resisted the Harvard tug like so much dead weight, and the instant that the Yale anchor saw that the Harvard team had come to rest he exclaimed:

"Pull!"

Then the Yale team gripped the rope and strained at it in earnest.

Their effort came like a yank, and in less than three seconds all the space that had been lost in Harvard's long tug was recovered.

So the contest went on to the end. Harvard frequently made desperate efforts to get the ribbon on its side of the line, and each time the Yale team had to lose a little ground, but each time they made a complete recovery, and at the end of four minutes the victory was with the blue.

The Harvard team got out of sight as quickly as possible, while the Yale men went to their dressing-room, followed by the wild cheering of their friends.

For the next few minutes the Yale spectators paid little attention to what was going on on the floor. They busied themselves in cheering each member of their team.

Puss Parker led the cheering. He stood in front of the Yale tier and shouted:

"What's the matter with Browning?"

An immense chorus responded:

"He's all right."

"Nine cheers for Browning," demanded Parker, and then the rah-rahs came rattling forth like volleys from a battery.

Then Parker asked what was the matter with Merriwell, and so on until the others in the team had been complimented in the same way.

Frank was well pleased, but the complete victory was not yet won, and besides that, as manager, he had a keenness in all the other contests. So as soon as he could do so he returned to the main room and watched what was going on.

The other members of the team, with the exception of Bruce, also returned.

The anchor, with his usual indolence, preferred to remain in his dressing-room and rest, although, to tell the truth, he did not feel the slightest fatigue.

Frank found nothing to be dissatisfied with, although victories for Yale were not piling up as well as he could have wished.

All the Yale athletes had made a good showing, and there was no blame to be cast upon anybody for losing, with the possible exception of the unhappy Mellor, but there proved to be good men in the other colleges, and one by one events were decided with a first place now to Cornell, now to Harvard, now to Princeton, and so also to Yale.

The longer the evening grew the closer the contest seemed, and at half-past ten, when nearly all the events had been decided, it was still a matter of doubt as to which college would carry away the trophy.

The tug of war between Princeton and Yale was set last on the programme, not because it was thought that it would settle everything, but because it was the event that created the most general interest.

A good many unfinished bouts in other sports were being rapidly worked off.

As it drew near to eleven o'clock Harvard and Cornell gradually lost their grip upon their chance for first place, and at last, when it was time for the great tug, it proved that Princeton and Yale scored exactly the same number of points.

Therefore the result of the tug would decide whether Yale or Princeton should carry away the

tournament trophy.

The thing could not have gone better for the spectators at large, but it made the students representing the two leading colleges excited and nervous.

The moment the last unfinished bout was decided, Frank hurried to the dressing-room, followed by the other members of the team and the managers.

He halted at the door with a great start of fear. Bruce lay across the threshold, his right wrist in his left hand, and glaring across the room savagely, while his jaws were shut hard together.

"For Heaven's sake, Bruce! what's the matter?" asked Frank.

"I've sprained my wrist," he muttered, "and by the feeling I guess I've sprained my ankle, too!"

"How did it happen?"

"A dirty trick, Frank, and the scoundrel who did it is somewhere in the room. I managed to get here at the door so as to grab him if he should run out, and also to prevent you from taking the same fall I did."

The other members of the team and the managers were now at the spot.

"Be careful when you go in," said Bruce. "The floor has been soaped or greased just in front of those lockers there, and it won't do for any one else to get such a fall as I've had."

CHAPTER XV.

OFF THE CLEATS.

"Did you say the fellow was still in the room?" asked Frank, in a low voice.

"Yes, I was sitting near the door with my head down when I heard a rustling noise back of me. I supposed I was all alone, and turned about to see who had come in. I caught sight of a fellow dodging behind that middle row of lockers."

"Who was he?"

"I don't know. Never saw him before. I thought he was a thief who was going through our clothes for watches and pocketbooks, so I made a jump and went for him. Right at the corner of the lockers my foot slipped and I went down full length. I could have helped myself from being hurt even at that if it hadn't been that the floor was so thoroughly greased that my hand slipped, and my whole weight came down on my right wrist. The pain was fearful for a moment, and it don't feel very good yet. I saw that it was a trick."

"Didn't the fellow get out?"

"No. I was bound that he should be caught somehow, and as there was too much howling outside to make myself heard, I couldn't call for help. I dragged myself to the door here, and if he had made any attempt to get by I'd have held him if it killed me."

"He may have got out of a window."

"I think not, or I should have heard him."

"We'll find out about this," said Rowland, emphatically, "but meanwhile the call is on for the tug of war with Princeton. Can you——"

The question was not completed, for Browning, with a wry face, held up his right arm.

His wrist was swollen to almost twice its usual size.

"I couldn't pull a baby," he said, regretfully.

The fellows looked blue, and Hill groaned dismally.

"Rowland," said Frank, in a quick, decisive tone, "go back into the hall and tell the committee of arrangements that our anchor is disabled, and that we shall have to have five minutes to get our substitute in order."

"Who in thunder can you substitute?" asked Hill

"Rattleton."

"But he never trained as anchor."

"I'll put him on the rope."

"Who will be anchor, then?"

"I will."

"You!"

"Why not?"

"You're too light, Merriwell."

Frank shrugged his shoulders

"If you can think of anybody else in the college," he said, "who is better qualified than I am to meet this emergency, bring him along."

"No, no!" exclaimed the others in chorus, "you're the man, Frank. This is your event, and the team may win out with you after all."

"It isn't a question of winning out now," he responded, "but of taking our part in the tournament. Go on, Rowland, and when you've spoken to the committee, call for Rattleton, and have him come here in a hurry."

Rowland went away, and then Frank stepped over and lifted Browning into a chair.

"One of you fellows," he said, "find somebody to get a physician. There must be a hundred of them in the audience."

There were several other students not connected with the team about the door at this time, and two or three of them started away at once.

"Now, then, Hill," said Frank, quietly, "let's see what we can do about this rascal that has tried to disable us."

Hill nodded and stepped into the room.

"The rest of you fellows," said Frank, "stay at the door and don't let anybody out."

"Look out for the greased spot," said Bruce, warningly.

Hill and Frank went into the middle of the room, where there was a double line of lockers extending nearly its whole length. There were two windows at the end, one of which was down slightly at the top, the other was closed.

They looked up at it, and then at each other.

"He hasn't gone out," said Frank, confidently, in a low tone. "Try all the lockers."

They started down, one on each side, opening first the doors of closets in which they and their companions had placed their clothes.

Nothing had been disturbed there.

As they went they found nothing but empty lockers, but presently Frank came to one the door of which he could not open.

The handle was simply a knob, and the door was held fast by a Yale lock. He looked at it a moment, then, drawing back, gave the door a terrific kick squarely upon the lock.

The thin wood broke at once, and another kick splintered it from top to bottom.

At that instant a man dashed out, tried to push Frank aside and make for the door. Frank recognized him at once as one of the men he had seen with Higgins at the Hoffman House.

"No, you don't!" he exclaimed hotly, catching the fellow by the arm and giving him a smashing blow on the side of the head.

Hearing the rumpus, Hill came running around the corner just in time to meet the two as they were staggering along. He promptly gave the scoundrel a rattling series of blows that dropped him to the floor half stunned.

"Come in here," called Frank, and the other students came crowding into the room.

"Let's kick him to death!" exclaimed one, excitedly.

The students were so angry that they might have put this suggestion into execution if Frank had not called a halt.

"Find a cord," he said, "and bind this fellow hand and foot; then we'll notify the committee of arrangements and go on with the tug of war."

A cord was quickly found, and the man was tied so thoroughly that there was no possibility that he could escape. Then, while Frank and the others were getting ready for the tug, Hill looked up the committee of arrangements and explained the situation.

It may be said in passing that the matter aroused a great deal of indignation on all sides, and that an investigation was made, which resulted in showing that the man Frank had captured was a common gambler, and that there were several others who had put up a great deal of money on Princeton, and then taken every means they possibly could to bring about Princeton's victory.

He could do this only by disabling Princeton's adversaries. It was found that attempts had been

made to injure both Harvard and Cornell men as well as those from Yale.

Two or three of the gambler's confederates were found in the hall and put under arrest, and the next morning they were taken to police court on a charge of malicious mischief, for which they were severely punished.

As it was perfectly certain that no Princeton man had any hand in the matter, or any knowledge of it other than had been given to the managers by the Yale team, nothing was said about it at the time, for everybody was anxious that the tug of war between Yale and Princeton should be pulled on its merits.

The master of ceremonies announced that an accident had happened to Yale's anchor, and that Merriwell would take his place, with Rattleton as substitute on the rope.

There was a good deal of dismay at this in the Yale ranks, for although everybody had confidence in Frank, all knew that a change in the make-up of a team at the last moment is likely to be disastrous.

Nevertheless, Merriwell was greeted with a big cheer when he went out to the floor and wound the end of the rope around his belt.

He put Rattleton on the farther end of the line, and moved Taylor up to his own old position. There was then a breathless moment, while both sides waited for the pistol shot.

When it came, the eight men went down at the same instant. It was evident that the Princeton team had observed the success of Yale men in dropping, and had determined not to let them get an advantage in that way.

The ribbon stood exactly at the chalk mark, and the first few seconds of violent pulling failed to budge it more than a hair's breadth in either direction.

The great audience stood up and cheered as they had not done since the evening began. It was a delight to see two teams of strong young men so evenly matched in strength and skill.

On the Yale side there was fear in spite of the enthusiastic cheering that Merriwell's weight would be against them in the end, and not a few called attention to the fact that the Yale team had already pulled once, while Princeton was perfectly fresh.

These things were thought of, too, on the Princeton side, and that made the wearers of the orange more confident.

As in the former pull, there was a short period of rest after the first tug. The anchors eyed each other warily, and the men lay on the rope, crossing their legs over it, and waiting for the signal to tug again.

Frank saw the Princeton anchor whispering to the man in front of him.

"If that's a command to pull," he thought, "it's given too openly, and it's probably a dodge to throw us off our guard."

It seemed to be so, for the Princeton men gave one sudden yank at the rope, and then lay still.

The yank did not stir the ribbon, and it did not call out any answering pulls from the Yale men. Many of the spectators wondered at this, and began to set up shouts to Merriwell to order a pull.

He remained perfectly quiet, paying no attention to the shouts around him, apparently not hearing them. In fact, he was not more than half conscious that there was anybody in the room except the three men directly in front of him and the four adversaries on the opposite team.

A full minute passed, during which there was some pulling by each side, and still the ribbon remained squarely over the chalk mark.

The spectators left their seats, so great was their excitement, and in spite of the efforts of the policemen who were stationed in the hall, crowded down upon the floor until they were within a few feet of the opposing teams.

Old men in the crowd who had graduated from college before Frank and his companions were born, were quite as excited as the younger men.

"Don't let it be a draw, Merriwell," shouted one white-whiskered man, waving his hat frantically.

"Princeton! Princeton!" came in a big chorus from the other side of the room, as the Princeton team lay closer to the floor and pulled at the rope with might and main.

The muscles of their arms and shoulders stood out like whipcords and the perspiration started from their brows. They were doing their best, to say the least, to prevent a draw.

It was a splendid tug; the ribbon at last began to move. It took its course slowly and by little starts and halts toward the Princeton side.

The palms of the Yale men fairly burned as the cord slipped by. It was not much, but as before, an inch at the end of four minutes would be as good as a yard.

Frank's face was set in an expression of intense determination, and the perspiration stood out

upon his brow, too, although he was exerting little force.

Inch by inch he was paying out the rope from his belt, a thing that had to be done in order to prevent his crew from being pulled to their feet.

Frank was waiting his opportunity; it came as he had foreseen, just at the instant when the Princeton men had exerted all the force of which they were capable.

He knew when this minute had arrived, not by any expression upon their faces, but by the fact that the Princeton anchor hastily caught his end of the rope in a knot in order to hold the advantage that had been gained.

Then Frank said in a tone that could not have been heard by any of the spectators:

"Now, boys!"

On that instant the three Yale men who had been lying almost on their backs, sat up, made a quick grab at the rope a few inches in front of where they had been holding it before, and then strained back suddenly, and with all the force that they could muster.

The Princeton anchor, who had supposed that the Yale men were exhausted also, was taken completely by surprise.

He had knotted his rope and could not pay it out as the opposing tug came; the result was that while there was yet a full minute to spare, the Princeton team stood up suddenly, pulled squarely off the cleats by the victorious sons of Yale.

The shouting changed on the instant; there had been a wild, triumphant howling on the Princeton side because the ribbon had gone fully fifteen inches beyond the chalk mark.

Now it traveled so rapidly toward the Yale side that there was no measuring the distance; that did not matter anyway, for when a team is pulled squarely off the cleats, the tug is done.

Frank, therefore, had the double satisfaction of seeing his college win the general trophy and of meeting successfully a serious emergency that had occurred in the special sport which he had undertaken to manage.

It was a great evening for Yale, and one that all men who were students in the college at that time will never forget.

"I tell you, I wouldn't have missed it for a good deal," said Rattleton, when they were on their way to Yale, the day following.

"It's too bad Browning was hurt," answered Frank.

"It's not serious," said the big fellow. "It will soon be all right, so the doctor says." And this proved to be true. Inside of ten days his wrist was as well as ever.

"Another contest is on hand," said Rattleton, one morning to Frank. "Do you know we are up for admission to the Pi Gamma Society?"

"Yes," answered Frank.

"We'll catch it hot soon—when they initiate us."

"Oh, I reckon we can stand it," came from Frank, with a quiet smile.

He did not dream of all that was in store for them.

CHAPTER XVI.

BLACK MARKS.

There were about twenty students in a room that would comfortably hold six; four of them, looking very solemn, were arranged along one side of the room with their backs to the wall; the others were seated on such chairs as there were or upon the floor.

The study table in the middle of the room had been cleared of books, and a covering of newspapers had been put on top of it.

The air was thick with smoke from pipes, cigars and cigarettes. The four who stood with their backs against the wall were not adding anything to the fumes; they were the only ones present who were not smoking.

Every window was down and the transom was closed. It is the theory among students that the smoker can stand a thick atmosphere, but that if one is not smoking it soon becomes very disagreeable to him.

One would have said that this theory was correct if he had taken but a glance into the room, for the four solemn persons looked far from well, while the others were evidently enjoying

themselves to the utmost.

Each one of the others had something in his hand besides his pipe or cigar; two or three had brooms, some horsewhips, some baseball bats, some canes, others umbrellas, and so on. The one who was apparently the leader had an iron poker.

"Who is the next neophyte who wishes to become acquainted with the mysteries of Pi Gamma?" he asked.

"It's Merriwell's turn next," answered one of the others.

"Very well, then, fetch him in."

At the mention of Merriwell's name the four solemn students against the wall glanced at each other.

"Hi, there! Hi, there!" called several voices. "No talking to each other!"

All the other students turned furiously upon the solemn four and glared fiercely. One of the four opened his lips as if to say something, then thought better of it, and shut them again.

"If you want to make a link in the mystic chain of the Pi Gamma," exclaimed the leader, sternly, "you'd better keep your mouth shut!"

The student thus addressed looked as if he was aching to say that he had not said anything, but his eyes simply wavered and otherwise he remained perfectly still.

"I guess they'll behave themselves," declared the leader. "Go out and bring in Merriwell."

Frank was about to take his first step in the long and trying initiation into the secret society known as the Pi Gamma. These are the two Greek letters standing for P and G, respectively.

What they mean is known only to the members of the order, but the society is generally known by an abbreviation of its initials.

In this way, with the characteristic humor of college students, the order of Pi Gamma is generally known as the "Pig." So, too, members of the order are sometimes referred to as "Pigs."

No one is supposed to take any offense at this, for, on the contrary, it is a mark of honor to be a member of the order, and if a man can say after he has graduated that he belonged to the "Pig," he makes it known that his social standing was very high.

No one can become a member of this society until he has reached the junior year; then students are elected from the junior class by the members of the senior class in blocks of five. The initiation of each block of five covers a period of one week.

The juniors elected at the same time with Frank were Harry Rattleton, Jack Diamond, Bartley Hodge, and John Henderson. It was these four who formed the quartet of silent students with their backs to the wall.

They had received their notification of election on the evening before, and with it certain instructions. From that moment until the end of the initiation the neophyte was forbidden to laugh, or to speak aloud unless addressed by a "Pig" in good standing or a member of the faculty.

If he was spoken to by one of his companions, not a member of the order, the neophyte was not to answer.

He was to attend strictly to all his college duties, and whenever he set foot upon the campus, he was to run at full speed and not stop running until he had left the college grounds.

He was to do without question anything commanded of him by any member of the Pi Gamma during the week.

In Frank's case this last rule had been put to the test at once by commanding him to go to a well-known store in the city and buy one match and one toothpick and bring the articles to the student who asked for them. Frank had complied promptly.

He went into this thing, as he did into everything, in a good-natured but businesslike way.

He knew that it was the custom for students to be put in embarrassing situations during the initiation, and he made up his mind to stand his share of it without grumbling.

Besides the rules already noted, each of the neophytes was told to write an essay upon a given subject and have it ready for reading on the following evening when the senior members of the society would meet the neophytes in Baker's room.

Baker was the president of the "Pig," and it was he who held the poker during the deliberations.

The neophytes had assembled promptly, and then had been conducted to the room of a senior named Rowe, from which they were called one by one to read their essays.

Frank's turn had come last, because there was so much respect for his nerve that the students wanted to give him a particularly hard test, and they believed it would be more effective if they made him wait until toward the end of the evening.

Accordingly, Rattleton and the others had been through with their essay reading before Frank was summoned.

A couple of seniors went out after Baker gave the order, and presently returned with Merriwell.

The latter looked as unconcerned as if he were attending an ordinary recitation. He coughed a little as he entered the smoky room, and then said, "Good-evening, gentlemen," in his pleasantest tone.

"Ah, ah! Put down one black mark," exclaimed Baker, severely.

Frank looked surprised. He had been told when notified of his election that black marks would be entered against the name of every candidate for every disobedience of the rules, and that if a neophyte got as many as ten black marks he would not be permitted to become a member.

"The neophyte has evidently forgotten the rule about speaking aloud," remarked Baker.

Every one of the seniors present took out a little memorandum and made a mark against Merriwell's name.

Frank had really forgotten the rule for the moment, and his lips parted to say, "Beg pardon," or something of that kind, when it occurred to him that that would bring him another black mark.

In fact, the instant his mouth opened, out came the memorandum books, but he shut his lips hard together, and the books went back into the students' pockets.

"We will begin with a little music," remarked Baker. "Neophyte Rattleton, come forward."

Rattleton at once stepped up and stood in front of Frank. Their eyes met, but each kept his face steady.

"Neophyte Merriwell," continued Baker, placing his hand upon Rattleton's shoulder, "this is a bass viol. This is your bow," and he handed him an umbrella. "We want you to play Mendelssohn's Wedding March."

Frank took the umbrella and looked from Rattleton to Baker in amazement.

"Play, neophyte," thundered Baker.

Frank was not certain whether he caught the idea or not, but after a little further hesitation, he took Rattleton by the shoulder and moved the umbrella back and forth across that young man's stomach two or three times.

"We don't hear any music!" bawled the seniors in chorus.

"Give him a black mark, then!" commanded Baker.

Out came the memorandum books, and down went another black mark against Frank's name.

"Whew!" he thought, "this won't do! I must be slow or stupid; if I don't catch on pretty soon I'll get more black marks against me than I can stand."

"Give us something that we can hear!" roared the seniors.

The three juniors who had been through it and who were still standing with their backs against the wall, were having a particularly hard time of it just now. Their lips were twitching with an almost uncontrollable desire to laugh.

Frank caught Rattleton again by the shoulder and again sawed the umbrella back and forth across his stomach, at the same time grunting in a wheezy way to imitate the sounds of a bass fiddle.

"You're out of tune!" cried one of the seniors.

"Play louder!" shouted another.

"He's playing on the open strings all the time!" exclaimed a third. "Make him move his fingers, won't you?"

Frank caught this idea at once, and, throwing his left arm around Rattleton's shoulders, he moved his fingers up and down on Rattleton's chest as if he were touching the strings of an instrument. Meantime he kept up his grunting and humming as loud as he knew how.

The seniors roared with merriment. Rattleton was shaking with laughter, and the three solemn juniors against the wall looked as if they would explode.

Frank was perspiring in the effort to do the thing as ridiculously as he knew how, and yet keep his face straight.

"Oh, but look here!" cried Baker, suddenly, "this won't do!"

He took out his memorandum book, and all the students followed suit.

Frank stopped fiddling.

"Keep on until I tell you to stop!" cried Baker. "That's a black mark, anyway."

In despair of ever doing anything right, Frank began to saw away again for dear life.

"I call your attention," shouted Baker, above the uproar, "to the fact that this neophyte is making loud sounds with his voice."

"That must be a black mark, then!" declared the other seniors, taking out their books.

Frank wanted to protest that he had been told to make a noise, and that he could not very well obey one rule without breaking the other, but he thought it best to keep quiet.

He learned later that the complaint against his making a loud noise was made for the very purpose of causing him to protest, for that would have brought another black mark against him.

As he kept his mouth firmly closed the seniors failed to catch him there, but they put a black mark down nevertheless, so that within the first five minutes of his initiation Frank had had four points scored against him.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE TEST OF NERVE.

Frank felt really worried about it, although it did seem to him that the marking was absurdly unfair.

"These fellows haven't any reason to complain of a professor's marking of examination papers," he thought, "if this is the way they treat a fellow student."

"It's nearly time for the test of nerve," remarked Baker, "and we'd better have the essay read before this neophyte gets so many black marks that his case will be hopeless. Get up on that table, Merriwell."

Frank started to climb up on the table, but as soon as his knee was upon it a half dozen of the seniors yanked the table from under him and he fell to the floor.

There was a great roar of laughter at this, but Merriwell kept his face straight and did not so much as grunt.

"No black mark that time!" he thought.

"I told you to get on the table!" roared Baker.

Frank obeyed this time by making a sudden jump that brought him squarely upon the center of the table before it could possibly be yanked from under him.

There was a roar of applause at this, and the students gathered around to listen to the essay.

Frank took his manuscript from his pocket.

"What was the subject you were told to write on?" asked Baker.

Frank looked at the paper and read:

"Why is a Hen?"

The four other juniors exchanged winks; each one of them had been told to write upon the same topic.

Just then there was a knock at the door, and, after a moment, Bruce Browning was admitted.

Browning was already a member of the order, although he was a classmate of Frank's. He had become so by being dropped at the end of his freshman year, as already related in this series of stories.

When that happens a popular student keeps up his society relations with his former classmates, so that Bruce, although he was a junior in the standing of scholarship, was a senior when it came to society matters.

The fact that he was still a classmate of Merriwell's had led him to decide that he would take no part in the initiation. The students, therefore, were surprised to see him enter.

"I thought you weren't to be here!" exclaimed Baker.

"I wasn't," Browning answered, "but I've got something important to say to you."

He spoke in such a serious tone that Baker at once went over to him, and after a few whispered words they shut themselves into Baker's bedroom, which adjoined the study.

"You remember Miller?" asked Browning.

"You mean the tough customer that sells cigars?"

"Yes."

"I do remember him; what of him?"

"He's got a grudge against Merriwell. I think Frank at some time or other interfered in some dirty work he was up to, and so he's laying for Frank."

"Well, what of it?"

"He's heard that Frank has been elected to the 'Pig,' and he declares that he'll take advantage of the initiation to raise hob with him."

"Huh!"

"I thought I ought to let you know about it."

"Well, yes, but I don't see what Miller can do."

"Nor I, either, but it'll be just as well to be on your guard, you know."

"All right, and we'll try and look out for it."

"How's Merriwell getting on?" asked Browning.

Baker grinned.

"He's standing it like a man," was the reply, "just as we supposed he would, but he'll get black marks enough to sink a ship before the night's over."

Browning chuckled.

"I'll bet he takes those black marks seriously," he said.

"Well, why shouldn't he?" returned Baker. "It's the last time we'll get the chance to roast a good fellow like Merriwell, and we're going to make it hot for him, I tell you."

"Go ahead, he'll stand it," said Bruce.

Having delivered his message of warning, Bruce left the room. Then Baker returned and ordered Frank to begin his essay.

"Speak up loud and clear," he said, "for when you're told to talk, we expect you to talk."

Frank unfolded his manuscript and began to read:

"The problem of the hen is one of the most interesting subjects in ornithology."

"Hi! hi! hi!" yelled the seniors, rapping the floor with their clubs, umbrellas, brooms and so on.

"It seems to me very appropriate," continued Frank, reading from his paper, "that this subject should be discussed by a 'Pig'——"

This word was a signal for the most terrific uproar that the room had yet witnessed. All the seniors made a dash at Frank with their clubs, brooms, umbrellas and so forth, raised in the air.

They brought them down in great whacks upon the table; he stood as still as a statue. If he had attempted to dodge he would certainly have been hit.

"The idea of a neophyte using that word!" they cried. "Give him a black mark!"

Accordingly, the memorandum books came out and down went another black mark.

It then flashed upon Frank that it must be a rule of this order that no neophyte should refer to it as the "Pig," and unhappily in his essay he had done so a dozen times or more.

He quickly decided to pretend to read, but really to speak offhand and so avoid using the troublesome word, but there came another knock at the door.

This time it was Prof. Adler, whose room was in the building, and who called to protest against so much noise.

"You see what it is, professor," said Baker, throwing the door wide open. "You were once a 'Pig' yourself, I believe."

"Yes, I was," the professor answered, trying hard to repress a smile as he looked at Merriwell and the four solemn juniors, "but really it's getting late, gentlemen, and I think you ought to take your initiation elsewhere."

"Well, perhaps we have gone far enough at this stage," said Baker. "At any rate, professor, we won't trouble you any more to-night."

"I hope you won't," said the good-humored professor, "for I should hate to report you."

With that he went away, and the next stage in the initiation began immediately.

Each of the five neophytes was blindfolded with a towel tied around his head; his hands were then bound behind his back, and a long cord attached to them; then they were sternly ordered to remember the rule of obedience.

"If you obey you'll come to no harm," said Baker, earnestly, "but the slightest act of disobedience may run you into serious trouble."

When the blindfolding and binding had been completed the neophytes were taken out to the campus and so to the street; there three or four seniors went with each neophyte in different directions about the city.

The seniors kept hold of the rope and walked several yards behind the neophyte, telling him when to turn to the right or the left.

In this way Frank was made to pass close to moving wagons, and to go to the very edge of embankments where if he had taken another step he would have had an unpleasant fall.

For more than an hour he was kept moving about in this way, completely baffling the efforts of the seniors to rattle him. He did everything they told him promptly, and never a word escaped his lips.

He had made up his mind that come what would he would not get another black mark. At last as he was crossing a street he was told to halt. He did so, feeling under his feet at the moment the rail of a street car track.

Then his "mentors," as his companions were called, gathered around him, threw the loose end of the rope over his shoulders and told him to stay where he was.

"Remember, neophyte," said one of them, slowly, "the command is to stand still, no matter what happens."

Frank made no response, but it was evident that he understood them.

A moment later the mentors went away, where, or how far, Frank could only guess.

It was late in the evening, and the street was very still, but somewhere in the distance Frank could hear the rumbling of a car; it drew nearer and nearer, and at length he could hear the buzzing of the trolley wire. It seemed directly over his head.

"I see what this is," he thought; "they have put me between the double tracks of the line so that I'll think that a car is going to run me down."

"Of course, these fellows are not going to injure me, and so if I stand perfectly still the car will pass close beside me. If I should move I might get run over. I can imagine that some fellows might be completely unnerved by this test."

The rumbling of the car became louder and louder; then there was a single clang of a bell and it stopped a short distance away; some passenger evidently was getting out. The bell rang again, and the car started.

The motorman kept up a loud clanging of his footbell as he approached Frank; the latter, remembering his instructions, stood perfectly still, confident that the car would rush past him without touching him.

Suddenly, just as the car was upon him, Frank was pushed violently and fell face forward in front of it!

CHAPTER XVIII.

FRANK WANTS MORE.

The car was going at full speed when Frank fell. On the instant the motorman reversed the current and applied the brake hard, but although the wheels immediately began to turn in the other direction, it was impossible to check the advance of the car completely.

It slid for a few yards along the rails, sending up a shower of sparks, and pushing Frank's body along ahead of it.

Frank's first impression was, when he felt the push, that it was a part of the initiation. The mind acts with marvelous quickness under such circumstances, and what he thought was that, instead of being placed beside the car tracks, he was really directly upon them and thus in the way of the car, and that this push had been given him at the very last minute in order to knock him out of the way.

It was but the fraction of a second, of course, before he realized his mistake, for he received a severe blow from the car platform.

Knowing then that this was either a mistake in the initiation, or something not on the programme, and that at all events he was in serious danger, he made the most desperate effort to help himself.

Naturally this was no easy matter, for his hands were tied behind his back and his eyes were blindfolded.

The knots had not been tied with the greatest skill, but the line was a stout one and in the short time he had to make the effort, Frank could not release his hands.

He was more than half stunned by the collision, but he kept his wits sufficiently to roll over and over in front of the moving car, trying the best he could to kick himself out of its way. Meantime the car was rapping him repeatedly.

It was all over in a second or two, but the time seemed terribly long to the neophyte.

He was only half conscious of what happened, but he knew that the noise of the wheels upon the rails had ceased, and that he was picked up in strong arms and carried somewhere; then his brain whirled and everything became a blank.

That was the way the event seemed to Frank. The way it appeared to his mentors was this:

Following the usual custom of such initiations, they had stood Frank close to the car tracks, but not so close that the passing car would have so much as brushed him.

Such events were not so uncommon in New Haven as to make them dangerous when conducted in the ordinary way. Motormen get used to the pranks of students and accordingly send their cars past blindfolded figures at full speed, oftentimes clanging the footbell furiously in order to help out the joke by alarming the neophyte as much as possible.

Sometimes a motorman who is new to the business gets so disturbed at the sight of the blindfolded figure near the rail that he stops the car just short of him.

In any event no trouble had arisen before this from this feature of "Pig" initiation.

Having left Frank beside the track, as we have stated, the mentors withdrew and stood in the shadow of a big elm from where they could see the result of the test without being observed by the motorman or anybody else in the vicinity.

They were watching the affair with great interest, although pretty well convinced that Merriwell's nerve was so strong that he would stand the test without trouble.

They were disappointed when the car stopped to let off a passenger, but were satisfied when it proceeded again and rapidly gained full speed.

Then they were amazed to see a figure dart rapidly out from the shadow of another tree not far away and make straight toward the neophyte.

They wondered at it, but were not alarmed, for their first impression was that it was some man who was unfamiliar with students' doings, and who believed that the blindfolded figure was in real danger.

They rather expected, therefore, to see this stranger catch Merriwell up and drag him aside. Their horror may be better imagined than described when they saw the stranger push Merriwell in front of the car and then leap across the tracks just missing the car himself, and disappear.

The alarmed and indignant seniors dashed from their hiding place and ran with all possible speed to Merriwell's assistance. They came up to him just as the car stopped sliding forward, and began to move back under the force of the reversed current.

The excited motorman was jabbering curses upon the foolish conduct of students generally, and altogether too busy with his apparatus and too rattled to get down from the platform.

The conductor and the few passengers in the car, disturbed by the slight collision, were moving toward the platform to see what was the matter.

Rowe, who was in charge of the party of seniors, immediately picked Frank up and carried him toward the sidewalk.

"Get a move on, boys!" he exclaimed, under his breath. "We must get Merriwell out of sight as quick as possible."

"Shan't I go for a doctor, Dick?" asked one of them.

"Yes," answered Rowe, hurriedly; "bring him to my room, but keep mum."

One of the seniors sped away down the street, another took hold of Frank with Rowe to help carry him, while the last member of the party fell in behind his companions, determined if they were followed to beat off pursuers.

This action on the part of the seniors might seem rather peculiar to those who are not wholly familiar with secret society matters.

They did not stop to discuss it, for each one of them knew in a flash just what must be done.

Secret societies at Yale are very powerful organizations. In past years there were some efforts to disband them and prevent the students from organizing them.

All these efforts failed; the more the faculty tried to suppress the Greek letter orders, the more firmly the students clung to them, until at last the faculty had to let the societies alone.

The students knew, however, that there were plenty of men in the government of the college who

would be glad of any excuse to suppress the societies and no better excuse could be found than the fact that a student had been injured in the course of an initiation.

Therefore, when Frank was knocked in front of the car, Rowe and his companions knew that it would not do at all to let the accident become a matter of public knowledge. So, before the people on the car half realized what had happened, they had carried Frank across the street, got over a fence into the grounds surrounding a private house, and were rushing along toward a thick clump of shrubbery.

When they were concealed in this they paused for an instant to get their breath and make a hasty examination of the neophyte.

By that time Frank was wholly unconscious. There was a red spot upon his forehead, his clothing was torn and his hands were bleeding a little from scratches.

The wounds and bruises would not have disturbed the seniors particularly, but Frank's unconsciousness gave them genuine alarm.

"We must keep moving!" exclaimed Rowe.

"Let me take my turn at carrying, then," said the one who had been acting as rear guard.

This was done. They proceeded across the lawn, climbed another fence into a garden and, having crossed this, came to another street.

They were now fairly safe from pursuit by the passengers on the trolley car, who, as a matter of fact, gave the matter no further thought when they were told by the motorman that the affair was a lot of students' nonsense.

As it was now very late in the evening the streets were almost deserted and by acting cautiously the seniors succeeded in getting Frank to Rowe's room without interference.

There they laid him upon a bed and hastened to apply restoratives as well as they knew how.

"It would be simply awful if it should prove that he was dead!" exclaimed Rowe, with a groan.

"He isn't dead," said one of the others; "we'll fetch him around——"

At this moment the student who had gone for a doctor burst into the room bringing the physician with him.

The doctor laid a case of instruments upon the table as he passed and bent over the bed where Frank lay. At that moment Frank opened his eyes and, seeing a strange face above him, said in a surprised tone:

"Hello, what do you want?"

"Humph!" muttered the doctor, "I thought I was going to have a fine chance to set broken limbs or do some other clever job in surgery. I guess you've cut me out of an operation, young man."

"Hey?" said Frank, trying to sit up.

His bones ached and he gave up the attempt.

"What's the matter, anyway?" he asked.

"How do you feel, Merriwell?" asked Rowe, anxiously.

"Kind of sore," returned the neophyte. "I should think I'd been in a football scrimmage. Oh!"

His eyes brightened as he remembered what had happened to him.

"Something went wrong with the——" he began, intending to say "with the initiation," when he caught sight of the doctor's face.

Seeing that a stranger was present and remembering his instructions to keep the initiation a secret, Frank hesitated an instant and then said:

"Machinery."

"Yes," answered Rowe, understanding the point, "the machinery broke down, but it wasn't our fault."

"I took that for granted," Frank remarked. "How did the car get along?"

The seniors laughed. This question showed them better than anything else could that Frank was not dangerously injured.

"The car seemed to stand it pretty well," Rowe answered. "How is he, doctor?"

"Well," answered the physician, who had been making an examination, "I don't see any evidence of broken bones, and what is more surprising still, the young man's brain doesn't seem to have suffered under the strain to which you have subjected him."

"I can stand more than that!" muttered Frank.

"There's nothing for me to do here," said the doctor. "I should advise him to go to bed and lie still for the rest of the night. If he feels badly in the morning you can send for me."

With this the doctor took himself off. Frank then slowly sat up.

"There are some aches about me," he said, with a wry grimace, "but I suppose the more I talk of them the more black marks I'll get."

"Oh, hang the black marks!" exclaimed Rowe. "There's been initiation enough for you, old fellow, and there isn't a doubt that when the matter is explained to the rest of the 'Pigs,' that you'll be excused from any further test."

"No, siree!" exclaimed Frank, emphatically.

"Eh, what's that?"

"If you think," responded Frank, "that I'm going to do the baby act and crawl out of the rest of the circus you're mistaken."

"But——"

"There's no 'but' about it! I've been through worse things than this and if you fellows don't put the initiation through just as if nothing had happened, I'll be hanged if I'll join the society."

CHAPTER XIX.

THE LEAP INTO THE RIVER.

"That's the right kind of talk anyway!" said Rowe, "and it's just what we might have expected from you, but really, Merriwell, this was the last thing on the programme for to-night, and even if that scoundrel hadn't pushed you in front of the car we should have made you go to bed at this time."

"Well, I'm bound to obey you in any case," said Frank, "but speaking of that, am I at liberty to talk?"

"Of course, for you're in the presence of members of the Pi Gamma in good standing."

Rowe grinned when he said this, for he thought of the black-mark nonsense and realized that Frank took it in earnest. He added:

"Out of consideration for this accident, Merriwell, I shall ask the president to score off the black marks already entered against you and let you begin with a clean record."

"Well, I can't object to that," said Frank, "for I must say it struck me that some of those marks were chucked on rather harshly."

"You'd better not make any criticisms of the way this society is run," declared Rowe, sternly.

"That's so; I take that all back, but what I wanted to say was that it seemed to me as if somebody had interfered with the game."

"That was it exactly, Merriwell, and it was something that we shall have to take a hand in before long."

"How did it happen?"

The others told Frank what they had seen. He listened thoughtfully and remarked:

"Some fellow evidently had a grudge against me."

"It looks that way," responded Rowe.

"Who do you suppose it could be?"

Before Frank could answer there was a knock at the door and Baker hurried in.

"Ah!" he said, in a tone of relief, "I see you've got through all right. There was something I meant to tell you, Rowe, and I forgot all about it."

"What was it?" asked Rowe.

"Why," answered Baker, "Browning came in, you remember, just before we started in on Merriwell's essay?"

"Yes. I wondered what he wanted."

"Well, he came in to say how he had heard that Miller, the cigar dealer, had it in for Frank, and that we'd better look out lest Miller take advantage of the initiation to put up some dirty job. Of course I meant to tell you about it before you took the neophyte to the street, but Prof. Adler's interruption drove it clean out of my mind. I didn't think of it until I was half through with

Rattleton, who was the neophyte in my party.

"I see you've got through to-night all right, but it'll be just as well to look out——"

Baker stopped, for there was something in the expression of the faces before him that aroused his curiosity.

"What's the matter?" he asked, suddenly.

They told him and he listened with growing indignation.

"It must have been Miller!" he exclaimed, at last. "Didn't any of you fellows recognize him?"

Now that Miller's name was mentioned the students thought that they did recognize him, but they could not be sure of it.

"We must find out about it!" said Baker, earnestly. "This thing has not only endangered a student's life, but it has put all secret societies at Yale in danger of their existence.

"If Frank had been seriously hurt the faculty would surely hear of it and nothing would convince them that we weren't to blame for it. Miller must be prevented from doing anything of this kind again."

"Probably he won't try it again," Frank remarked, "for if he saw how successful his trick was, he must be convinced at this minute that I was maimed for life, if not killed."

"Merriwell insists on going on with the initiation," said Rowe, "and I have told him that, under the circumstances, we would erase all the black marks against him."

"That's right," responded Baker, solemnly. "I think we'd better go on with the initiation just as usual, and meantime some of us will look up Miller and see what we can do about him."

"I rather wish," suggested Frank, "that you could wait on that until the initiation is over, so that I can take a hand in it."

"It won't do to lose any time," returned Baker. "You go to bed, Merriwell, for you'll probably find that you need rest; the rest of us will go and have an interview with Miller."

As Frank was bound to obey, he made no further objection to this plan, and accordingly went to his room. Baker and Rowe and the others proceeded to the little shop where Miller did a cigar business.

They found it closed. Usually it was open until after midnight. By patient inquiry they learned where Miller lived and they went there. Miller was not at home.

The students rather wished that they could report the matter to the police, but that would have brought the Pi Gamma affairs into public notice and so they decided not to do so.

It might be said right here that during the rest of the week of initiation they made vain efforts to get track of Miller. He had disappeared.

An assistant was in charge of the shop, who pretended to be very much mystified at his employer's absence. Whether he was telling the truth or not could not be proved.

The main fact was clear; Miller had played his trick so successfully on Frank that he was afraid of the consequences and was keeping out of sight.

Frank was a little lame on the following day, but not sufficiently so to be kept from going about as usual. The initiation, therefore, proceeded during the week according to regular custom.

During the daytime Frank attended lectures and recitations with regularity, and as he afterward said, did rather more studying than at any other week during his college career.

Every evening there was a meeting of the "Pigs" in the room of some senior member, where exercises of a more or less ridiculous nature, similar to those already described, were had. Usually, too, there was an excursion upon the street, but in these instances the neophyte was not blindfolded.

Frank had had to do numberless small errands, and one evening was devoted almost wholly to sending him from house to house to ask for a piece of cake or a slice of bread.

His mentors always stood near to see that he followed out the instructions literally, and in every case he complied.

Rattleton and Diamond suffered more from the experiences of these evenings than they had on the occasion when their nerves were tested by being driven blindfolded through the streets.

Diamond lost his temper several times and flatly refused to go on with the initiation, whereupon the seniors would give him a host of black marks.

He took the black marks as seriously as Frank did, and always became very penitent.

"I suppose I can do what other fellows have had to do," he grumbled, "but I can't see any sense in such tomfoolery."

Then the seniors would discuss the matter gravely, and decide that as Diamond was a well-meaning fellow, they would let the black marks go this time, so that he could start over with a clean score.

Before the week was over Frank began to see through the black-mark farce, and he realized that it was a part of the scheme to make a neophyte get as many black marks against himself as possible, and then as a special favor allow him to start over again; nevertheless, he continued to obey instructions as carefully as possible.

The most trying experience he had in this line was when the seniors arranged matters with several young ladies who were acquaintances of Frank's, so that they should meet him one after another, speak to him, and try to engage him in conversation.

On each of these occasions a senior member of the order happened to be near, and Frank was compelled to put his hand to his lips and shake his head at every pretty girl who spoke to him.

Some of the girls understood the situation, and others were mystified. The result was, therefore, that as every one of them appeared to be indignant and offended, Frank accumulated a lot of trouble which it took him several calls later to overcome in the way of making apologies and explanations.

He never complained, however, and at last the final night of the initiation arrived.

Up to this time not one of the neophytes had been near the society's rooms. These were known to be on the top floor of a high building not far from the college. No student not a member was ever admitted to them, and what there was there was one of the mysteries of the society.

On this evening Frank and the other neophytes were again blindfolded and dressed in long gowns that had hoods attached to them.

The hood was pulled over the neophyte's face. His hands were then bound behind his back, and half a dozen mentors accompanied him on his trip.

On this occasion each of the mentors had a long horsewhip. They walked at some distance from him and guided him in the way he should go by touching his face on either side with the end of the whip; when Frank felt the lash brush his right cheek he turned to the right, and *vice versa*.

The mentors, as before, left him alone sometimes for half an hour at a stretch. On each of these occasions he had no idea where he was or what was being done.

As a matter of fact, warned by their previous experience, the mentors kept within sight, but no effort was made to do Frank an injury.

The object of the long waits was to try the neophyte's nerves as much as possible, so that he should be in proper condition for the final test. The most trying of these consisted of the jumping from the bridge.

After having been driven this way and that until his head was completely turned, Frank knew that he was approaching the railroad tracks, for he heard the sounds of passing engines.

Presently two of the members stepped beside him in order to prevent him from stumbling, for he was now upon the sleepers themselves.

They walked beside him thus for some distance until at length the neophyte knew that he was on a bridge; he remembered the place then, or thought he did.

Several railroads that pass through New Haven enter the street by crossing the Quinnepiac River on a drawbridge.

Frank was certain that he was on this bridge, and for that matter his guess was a correct one.

The students conducted him to the middle of the bridge, and after halting him, told him to move forward very cautiously by shuffling his feet along on the boards.

He did so, and presently was aware that his toes were projecting over the edge of the bridge; that meant that the draw was open.

Just below him he could hear the gurgling of the water as it flowed past the piles.

He stood there in silence for a few minutes, and then another party approached, bringing with them Rattleton, Diamond, Henderson and Hodge. The five neophytes were then together.

A whispered consultation took place among the seniors. Apparently they were trying to prevent the neophytes from hearing them, but as a matter of fact the neophytes heard every word, which was exactly what the seniors intended.

The discussion was as to whether the tide had risen far enough, whether the ropes were all right and would hold, and whether any of the neophytes were too nervous to risk the plunge.

Of course the waiting neophytes understood it all. They realized that they would be ordered to jump into the water. It was not a pleasant thought.

There was not one of the juniors who would not have relished a dive if he had had his eyes open and had been dressed for the occasion, but it is quite another thing to stand bound and

blindfolded above a rushing current and leap out into the darkness.

At last it was decided that Rattleton should go over first. The seniors talked in low tones and acted generally as if they were greatly excited by the seriousness of the occasion.

Even Frank, who was perfectly cool through it all, wondered if everything was so arranged that no accident could occur, and he felt a little sorry for Rattleton, who was so excitable that the sudden shock of jumping and landing in the water might produce unpleasant results.

With it all the seniors were very slow in their procedure and every minute of suspense made it harder for the waiting neophytes.

At last Baker, in a low tone, reminded Rattleton of his promise to obey orders, and then told him to jump.

Frank, of course, could not see a thing, but he heard a little grating sound as Rattleton's feet left the planks. An instant later there was a loud splash in the water.

"Pull him in quick!" exclaimed the voice of Rowe, "we don't want him to catch cold. Hurry it up!"

"There, he's coming to the surface!" said another voice.

This remark was followed instantly by a loud coughing and sniffing.

"Poor Harry's got his mouth full of water," thought Frank. "I'll look out for that when I go over."

With a great bustling about and a lot of excited exclamations the seniors pulled Rattleton up and started him off as fast as he could go toward the college.

CHAPTER XX.

THE LAST STAGE.

It was Diamond's turn next, and he went off the edge as promptly as Rattleton had. The same sort of action followed his jump, and Frank was surprised that Diamond appeared to have swallowed as much water as Harry had.

"I should have thought Diamond would keep his mouth closed," thought Frank.

Hodge's turn came next, and he, too, left the bridge promptly.

Henderson weakened when the command came to him. Instead of jumping he drew back with a little gasp.

"Jump, neophyte!" exclaimed Baker, in a low but stern voice. "It's too late for you to hope for any special consideration now. What others have done you must do, too!"

"Great Scott!" muttered Henderson.

Frank heard his steps wavering upon the planks, and then, with a little quivering cry, the frightened neophyte jumped over. The splash that followed his jump was very loud, and it was followed by a lot more of splashing.

"Thunder and Mars!" cried Baker, "the rope's broken."

"Do you suppose he can swim?" inquired the voice of Rowe, anxiously.

"How can he with his hands tied?"

"Then he'll drown."

"We mustn't let him!"

"Did one of you bring along that boat hook that I told you to bring?"

"Yes, here it is."

"Catch it into his clothes before he floats too far."

"Whew! how fast the tide runs!"

"Have you got him?"

"Yes. No! the hook's got loose."

"Try again, then, quick!"

"Good Lord! suppose he's become unconscious from fear, there'd be no saving him then."

Frank ached to have his bandage removed and his hands unbound so that he could go to the help of his companion.

"When it comes my turn to conduct an initiation I'll bet I'll fix things so that there won't be any

such accident as this," he thought. "It's outrageous to put an unoffending fellow like Henderson through this sort of trial and then let a slip occur."

It was a great temptation to Frank then to forcibly release his hands and jump into the water after Henderson, but he reflected that after all there were plenty of seniors present who had courage and who knew the water well.

He decided that it was best to leave the matter in their hands, but he listened anxiously for some sound of Henderson's voice to assure him that all was well.

He did not hear Henderson's voice, but he did hear a great many more exclamations of anxiety and doubt as the seniors seemed at last to get the big hook securely fastened in the neophyte's clothing.

Then there was a lot of tugging and hauling, and after a time the sound of retreating footsteps.

"I guess Henderson will come out of it all right," thought Frank, "for it seems that he can walk."

"It's nearly time to close the draw," said Baker, hastily. "Now, Neophyte Merriwell, it's your turn. Remember your instructions, and when I give the word, jump."

Frank shrugged his shoulders. It was a slight action, but the seniors could see it, for a big electric lamp upon one of the bridge pillars lighted the scene brilliantly. It was very evident that Merriwell's nerve had not been shaken.

"Be ready to pull him out at once, boys, and don't let the rope slip this time!" said Baker. "One—two—"

Baker spoke very slowly, and although he appeared to be perfectly unmoved, Frank's heart nevertheless was beating fast. He wondered how far he would fall before he struck the water.

He dreaded the chill that would come upon him suddenly, but he had no fear of the result, and he was fully determined that he would do his share in this as promptly and boldly as any man who had ever been initiated.

"Three!" said Baker. "Jump!"

Frank leaped at once, far out from the bridge. He had his lips tightly closed, and he held his breath to avoid taking in a lot of water.

To his immense surprise he did not touch the water at all. He could not have fallen two feet before he was caught in strong arms and lifted back to the bridge.

Nevertheless he heard a loud splash and a voice saying:

"Pull him out at once."

"Oh, come off, Rowe!" exclaimed Baker, in a loud tone of voice, "have you forgotten that there's nobody to follow Merriwell?"

"Yes, that's so," was the reply, "I'd clean forgotten that."

"Well, I'll be hanged!" exclaimed Frank, "if this isn't a worse shock than jumping into the river itself. Was that the way you treated the rest of them?"

"Give him a black mark for talking," said Baker, with a hearty laugh.

Frank said "Humph!" but nothing else as the students hurried him across the bridge back to land.

He was immensely amused by the experience, and on the way to the society rooms he thought it all out, and came to a conclusion on the matter that was very nearly correct.

At high tide the water in the Quinneapolis River comes almost to a level with the bridge.

The boys always arrange their initiations in such a way that the bridge test shall take place at high tide, and they choose an hour when no trains are due to pass.

Then a small fee persuades the bridge keeper to open the draw. A big, flat-bottomed boat is procured and made fast to the bridge just in front of the open edge.

Half a dozen of the students get into this boat; some of them receive the leaping neophyte in their arms and clap their hands over his mouth so that he shall not cry out.

At the same time other students topple a big log into the water so as to make a splash.

The rest of the farce is carried on as described, with the result of making the waiting neophytes believe that their companion has had a cold plunge into the river.

Time was when the students made the neophytes really jump into the water, but it was found that many a student whose nerve was supposed to be perfectly good, suffered such a shock from sudden contact with the water that he became seriously ill, so that test was modified in the manner described.

The last stage of the initiation that can be described was one of the most ridiculous.

Frank was still blindfolded and bound. He was led, he knew not where, but at last halted within a

doorway. There his hands were untied and he was told to kneel.

He did so, and found that he was at the foot of a flight of stairs.

"You are now going to ascend," said Baker, solemnly, "to the mystic regions of Pi Gamma. It is becoming that a neophyte should enter there in a modest attitude, therefore you will go on your hands and knees until commanded to rise. Proceed."

Frank immediately began to climb the steps upon his hands and knees. The moment he began to move his ears were fairly deafened with a hideous uproar.

It seemed as if a tribe of demons had been let loose around him. There was an infernal clatter, made, as he afterward learned, by beating upon tin pans and shaking large squares of sheet iron.

There was a chorus of savage yells and shrieking. The air was foul with the odor of firecrackers that were exploded close to his ears. Every kind of barbaric noise that student ingenuity can invent was brought into play.

"By the bones of Cæsar!" thought Frank. "If I hadn't been pretty well seasoned by adventures before this, I believe I should be scared."

As it was, far from being scared, he shook with laughter as he slowly and patiently climbed up the stairs. It seemed as if they would never end.

It was a winding stairway, and went from the ground clear to the top of the high building.

Later he learned that this was a back stairway built expressly for the students, whose society rooms were in the top of the building.

It seemed to him as if he had climbed higher than the top of the Washington monument when at last he found no steps in front of him, and the diabolical racket ceased as suddenly as it had begun.

He was told to rise, and he did so with a sigh of relief. He was then led two or three paces and ordered to sit down.

He did so, and felt that he was in something like a swing. There were chains at each side of him, holding the seat. He was told to grasp these chains tightly, and hang on, lest he be dropped the entire distance to the ground.

"That would be a pretty long fall," thought Frank, who at the moment really believed that there was a well beneath him that extended clear to the bottom of the building; so he gripped the chains and heard the voice of Baker crying:

"All ready, send him up."

"I'd like to know how much farther up I can go," thought Frank.

He heard the creaking of a windlass and knew that he was rising. As he went up his seat swung back and forth a little, making him feel all the more how important it was that he should hang on securely.

This journey was as long, and in one sense as trying as the climb upstairs had been. There was no noise in connection with it, except the constant creaking of the windlass.

Blindfolded as he was, it really seemed as if he had been hauled up at least a hundred feet when at last the creaking ceased and he was lifted from his seat.

Then he was laid upon an inclined plane, feet downward. It seemed steep, too, and when his fingers accidentally touched the little rail at the side he noticed that it was well greased.

He did not need to be told then what was to happen, for he knew that he would be sent whizzing down this plane to land—somewhere.

"Is the tank all ready?" asked somebody, who was holding Frank by the shoulders and thus keeping him from sliding down.

"Yes," came a muffled voice that seemed far, far below. "Let him go!"

The hands on Frank's shoulders were released, and he promptly began to rush down the plane.

In less than a second his feet had come in contact with a mattress, and as the force of his fall brought him to an upright position, a glass of water was flung into his face.

At the same instant the bandage was torn from his eyes, the hood raised, and he found himself standing in a well-lighted room surrounded by a group of laughing and interested seniors.

He turned with an expression of the utmost amazement to the plane down which he had slid. He saw that the distance up which he had been slowly raised by the windlass was less than ten feet.

CHAPTER XXI.

MAKING THINGS INTERESTING FOR MILLER.

"It's funny," remarked Frank, with a smile, "how far a man seems to be going when his eyes are shut."

There was a chorus of laughter at this, in which Rattleton and the other neophytes, who were present, joined.

Order was quickly restored by Baker, the president, who announced that there was yet one more step in the initiation to be taken. What this step was cannot be described here.

It must be remembered that the order of Pi Gamma is a secret society, and every member of it is sworn to keep its secrets sacredly. Among the things that they are not allowed to tell are the very tests which have already been narrated, but such secrets are really common property in New Haven.

So much of the initiations are conducted upon the public streets and in a public manner that there has been no violation of the rules of the order in telling of Frank Merriwell's experience.

What followed in the rooms of the society, however, must be omitted out of respect to the serious character of the proceedings and the fact that the members of the order regard them all as of considerable importance.

It is proper to say that no further tests were required of the candidates; they had passed their week's ordeal successfully, and the other proceedings were conducted with their eyes open.

The end of it all was conducted with vociferous cheering on the part of the old members of Pi Gamma, and each of the new members came in for a lot of hearty handshaking and congratulations. Then the whole affair wound up with a supper in the society's largest room.

At this there were not only the seniors who had initiated the first block of juniors, but also a number of graduates who had paid a visit to New Haven for the sole purpose of taking some part in an initiation ceremony.

Two or three college instructors, who had been members during their student days, were present, and no one there appeared to enjoy the occasion more than did Prof. Adler, the one who had warned the boys that they must conduct their initiation more quietly as long as it took place in a college room.

On such an occasion as that the students and professors are pretty much on the same terms. The professors, to be sure, are addressed by their titles, and spoken to respectfully, but there is none of the restraint of the classroom, and no fear whatever that any of the professors present will report unpleasant things to other members of the faculty.

The supper was a good one, and naturally enough it was thoroughly enjoyed by the new members, the more so as a part of their trial during the week of initiation was the fact that they had been compelled to limit their eating to the plainest articles of food.

All pies and cakes had been forbidden, and in fact nothing that could be called a luxury was allowed to pass their lips. Those who smoked had been deprived of that habit also.

Now the seniors who had been the most severe in compelling an obedience to these rules fairly overloaded their new associates with attention.

They made a point of heaping the junior's plates with more good things than they could possibly eat, and a plentiful supply of cigars and tobacco was placed before them.

After the eating was finished speeches were in order. Pres. Baker called upon one after another of the older members, and eventually each one of the new members had to make remarks.

Prof. Adler spoke briefly but with undoubted sincerity of the pleasure it gave him to be associated with the students' society in this way, declaring it as his belief that they were helpful to the college and that it was a mistake to try to suppress them.

This from a member of the faculty was especially interesting to the boys, and it brought out thunders of applause.

The younger members got through their speeches very well, being greeted with loud cheers whether they said anything of consequence or not.

As was to be expected, Rattleton twisted his words hind side forward a good many times, and at last sat down, blushing and feeling that he had never made such a fool of himself.

The older members apparently thought differently, for they applauded long and heartily until the abashed student had to rise and bow.

Frank spoke easily and quietly. He made no attempt at oratorical effects, but declared that he felt it an honor to be a member of Pi Gamma, and assured them that he should look forward to the time when he could get even for the miseries he had endured for a week in inflicting the same tortures upon another fellow.

This was the spirit that the members appreciated best, and of course they cheered tremendously.

The most effective part of Frank's speech, however, and the one that created the greatest interest, was not applauded at all.

"Perhaps you don't all know it," he said, "but some of you will remember that there was an incident connected with my initiation that was not on the programme."

The room became very quiet. All the seniors had been informed of Miller's attempt to do Frank an injury, and the only ones there who did not know it were the graduates and a few members of the faculty.

"I think my friends know me well enough," Frank continued, "to believe me when I say that I haven't the slightest desire to be revenged upon the man who put me in such danger of my life. It was a low-down, dastardly trick and the work of a coward."

There was a low murmur of assent at this.

"A man who would do such a thing as that," Frank went on, "is really unworthy the contempt of a Yale student and so from one standpoint it might be well enough to let the matter drop.

"On the other hand, we are bound to consider the possibility of such a thing happening again. If the man who did the trick escapes without any sort of punishment, he may attempt it again, or he may boast of it to some companion as cowardly and mean as himself, and the result may be that at some future time a student may be treated in a similar way and not have the luck to come out of it as well as I did."

Frank paused a moment, for the deathly silence with which his hearers listened was a little embarrassing.

"I have said that I didn't care for revenge," he said, in a moment, "but now that I am a full-fledged member of Pi Gamma, I feel that I have a right to look at it as an offense against the society rather than against me as an individual."

"Right!" exclaimed one of the seniors, in a low tone. Others nodded approval.

"I think it would be dignified and proper," Frank continued, "for the society to take some kind of action on the matter, and if it is allowable I should like to make a suggestion."

"Go ahead," said Baker, promptly; "there is no member from whom a suggestion on this matter would be more fitting. What do you think we should do?"

"I'm not thinking," Frank answered, "of passing any vote to do one thing or another, but it strikes me that in a perfectly harmless way we can take the law into our own hands a bit and fix Miller, for there's no doubt that he was the guilty one, so that he will never molest a student again as long as he lives.

"You see," and he smiled good-humoredly, "I'm fresh from my experience with the tortures of Pi Gamma."

All the listeners smiled broadly.

"It is one thing," he added, "to endure these tortures with a feeling that you are in the hands of your friends, but quite another, I should think, to go through such an ordeal with a feeling that the fiends and demons surrounding you are hostile.

"I can tell you frankly that for my own part, during the worst parts of the initiation, I felt always that you were friends of mine and that I was perfectly safe to trust myself in your hands no matter what extravagant things you seemed to be doing.

"I think that if Miller should be put through some such proceeding it would—well, it would likely tear what little nerve he has into tatters."

Frank hesitated a moment and then sat down. The room was perfectly still while the members of the order looked at one another doubtfully.

"I don't quite see," remarked Baker, presently, "how the society of Pi Gamma can put a man who is not a student through an initiation."

"Oh, I didn't mean to suggest that," responded Frank, hastily, but without rising. "I was only thinking that the society has such means for terrifying a man that it ought to be easy for us to devise a plan for giving Miller a good scare."

"Yes, that's the scheme!" exclaimed Rowe, earnestly. "I wouldn't favor putting him through anything like the farce with which we treat neophytes, but it does seem to me that we might give him a dose in earnest somehow."

Other members gave their assent to this suggestion and then somebody asked:

"But what can you do about it if you can't find Miller?"

"That's a damper!" responded Rowe, gloomily. "I understand that he's skipped."

"He's come back," said another senior.

"So?"

All eyes were turned upon the speaker.

"I saw him in his shop on my way to the rooms this evening," said the senior.

"Then he's got over his scare. Probably he may have heard that Merriwell wasn't seriously injured and so thinks the thing's blown over."

"We'll show him the contrary!" growled Baker.

"But how shall we do it?"

After a moment of thought Baker rose and said:

"I think as Merriwell has suggested that it is just as well that the society should not pass any vote on this matter, but with your permission I'll appoint a committee to take the matter in charge.

"They can meet after the ceremonies of this evening are over and decide what to do about it. It is probably too late to undertake anything to-night."

"Miller keeps open until after midnight," somebody suggested.

"Yes, but it's after midnight now and we don't want to act without being thoroughly prepared. Unless there is some objection I will appoint the five new members with Rowe and myself to act as a committee to consider this matter and take such steps as we think best."

There was no objection to this and so the matter was considered settled, but the interest of the students in it was so great that they had little desire to talk of other matters, and before long the meeting adjourned for the night and the members of the committee assembled in one of the smaller rooms to lay plans for Miller's punishment.

CHAPTER XXII.

MILLER'S NERVES.

There is no need to give an account of the long discussion held by the committee; what they did in the matter is of more importance.

A good many wild plans were suggested; hot-headed Rattleton was in favor of severe measures that would have given Miller pain if they had not produced serious injuries.

Jack Diamond, too, who had lost his temper more than once in the course of his initiation, argued in favor of giving Miller a punishment something like a flogging at the stake.

Frank resolutely sat down on all propositions of this kind.

"I don't care to have any hand in it," he said, "if it comes to taking this man when he's only one against a good many and giving him a drubbing. If that was the question I'd tackle him single-handed and give him a chance to defend himself.

"What we want to do is to give him an experience that he won't forget as soon as he might a licking."

It took some argument for Frank to bring his loyal friends around to his view of the case, and they were not fully satisfied until he himself had mapped out a plan that promised good sport and success.

In accordance with this plan Frank did not leave his room on the following day. There were lectures and recitations to be attended to, but he cut them and did not even show his face at the window.

Meantime the other fellows were busy in making preparations for the serious work of the night.

Most of these preparations were done in one of the rooms of the society, but a little took place elsewhere; for example Baker and Diamond arranged to meet as if by accident in front of Miller's cigar store.

They chose an hour when Miller was certain to be behind the counter. He was there, and after the two students had said good-morning, as if they had just met for the first time during the day, Baker remarked, in a loud voice:

"I got up so late this morning that I had to run to lectures after breakfast without a smoke and I haven't had time for one since. I guess I'll burn a cigar. Will you join me?"

"Thanks," responded Diamond, in the same tone, "I will."

Accordingly they entered the store and Baker called for cigars. Miller set a couple of boxes on the counter while the students made their selection.

"I never smoked this brand," remarked Baker, "but it looks pretty good."

"It'll do if it will burn," responded Diamond, biting off the end and turning to the alcohol lamp for

a light.

"How's Merriwell getting on?" asked Baker, as he handed out a bill for Miller to change.

Diamond's back was toward the cigar dealer, but he was facing a mirror, and in it could keep careful watch of Miller's face. Meantime, Baker was studying Miller also.

The cigar dealer's face was very grave, and if any one not interested in the matter that was weighing upon the students' minds had been present, he would probably have noticed nothing.

Both students, however, were convinced that Miller was greatly interested in the question and anxious for the answer.

Diamond drew a long breath.

"He's in a mighty bad way," he said.

"Why!" exclaimed Baker in surprise, "I thought the doctor reported that he was doing very well?"

"You forget," said Diamond, "that the doctor always said that he was doing very well under the circumstances."

"Oh! and I suppose that under the circumstances meant that the situation was very serious, eh?"

"Serious! Why, man alive, you don't seem to realize that Merriwell narrowly escaped death outright!"

"Huh! I hadn't thought it was as bad as that."

"Well it was!" continued Diamond, and it seemed to take him a long while to get his cigar lighted, while Baker was slowly counting his change.

Miller was fussing with the cigar boxes with his head bent down.

"If Merriwell's muscles hadn't been as tough as steel," continued Diamond, "he would have croaked before this."

"Oh, no! Oh, no!" returned Baker, as if incredulous. "I'm sure you're exaggerating the matter, Diamond, on account of your interest in your friend."

"Exaggerate nothing!" retorted Diamond, indignantly. "I guess I've spent hours enough with Merriwell to know his condition."

"And you say he's worse this morning?"

"Decidedly! The critical stage in his trouble has come on and the doctor has cleared the students out of his room. That was why I was out for a walk instead of watching by his bedside. I'm going back there now, for I can't bear the thought of being so far away."

"Well, it would be simply awful," remarked Baker, with long breath, "if he should——"

"Why don't you say die and have it out!" blurted Diamond. "That's what he's in danger of, poor chap."

"Well, if he should die," added Baker, "there ought to be a lot of trouble for the chap who pushed him in front of the car."

"Ah! if we only knew who that was!" said Diamond.

"I suppose that will always be a mystery," said Baker, and with this both left the shop.

"The miserable scoundrel!" exclaimed Diamond, under his breath, as soon as they were well outside. "There isn't any doubt that he was the fellow that did it."

"Of course there isn't," responded Baker, "but what makes you so emphatic in saying so now?"

"Why this! If Miller had had a spark of manhood in him he would have made some inquiry about Merriwell while we were talking about him. The very fact that he kept his mouth shut showed that he was afraid to speak for fear of giving himself away."

"Oh, he's the one, sure enough," Baker declared, "and I don't think there's any doubt that we've given him a good bit of fright for a starter. Now if he doesn't skip the town——"

"Rattleton and the others will look out for that," interrupted Diamond.

At that moment they saw Hodge idling in a doorway across the street and they knew that Rattleton must be loafing in a similar way in some other spot.

These two had been detailed to keep watch of Miller, dog his footsteps wherever he went, and if he made any attempt to leave town, keep him back by force if necessary.

Miller did not attempt to leave town. Probably he was too cautious to do so, for that might have been the means of bringing suspicion upon him.

Baker and Diamond in his shop had declared that the attack on Merriwell would probably remain a mystery; therefore it is likely that Miller reasoned that it would be safer for him to stay where

he was as if he were entirely ignorant of the whole matter.

Although Rattleton and Hodge kept their watch on him faithfully throughout the day, no other of the students interested in the case went near him until early in the evening.

Then Rowe and Henderson dropped in. Rowe went in first and bought a box of pipe tobacco. While he was waiting for his change Henderson came in with a very gloomy face.

He nodded silently to Rowe, laid a coin on the counter and asked for a cigar.

"Why! Henderson," exclaimed Rowe, jocosely, "what's gone wrong with you? Has the faculty suspended you, or is it simply stomach ache?"

"Oh! don't joke about it!" responded Henderson, dismally.

"Joke about what?"

"Haven't you heard?" asked Henderson, in the same melancholy tone.

"Heard what?"

"About Merriwell."

"No. That is, nothing since morning. Has he——"

"Yes. He's gone!"

The two students looked at each other as if in great consternation. Rowe drew a long breath and remarked:

"Great Scott! that's awful."

Henderson sighed too, and both went out together without another word. Then they got around the nearest corner and burst into a perfect fit of laughter.

"Say! but he looked as if he'd seen a ghost," chuckled Henderson.

"Gee whiz!" returned Rowe, "but he was blue. How will he look to-night, eh?"

"I'm just burning up to have the fun begin," answered Henderson, "and we shall have to wait until midnight."

"Yes, later than that if he shuts up at the usual late hour, but perhaps he'll start home earlier."

"I shouldn't wonder," remarked Henderson, "if this should work on his nerves through the evening and cause him to try to skip the town."

"We shan't lose him," returned Rowe, in a satisfied tone, "and the only thing we've got to do now is to kill time until the hour comes for business. Let's play billiards."

Accordingly they went to a billiard hall and knocked the balls around until they were tired of walking about the tables. For the others interested, as well as those, the time passed slowly.

A number of students, including Merriwell, who were to take part in this affair, assembled at the society rooms about the middle of the evening, thinking that possibly Miller might take fright and shut up his shop earlier, but the hours passed and Miller still stuck to his counter.

Hodge and Rattleton, who, now that it was dark, stood nearer to the cigar store, could see that Miller was growing nervous as the time passed.

He paced restlessly up and down back of his counter and occasionally shifted the position of boxes and did other things to indicate that he was suffering from extreme anxiety.

When customers came in he greeted them gruffly and had little to say, whereas his usual custom was to talk freely.

After eleven o'clock, when the store happened to be free from customers for a moment, the boys saw him empty his cash drawer into his pockets and also take what money there was in his safe and stow that in his clothes, too.

From that time on he put whatever money came in into his pockets instead of into the drawer. They judged from this that he had made up his mind that he must leave town, and that he was taking all the money that he could lay his hands on with him.

Finally, a little before midnight, he seemed to feel that he could stand the strain no longer, and prepared to shut up the shop.

He turned the lights down hastily, as if he feared that some customer might enter and detain him longer. He went out, locked the door behind him, and started rapidly toward his lodgings.

He lived at some distance from his shop, and had to pass through a long, quiet street to get there. Even in the daytime few persons were usually stirring upon this street, and at this hour it was entirely deserted.

Miller went along part of the time with his head down, and part of the time turning his eyes in every direction.

He was just approaching an intersection with another street when two figures in long, black robes with hoods drawn over their heads seemed to rise from the ground in front of him.

As a matter of fact, they had simply stepped from behind a tree, but Miller's mind was in no condition to take things as they were.

He gasped with fright the minute he saw them, stopped short and then tried to run back. The figures leaped after him, and clutched him by the arms, while one clapped a hand over his mouth. "It'll be safer for you," said one of them, sternly, "to make no resistance, for if you do you'll be beaten to a pulp in less than no time."

Miller chattered with fear. In spite of this threat he might have tried to break away, but he saw other figures apparently rising from the ground.

He was quickly surrounded by not less than a dozen, all in black cloaks and hoods. He could not see the faces of any of them clearly.

CHAPTER XXIII.

TRIED BY THE "PIGS."

If Miller had not been guilty of the assault upon Frank, he might possibly have had faith that no Yale student would do him a serious injury, though that is doubtful, for he had the idea which many ignorant people hold that students are nothing short of young barbarians when they get to playing pranks.

As it was, he was fully convinced that he was in for the most horrible tortures, even if he were permitted to escape with his life.

He was in such an agony of fear that if he could have done so he would have disregarded the threats of the leader and yelled at the top of his lungs, but his very fear prevented this, to say nothing of the fact that one of the students kept his hand ready to close over Miller's mouth.

The cigar dealer was so paralyzed with terror that he could only chatter. A few disjointed words came out which seemed to be to the effect that he hadn't done it purposely.

If the students had needed any further proof that he was the guilty party, this would have settled it.

They were sufficiently satisfied, however, before they began their operations, and this partial admission merely stimulated them to more active work.

The dozen or so who had come out in hoods to capture the man, surrounded him and walked him rapidly toward the building in which the Pi Gamma had its rooms.

In so doing they passed more than one person on the streets, but no more than a little curious attention was paid to them.

Whoever saw them supposed that some process in a secret society initiation was going on, and if they caught sight of the unhooded figure in the middle of the group, they undoubtedly supposed that it was a neophyte.

Miller longed undoubtedly to cry for help whenever the party met anybody, but with a student clinging to each arm and hands raised to choke his voice, he dared not so much as whisper.

So at length he was brought without interruption to the back entrance of the building, where he was hustled into the doorway and blindfolded. There, strangely enough, he found his tongue for a moment.

"You fellers let me alone, or you'll all go to jail for it," he muttered.

A chorus of hoarse, long-drawn "ahs!" was the answer to this.

The outer door was closed then, and Miller was told to kneel.

"I won't do it!" he protested. "I'm not going to have my head struck off with an ax——"

"Kneel, you scoundrel!" cried the voice of Baker, who was the leader of the party.

They did not wait for him to kneel, but pushed him to his knees. He found himself as the neophytes did, at the bottom of a stairway; then they told him to mount, and prodded him in the back and legs to make him start on.

Miller started, for he could not help himself. His journey upward then was like that described in the case of Frank during his initiation.

What he felt cannot be described, for Miller, so far as is known, never told anybody about it.

He arrived at the top of the long, winding flight of stairs in a state of almost complete collapse. The noise had been more deafening and hideous than ever had been endured by any neophyte.

The whole force of the Pi Gamma were out to make the thing a success, and every kind of racket that ingenuity could devise was added to the usual programme.

When at last Miller found that there were no other steps ahead of him to be climbed, he stumbled forward, face downward, and lay upon the floor gasping and groaning.

The noise suddenly ceased, for Baker had held up his hand and the students who understood the programme obeyed his silent command immediately.

"The mystic gates have been passed," remarked Baker, in a solemn tone. "It is understood that the person who has thus entered within the circle of Pi Gamma is not a member and that he has been permitted to come here simply that he may defend his own life.

"We will, therefore, proceed to try him at once. Set the prisoner on his feet."

A couple of students lifted Miller up, and obeying another sign from Baker, took the bandage from his eyes.

Miller looked around then with a stare of fright and surprise. The hooded figures had disappeared and in their places were students dressed just as he was accustomed to seeing them.

The room was a large one, but what it contained besides the students he was too frightened to notice. His knees were shaking and his lips quivered, although in the presence of these rather familiar faces he tried to pull himself together and look cool.

"Miller," said Baker, sternly, standing squarely in front of him, "you are in a very serious situation, and it is necessary for your safety that you should have as good control of yourself as possible. We intend to give you every chance for your life."

"I ain't done nothing!" muttered Miller.

"That will be found out later," was the stern reply; "meantime you're in no condition to defend yourself. We'll give you a bracer so that you may be able to understand what goes on and take part in it the best way you know how."

With this Baker nodded to a senior, who immediately came forward with a glass filled with some kind of liquor.

"Drink this," said Baker.

He held it out to Miller, who took it with a trembling hand.

"You're going to poison me," he stammered.

"In the presence of all these witnesses?" returned Baker, sharply. "Hardly. The stuff will not harm you; if you don't drink it you'll be worse off."

Miller still hesitated. He looked doubtfully at the liquor, smelled of it and then stared helplessly at the faces around him.

Baker raised his hand. At the signal every student seized a club of some kind and got in a circle around Miller, holding the clubs up.

"We don't want any nonsense about this," said Baker then. "You can either drink that dose now or the clubs will fall."

The instant he had spoken every student brought his club down hard upon the floor close to Miller's feet. The man fairly danced in an agony of fear, and a part of the liquor fell from the glass.

"Drink!" thundered Baker.

The cigar dealer then put the glass to his lips and poured it down with one gulp. Baker nodded in a satisfied way.

"Now put him in the prisoner's chair!" he said.

Two of the students then led Miller trembling and more than half convinced that he had taken deadly poison, to the swing in which the neophytes had been drawn up to the ceiling.

Miller was seated in the chains and told to grip the chain and then the windlass was worked, and he was raised three or four feet from the floor.

The students grouped themselves in front of him, seated on chairs; Baker alone remained standing.

It seemed to Miller then as if everybody moved very slowly. He thought he could count a hundred between every two words that were uttered. Before many minutes had passed it seemed to him as if he had been a year in this place.

This sensation on his part was due to the liquor he had drunk. It was a harmless preparation of hasheesh, a well-known Indian drug that, taken in sufficient quantities, is poisonous, but in small doses produces simply a half dream-like effect upon the mind that causes the time to seem intolerably long.

It is a dangerous drug to fool with, but the preparation of it in this instance had been made by a senior who was the best student in college in the department of chemistry.

He knew just how to put it together so that the effect on Miller's brain would not endure for more than two hours and would leave him entirely uninjured. As he expressed it:

"It won't do him half as much harm as an ordinary jag, and he'll remember everything that occurs during the time that he's drugged, and everything that's done will impress him most seriously."

Taking his fear and the influence of the drug together, therefore, Miller was in very ripe condition for the trial that then took place.

It was really very brief, for knowing that the time was passing slowly to the victim, the students hurried through the proceeding in order to get more quickly to the climax.

"Miller," said Baker, sternly, "you are accused of pushing Frank Merriwell in front of a moving car. What have you to say for yourself?"

"I—I—I——" stammered Miller, very slowly.

"If you're going to tell the truth," interrupted Baker, "you can take less time about it. We know the facts, for you were seen by four of us and recognized. We should have let the matter pass if it hadn't resulted fatally."

"I didn't go for to do any real harm," answered Miller, the perspiration breaking out upon his face.

"But you admit that you did do it?"

"I just thought I'd give him a scare."

"Very well, gentlemen," said Baker, calmly, "what's your verdict?"

"Guilty!" thundered the students in chorus.

Miller trembled so that the chains to which he was clinging rattled.

"See here," he said, feebly, "I don't see how it could be fatal, for I heard that Frank Merriwell was seen around on the streets day before yesterday."

"Then you doubt, do you, that your cowardly trick has proved fatal?"

"How could it," asked Miller, "if he was going around just as usual? I think this is some infernal trick of you students——"

"You'd better speak respectfully."

"Well," stammered Miller, "I don't want to cause no offense, but you told me I could defend myself, and I ain't going to believe that Frank Merriwell was seriously hurt. I'm sorry for it if he was, and I won't do it again."

"Take him down and let him see the body of his victim!" said Baker, in a solemn tone.

Miller started so when he heard this that he almost fell out of the chain loop. The windlass creaked, and he was set down on the floor.

Baker's command had set his fears going afresh, and he trembled so that he could hardly stand upright. A couple of students caught him by the arms and pushed rather than led him to one of the small rooms of the order.

A door was opened and Miller was forced inside. He gave a loud gasp when he entered, fell upon his knees, and beat his hands helplessly upon the floor.

CHAPTER XXIV.

HUMPERDINK TO THE RESCUE.

What Miller saw was this:

A room lighted by one solitary candle and rendered more gloomy by heavy curtains hanging before the windows; a cot bed was in the middle, and upon it was a body all covered over with the exception of the face, and the face above it was that of Frank Merriwell.

It need hardly be said here that Frank was as much alive at that moment as he had ever been in his life, but his face had been covered with chalk so as to resemble that of a dead man.

Miller was thoroughly convinced that Frank was dead, and he was not too frightened to realize that he had admitted having been the cause of it.

"Oh! what shall I do? What shall I do?" he groaned. "I never meant that it should be as bad as this!"

"It isn't a question of what you shall do," remarked Baker, sternly.

The other students had come into the room and now stood around, looking on solemnly. Not one of them so much as winked at another for fear that the spectacle would lose some of its force upon the mind of the frightened victim.

"The point is," continued Baker, "that you are not in a position to do anything; the question is, what shall we do?"

"He ought to have his head chopped off where he is!" muttered Bruce Browning, gruffly.

Miller started and edged away from the spot where he was kneeling.

"No!" exclaimed Baker, sternly; "that would be too easy; I should rather think that it would be better to boil him in a vat!"

"Or might burn him alive out on the marshes!" said another.

"I think a good straight forward hanging is the best thing for him!" muttered Jack Diamond.

"Oh, for Heaven's sake, gentlemen!" groaned Miller, "don't let it be to-night. Give me a chance to make up for this!"

"How can you make up for it?" retorted Baker. "Do you know any way of restoring a dead person to life?"

"No, I don't, but I never would have gone to do it if I'd supposed that it would be serious, so help me, I never would!"

"I don't think that that makes any difference."

At this moment there was a stir in the room back of the students. Baker turned inquiringly.

One of the students who had really been present all the time now pretended to be coming in from the outside in a hurry.

"Prof. Humperdink," said this student, "is on the way, and will be here in a minute or two."

"Ah!" responded Baker, in a tone of relief, "perhaps then that may make things better, for, of course, while we are bound to punish this man Miller, we want Merriwell restored to life if such a thing can be done."

"Humperdink can do it if anybody can!" said Rowe.

"Do you mean to say, gentlemen," gasped Miller, "that there's a chance that Merriwell may be restored?"

"We can't tell until Humperdink comes," responded Baker, solemnly. "Haven't you ever heard of Humperdink?"

"I don't think he buys his cigars at my store," responded Miller.

"No, he probably doesn't," responded Baker, significantly. "Humperdink doesn't indulge in ordinary tobacco; he smokes the root of snake plants found in the wilds of Africa. One whiff of it for an ordinary man is fatal."

Miller stared in a way that showed he believed every word. He was not in a condition to doubt anything that was told to him.

That is one of the effects of hasheesh, but even without the drug it is more than likely that he would have believed everything said to him on this occasion.

"Humperdink," continued Baker, "knows all the mysteries of nature. He has experimented with all poisons, and eats them as readily as the rest of us do ordinary food. In the old days he would have been called a magician. Really he's a very great scientist, and if there's any possible hope for Merriwell he'll know it. Ah! here he is."

At the moment when Miller had been taken into the room where Merriwell lay apparently dead, another student had slipped into the dressing-room of the little theatre, which was a part of the society's quarters, and had put on a long gown, white wig and beard, and concealed his eyes with dark glasses.

He now came tottering feebly across the room toward the students.

"What have ye here?" he asked in a high, cracked voice.

"One of the students has died, professor," responded Baker, in a tone of deep respect, "and the circumstances were so peculiar——"

"Dead, eh?" returned the "professor," stopping short in his walk, "then I can't do anything for him."

He turned about as if he would go away.

"Oh! don't give it up!" screamed Miller, "come in and give him something to bring him back to life; do it, I beg you, for my sake!"

"Your sake," sneered the "professor," "you are not worth the turn of a thumb!"

"Oh, but you don't know how much depends on it!" cried Miller.

"I don't know!" fairly shouted the professor. "I know everything! I know that you caused that young man's death; I know that you pushed him in front of a moving car; I know that you didn't mean to kill him, but that you would be glad to do so if you could do it safely; I know that you're a cold-hearted wretch!"

Miller again beat his hands upon the floor helplessly.

"Yes! Yes!" he groaned, "I'm all that, but I don't want him to die! Do save him if you can, professor."

"It's this way, professor," said Baker, quietly. "This man groveling on the floor is not worth the turn of a thumb, but the rest of us are very fond of Merriwell, and would like to have him restored to life if such a thing can be done.

"Do it for our sakes, and the sake of science, professor."

"Well," grumbled the "professor," after hesitating a moment, "for the sake of science I'll take a look at him. The rest of you clear out."

He turned slowly into the dark room, while the rest of the students withdrew, taking Miller with them; then a long ten minutes passed.

Meantime, acting according to their former programme, the students in the main room discussed various plans for the punishment of Miller.

The victim of their fearful proceeding squatted on the floor, rocking his body back and forth, moaning and wringing his hands.

At last "Prof." Humperdink appeared in the doorway and started slowly across the room. Miller jumped to his feet, ran to him, and caught him by his robe.

"Tell me," he cried, frantically, "will he recover?"

"Bah! don't touch me!" returned the "professor," giving the cigar dealer a vigorous kick.

Miller fell over on his side, while the "professor" went slowly out of the room.

"Why don't you ask him," said Browning, anxiously turning to Baker, "has he succeeded or failed?"

"He must have failed," responded Baker, sadly, "or he would have said something about it. We'll take the prisoner in there again and decide what to do with him."

By this time Miller was a complete wreck. He could not possibly stand upon his feet, and students picked him up to carry him to the darkened room.

Just then the door of that room opened again, and Frank appeared in the doorway.

He had rubbed some of the chalk off his face so that he appeared more natural than before, but he leaned against the doorpost as if weak.

"Well, fellows," he said, feebly, "what's the matter?"

The students set up a great shout, ran to Merriwell, grasping his hand and congratulating him warmly. Frank appeared to be dazed by the proceeding.

"What's the matter, anyway?" he asked. "What am I here for in this condition?"

"You've been dead!" shouted the students, in chorus.

"Dead, is it?"

"Yes, and Prof. Humperdink has restored you to life."

Frank looked as if he did not believe it.

"This is some joke," he said.

"Joke? Why, we thought you were going to tell us what happened in the other world."

"I'm not going to tell anything until I understand this!" he retorted. "Hello, there's Miller."

During this Miller had been half lying in a chair where the students had dropped him at sight of Frank. He was staring in speechless astonishment at the figure in the doorway.

The probability is that he was still so frightened that he believed that Frank had not really come back to life, but that it was his ghost that was speaking.

"What's Miller doing in the Pi Gamma rooms!" exclaimed Frank, starting toward him. "He's the fellow that pushed me under the car! Did you bring him up here for me to give him a thrashing?"

This was said in such a perfectly natural tone, and Frank appeared to be so much in earnest, that Miller was restored to a good deal of his ordinary condition.

He jumped up from the chair, and tried to make for the door; of course, he was caught before he could get out.

Then while he was held there, Baker pretended to explain to Frank that death had taken place and that Humperdink had restored him by some secret scientific process.

"We had Miller here," he concluded, "so that we might punish him for causing your death."

Frank listened very gravely.

"Well," he said, "the main thing is that I'm alive again. As for you, Miller, you deserve to be hanged just as much as if you had succeeded in what you tried to do, but I'm so much alive again that I'm inclined to beg the boys to let you off."

"Oh, don't let them hurt me, Mr. Merriwell!" groaned Miller. "On my life I didn't mean to do you any harm, and I'll never do anything wrong again as long as I live."

"I think it's safe enough to take his word for that," said Frank, turning to the others.

They looked a little doubtful, but Baker answered for them.

"Well, Merriwell is the most interested party, and what he says ought to go. You may get out, Miller, but remember if there is ever any sign of you attempting dirty work with a student again, we'll be after you, and next time we won't give you any chance for a trial, either."

"I'll behave myself for the future, I will, so help me!" stammered Miller, as he made for the open door.

After he had been seen well out of the building the students indulged in an uproarious laugh at the success of their plan, and all declared that it was a much better way of getting even with the cigar dealer than any of the plans suggested by the other students.

They had another supper on the spot to celebrate the event, and they were not surprised a day or two later to learn that Miller had disposed of his cigar business and left New Haven forever.

CHAPTER XXV.

FRANK HAS A VISITOR.

After the affair with Miller matters went along quietly for some time with Frank.

He turned to his studies with a will, paying particular attention to mathematics, so that no complaint might be made against him by Prof. Babbitt.

One day he was deep in a problem in geometry when there came a loud rap on the door.

"Come in."

The door opened, and in walked Ben Halliday. Frank looked up in surprise.

"Hello! Hally," he called.

"Hello! Merriwell," said the other, a trifle stiffly.

"What's the matter, old man? You are not usually in the habit of knocking in that manner. Usually you walk in without being invited."

"Perhaps I have been a little too free in that respect," said Ben, significantly.

"Free! Not at all. You know any of my friends are welcome here at any time. This is Liberty Hall."

"That sounds all right, Merriwell," said Ben, remaining standing; "but, if you mean it, why should you say I am too fresh and take too many liberties?"

"I say so? Why, I never said anything of the sort Has any fellow reported me as saying that?"

"I heard it."

Frank came to his feet instantly.

"Heard me say so?" he cried. "Is that what you mean, Hally?"

"No; I mean that I have heard you did say so."

Merriwell advanced and placed his hands on the shoulders of his visitor, looking straight into Ben's eyes.

"Halliday," he said, slowly, "have I ever been anything but a friend to you?"

Ben moved uneasily, and then answered:

"I do not know that you have."

"Did you ever know me to say anything behind the back of either friend or foe that I did not dare say to his face?"

"No."

"Did you ever know me to lie?"

"No."

"Then you will believe me, I think, when I tell you I did not say you were too fresh and took too many liberties. Some chap has been trying to make you my enemy. I have seen of late that you acted strangely but did not know why. Now I understand it. But I am surprised that you could believe such a thing of me."

Halliday was confused.

"Well," he falteringly said, "you see it's this way: I knew you hated to throw up your grip on the football team and drop out entirely, and somebody said you were jealous of me because I did such good work against the Indians. You know my run in that game was compared with your famous run in the Princeton game last season. And you have not been just like yourself lately. Sometimes you have not looked at me when we met."

"Is that so?" asked Frank, in surprise. "I didn't know it. Must be my mind is on my studies too much. And still I made a dead flunk the day after the Carlisle game. There had been so many reports that the Indians had a new trick that was sure to enable them to win, and, knowing as I did what bulldogs they are to play, I was all nerved up with anxiety. Couldn't seem to keep my mind on my studies for a week before the game, and it grew worse and worse the nearer the time came. After it was over, I found I might as well have taken part in the game."

"That's just it!" cried Halliday, quickly. "That's why I dropped around to see you."

"Eh? What do you mean?"

"Why don't you get back on the team?"

"Get back? What are you driving at? You're doing good work."

"I don't want to crowd you out."

"You wouldn't. They need you as full-back."

"You played that position in the game with the Indians."

"But I am not to play it again. I am quarter-back now."

"Is that right?" cried Frank, in surprise. "Your position has been changed? How did that happen?"

"Quigg is out of it for the season. You know he was hurt in the last game. Doctor says he must not play any more this year. I have been shoved into his place in a hurry."

"What's that for?"

"Forrest did it. A new man is going to be tried at full-back—Rob Marline. Forrest is desperate. He says the team is broken all to pieces, and stands a poor show with either Harvard or Princeton. This will be a dismal season for Old Yale."

Frank turned pale and seemed to stagger a bit, as if he had been struck. It was a shock for him to know that Yale was in danger. He had supposed she was all right and everything was running well.

"We did not make the showing against the Indians that we should have made, although we beat them," Halliday went on. "But for my lucky run, we might have been beaten."

"I didn't know—" began Frank, falteringly.

Ben made a fierce gesture.

"What's the matter with you Merriwell?" he savagely cried. "Didn't know? You should know! You are the fellow of us all who should know. You have changed, and it has not been for the better. I tell you we stand a slim show with Harvard and Princeton, and you are needed just as you were needed at the tug of war. That being the case, you have no right to shut yourself up here in your room and plug away, seeming to take no interest in anything but your studies and recitations. You have been the most popular man in college, but your popularity is on the wane. I'll tell you why, if you want to know."

Frank was still whiter, if possible. Was this Halliday talking to him in such a manner—Halliday, who had ever seemed to stand in awe of him? It was plain enough that Ben was giving him a "call down," but what shook Merry the most was the fact that he began to feel that it was merited.

"I should like to know," he said, slowly.

Ben could not tell what effect his words might have on Frank, but he was reckless, and he did not care.

"You can punch my head, if you want to," he said, "but I am going to talk plain. Don't seem to be

anybody else who dares to talk to you. They kick and growl and say things behind your back, but they don't come right at you with what they want to say. They are saying that you are afraid to play on the eleven this year."

Frank stiffened up.

"Afraid?" he said, hoarsely.

"Yes."

"How can they say that? Have I ever shown fear?"

"They do say it," came doggedly from Halliday. "They say you made a lucky run in the Princeton game last year, and you know it was a case of dead cold luck. It gave you a great rep., and you are afraid of taking a fall down if you play this season. That's exactly what they are saying, and," added Ben, for himself, "I'll be hanged if it doesn't look that way from the road!"

Frank bit his lip and stood staring at Halliday. He showed no anger, but it was plain that he was astonished. Up to that moment he had not realized he stood in a position where he could not withdraw from football, baseball, or anything else in that line of his own desire without being regarded as cowardly. Now he saw it plainly enough.

Halliday had been doubtful as to the manner in which Frank would take his plain talk, but he was determined to tell Merry what was being said, and he would not have hesitated had he felt certain it would produce a fight.

But Frank saw Ben was speaking the truth, and, instead of being angry, he experienced a sensation of gratitude. Still he was determined to know all about it.

"How long have they been making this kind of talk, old fellow?" he asked.

"Ever since it was known for sure that you had decided not to try out for the eleven this fall."

"And this is the first I have heard of it!"

"They didn't talk so much at first," explained Ben. "It wasn't known then but your place could be filled easily."

"You were put in my place."

"Yes, but I should have been placed elsewhere if you had come on."

"And they think that would have strengthened the team?"

"Of course it would! I tell you the fellows have a reason to growl when they see Yale putting out a weak eleven while the best man in college refuses to get into gear and give a lift."

"What sort of man is this Marline?"

"A good runner and a pretty punter."

"Sand?"

"Guess so."

"Then what's his weak point?"

"Temper."

"Quick tempered?"

"Like a flash of powder. Loses his head. Forrest says he may lose any of the big games for us by getting mad at a critical point, but still he is the best man we have."

Frank walked over to his window and looked out, his back toward Halliday. Ben stood watching him with no small anxiety.

Now it was over, and he had relieved his feelings by speaking out plainly, Ben wondered at his own boldness. He had been flushed with excitement, but he felt himself growing pale and cold.

"Lord, what a crust!" he thought.

Three minutes passed this way, and then Frank whirled around with startling suddenness.

"Do you practice to-day?" he asked.

"Yes."

"I'll come out to the park."

"What for?"

"Don't know yet. I'll look on, anyway."

"Shall I tell Forrest?"

"No, you needn't say anything about it."

"All right."

Halliday was well pleased with the result, for he felt sure Merry was aroused.

"How do I know I am wanted on the eleven?" Frank asked. "It's all made up now, and——"

"Heard Forrest say he'd rather have you for full-back than Marline."

"Well, I'll come out and see you practice."

So Ben left. At one time he had been envious of Merriwell, but now, like others, he realized that Merry was too good timber to be lost from the eleven. Halliday overcame his selfishness, and, for the interest of Old Yale, desired to see Merry back on the team.

Besides that, Ben was not pleased to be changed from full-back to quarter-back and have a fellow like Marline given the position he had played very well thus far that season. He felt that he had much rather be put off the eleven entirely to give room for Frank.

After Ben left, Frank attempted to return to his studies, but he could not fix his mind upon them. He went down to recitation in a dazed condition, and made a flunk, much to the surprise of those who knew he had turned into a "greasy grind" of late.

Frank's mind was uneasy, and it wandered constantly. The knowledge that he had been regarded as cowardly in declining to go on the eleven was gall and wormwood to him.

He was glad Halliday had come to him and let him know how matters stood, and surely no one could have closer at heart the welfare of Yale in all directions.

He began to understand that he had won a position in athletics from which he could not voluntarily withdraw without being misunderstood and maligned.

That afternoon Halliday came around for Frank, and found him with his sweater and rough clothes on, ready to leave his room.

"I was afraid you would forget," said Ben, in a confused way.

"Little danger of that!" muttered Frank. "I haven't been able to remember anything else but what you said to me this forenoon."

"Hope you didn't lay it up against me, Merry."

"Don't take me for a fool, old fellow!" came rather sharply from Frank.

They left the college grounds and took a trolley car out to the park. Forrest and the team were there ahead of them. A hundred spectators were watching the men catch punts.

Bob Cook was there. He was not coaching; he was standing at one side by himself, watching the men, something like a disconsolate look on his face. This was not like him; it was significant.

As they entered the gate, Halliday touched Merriwell's arm, quickly saying:

"There he goes!"

"Who?" asked Frank.

"Marline. He's getting out to take some punts."

Frank knew Marline by sight, but he had never given the fellow much attention. Now he deliberately sized him up. He saw a well-built, healthy-looking lad, who carried himself gracefully, almost arrogantly. There was more than a suggestion of conscious superiority in Marline's manner.

Punk!—a strong leg sent a twisting ball sailing toward Marline. He ran under it with an air of confidence, and caught it easily, gracefully.

"I take it he is one of the fellows who show up well in practice, at least," said Frank.

CHAPTER XXVI.

SIGNIFICANT MOVEMENTS.

The appearance of Frank on the ground soon attracted attention. Of late there had been much talk about Merriwell and there was not a college man interested in football who had not expressed an opinion concerning his ability or his withdrawal from the sport.

Early in the season Walter Gordan had made a try for the eleven, but had soon been turned down. Sport Harris could not have been induced to play football, but he took much interest in the team, as he wished to know how to place his "dough" on the great games.

Harris and Gordon were watching the men at practice, but the latter saw Merriwell as soon as he entered the park.

"Well, hang me!" he muttered, staring.

"What's the matter?" asked Sport.

"Look there—with Halliday!"

"Yes, I see—why, it's Merriwell!"

"Sure."

"What's he out here for?"

"Don't ask me!"

"Thought he was out of it. Hasn't seemed to take any interest in the eleven this season."

"Perhaps he thinks he's stayed away till it is so late he'll not be asked to come on the team. He couldn't keep away any longer."

"Well, he's needed on the eleven, and that is a fact. He has disgusted his friends by pulling out of the game."

Gordan laughed.

"He seems to think he can retire on the laurels he has won."

"Well, he never made a bigger mistake in his life," said Harris. "Yale doesn't have any use for shirks. If he thinks he can retire because he made a great run in the Princeton game last fall, he is mistaken."

"He is retiring on his reputation as a globe-trotter," sneered Walter. "You know he has been all over the world. I expect to hear any day that he has discovered the North Pole during some of his extensive travels, but has forgotten to say anything about it."

"You think he hasn't traveled as much as has been reported?"

"Oh, he may have been over the pond, but that's nothing. Willis Paulding has been over several times, and so have a score of fellows I know. But the yarns about shooting panthers in South America, gorillas in Africa, and other fierce and terrible beasts in other countries are altogether too steep to go down my throat."

"How about the trophies he has to show for it?"

"Bah! His uncle left him money to burn, and he has a way of squeezing any amount of it out of his guardian, Prof. Scotch. If he calls for a thousand dollars, he gets it right away. With money like that I could buy a lot of old weapons, queer pottery, fake idols, brass lamps, skins of wild animals, and so forth, and make a big bluff that I had gathered them all over the world. I don't say much about him, but, between you and I, that fellow makes me awfully weary."

Harris grinned a bit.

"Can't get over it, can you?" he said.

"Can't get over what?"

"The fact that he beat you out at both baseball and football last year. He got onto the 'Varsity nine and the eleven. You tried for both, and got onto neither."

"Oh, I don't care about those things," protested Gordan. "It was by chance that he got onto the nine, and you know it. If Yale hadn't been hard up for pitchers, he would not have been given a trial."

"That's all right, but you had the same opportunity and you got left."

"Oh, well, rub it in!" snapped Gordan. "Merriwell has beat you at a few things, or the stories they tell are lies."

It was Harris' turn to get red in the face.

"Who has been telling anything? Has Merriwell been blowing around?"

"I don't know about that, but it is said that your Harvard friend, Harlow, proved to be a card sharp—and you introduced him to a lot of fellows here. Merriwell got into a game and caught him cheating. If the stories are straight, Merriwell could have made it hot for you. He let up on you."

"Lies!" snarled Harris, his face growing dark, while he pulled away at his short mustache. "It must be Merriwell has been telling these things. Oh, I'd like to punch his head!"

"Yes, but you don't dare try it any more than I do," grinned Gordan. "You know he can lick you and not half try."

"Oh, he's a fighter, and I don't pretend to be that; but he may find me dangerous. I have been keeping still for some time, but I'm simply waiting, that's all."

"The fellows say he was dead easy with Hartwick, but that Evan would not let up on Merriwell."

"Well, Hartwick was forced to leave college, anyway, and I'd like to make Frank Merriwell do the same thing."

"Wish you might. It would give some of the rest of us a show."

"If he's played on the eleven this fall, I should have been forced to put my money on Yale. Now we've got a weak team, and I have put up something on Harvard as soon as this. I am getting all the bets I can before it is generally known that Yale is weak."

"What if Merriwell should be taken on?"

"There is no danger of it, and he couldn't play the whole game, anyway. As full-back, however, he would have strengthened Yale's weakest point. It is remarkable, but we haven't a man besides Merriwell this season who is fully qualified to play the position."

"What's the matter with the new man?"

"Marline?"

"Yes."

"He's a grand-stand player. All he cares about is to do something pretty to win the admiration of the ladies. He will work for Marline, and not for the team. Mark what I say. The team was weak enough when it went against the Indians, but it is weaker still with Halliday at quarter and Marline at full. Harvard is better than she was last season, when we beat her by a fluke, and she will walk right over our team. Put your money on Harvard, Gordan, and you will win everything."

"Hello!" exclaimed Walter, suddenly. "What's up now?"

"Cook is talking with Merriwell, that's all."

"That means something."

"Get out! Cook is coach, but he isn't running the team."

"I tell you it means something! See—Cook calls Forrest. Now the captain of the eleven is coming over. See that! They are talking together. I tell you that means something, Harris!"

Gordan was excited, and he seemed to impart his excitement to his companion. With the greatest eagerness they watched the little group.

Perhaps the trio spent ten minutes talking, and then there was a move that added to the excitement of Gordan and Harris.

"What's Merriwell going to do?" asked Sport, catching his breath.

"Do!" exclaimed Walter, in deep disgust. "Can't you see? He's going to practice!"

"Practice? Great Scott! That means——"

"That means that he is sure to play on the eleven!"

Gordan and Harris were not the only ones interested in Merriwell's movements.

Tom Thornton, who had once been an enemy to Frank, and was now very friendly toward Rob Marline, the new man, who was expected to play full-back, was watching Cook, Forrest and Merriwell.

In catching a ball, Marline ran past Thornton, who asked:

"What's up over there, Rob? Why are those fellows talking with their heads together?"

"I don't know," was the answer. "Maybe Merriwell wants to get onto the eleven."

"If he wants to, he'll do it."

"He can't. Positions all taken."

"Somebody'll be fired."

"'Twon't be me."

"Don't be so sure of that," thought Tom, but he did not speak the words aloud.

After a little Merriwell was seen preparing to practice. Halliday was at it already. Happening to be near Ben, Thornton heard him observe to a player:

"I've done the job for Yale this time. Got Merriwell back. They will have to thank me for that."

"Got him back?" said the other. "Why, how is that? Where will he play?"

"Full-back, of course."

"But Marline."

"Marline will be given a chance to rest."

Thornton nodded.

"Knew it!" he muttered. "Rob is a good fellow, and this isn't a square deal. He won't be given a show. Merriwell is all right as a player, but he has no right to refuse to play and then come on after things are fixed and knock some other chap out. I'll tell Rob."

So, at the first opportunity, Thornton told Marline what he had heard Halliday say.

Marline was from South Carolina, and he was proud as Lucifer. In fact, his manner of always speaking of South Carolina as the "one" State in the Union was often little short of exasperating. He was haughty and overbearing, proud of his birth, inclined to boast, and utterly blind to his own shortcomings.

No one questioned Marline's courage. He came from a family noted for courage and daring. His great-grandfather was a patriot officer of Revolutionary times, and his father had won a commission in the Confederate Army in the War of the Rebellion. The blood of fighters and heroes ran in Marline's veins.

For all that, there was no one at Yale who could make himself more offensive than the boy from South Carolina. He had a way of sneering at everybody and everything outside his native State, and when he set out to call anybody down, the most withering and biting sarcasm flowed from his tongue.

Marline was smart intellectually, but whimsical and set in his notions and beliefs. Once let him express an opinion and he would not confess himself in the wrong even when absolute proof lay before him. Instead, he was pretty sure to want to fight the fellow who offered the proof.

As an orator the youth from South Carolina had no superior in college. He was strong in argument, and it was through him that Yale had succeeded in wresting from Harvard the honors in the annual debate.

With the professors he stood unusually well, as he was regarded as a brilliant scholar, and he had never been known to take part in any of the students' carousals.

Marline's face grew dark as he listened to Halliday.

"They can't drop me without playing me at all," he said, harshly.

"Can't! Guess you don't know Walt Forrest. He wouldn't hesitate a second if he thought he could improve the team. He doesn't allow his feelings to interfere at all with the discharge of what he thinks is his duty."

"If they try to kick me out, there'll be a hot time, sah!" flashed the boy from South Carolina. "I'll show somebody that I'm not to be used like I am a dog!"

"Don't blame you," nodded Tom. "It is a dirty trick."

Marline was rattled. Three times he tried to catch a punted ball, and three times he dropped it, something remarkable for him to do—something that made the boys stare at him in surprise.

In the meantime, Merriwell was on the gridiron, and he was taking all kinds of twisters with his old-time confidence and skill. Three balls were in use, and, after a time, it happened that, in running under two of them sent into the air at the same time, Marline and Merriwell collided.

Frank struck Rob in such a manner that he was thrown to the ground, but he flopped over, sat up, and took the ball that belonged to him, laughing in a good-natured way.

Marline paid no attention to the ball he had started after, but stood looking down at Frank, his face utterly bloodless and his eyes gleaming.

"Sah," he said, after a few seconds, as Frank was getting up—"sah, you ran into me!"

"Believe I did, old man," laughed Merriwell. "No harm done, I hope. Didn't upset you, and you did me. I'm all right."

"But you ran into me, sah!"

"Couldn't help it, you know," declared Frank, with unflinching good nature. "Accidents will happen."

"Accidents, sah, may often be avoided."

"It is difficult to avoid them on the gridiron."

"You may apologize, sah."

Marline was standing there, his arms folded, his dark eyes looking daggers at Merriwell. His pose was graceful, and he really looked handsome, for all of his arrogant bearing.

Frank whistled his surprise.

"Apologize?" he said, slowly. "Do you really mean that?"

"I certainly do, sah."

When Rob Marline addressed anybody as "sah" in that manner it was a warning. The word was one seldom used by him since coming to Yale. To a great extent he had adopted the manners of the North, and had suppressed any little peculiarities of speech that might indicate his Southern

blood. Now, however, he felt that he was a South Carolinian, and the dignified and haughty "sah" of the South suited his mood.

Frank paused a moment, looking straight into the eyes of the hot-blooded youth who had demanded an apology. He seemed in doubt, but quickly made up his mind.

"I never heard of an apology on the football field," he said; "but, as you seem to think me to blame for this little accident, I ask your pardon. I trust that is satisfactory."

To this Marline made no answer, but with a contemptuous movement of his body, turned about and stepped away.

A few of the players near at hand had seen and heard everything. All were astonished. To them it seemed that Marline had cowed Merriwell, and a feeling of disdain for the latter mingled with their astonishment.

"That beats the band!" said one to another. "Is this the same Merriwell we have thought such a lion?"

"It's plain," said the other, "that the fellows who have been claiming he really has less nerve than is generally supposed were right. He is afraid of Marline—I can see that. Marline comes from a fighting family, and he would challenge Merriwell to meet him in a genuine duel. Merriwell can scrap, but he has no relish for swords or pistols. He has been cowed by the fellow from South Carolina."

CHAPTER XXVII.

HALLIDAY IS PUZZLED.

Two teams were made up, and a short game was played, while the coaches kept at the men like relentless slave drivers.

The appearance of Frank on the field had seemed to awaken Bob Cook. He opened up on everybody, and the men seemed to find it inspiring to have him scold them.

During the first half Merriwell played full-back on the eleven that was pitted against the regular 'Varsity team. He went into the game as if it was of the utmost importance. Once he went through the center of the opposing team, and once he went around the left end. Had he been well backed up, the regular eleven would have found difficulty in securing two touchdowns, one of which was made by Marline.

On the last half, much to his disgust, Marline was taken off the regular eleven and placed at full-back on the other team, while Merriwell was given his place.

Then the 'Varsity eleven seemed to have new life, and the men played like so many tigers. The "irregulars" could do nothing with them. Merriwell kicked a goal from the field, besides making one of his surprising and bewildering runs.

Marline played desperately, but he gave up in disgust before the end, realizing he could not make a good showing under such conditions. In his bosom his heart was heavy and bitter.

"If I am pulled off the team without having a show, somebody shall suffer!" he vowed.

The practice game over, the men pulled on their coats and started for the two trolley cars which were waiting at the entrance to the park. Halliday got a seat beside Frank on one of the cars.

"You're right in it, old man!" said Ben, enthusiastically. "Why, you worked as if you were in training!"

Frank smiled.

"I suppose I forgot the possibility of making myself lame. Til feel it to-morrow."

"Never mind. You showed everybody that you are as good as ever. Marline will get walking papers."

Merriwell's face suddenly became sober.

"I don't know as that will be using him square, Hally," he said, in a low tone of voice. "I presume he has been told he should play half-back on the eleven."

"Told nothing!" snorted Ben. "Forrest don't tell us fellows we can play anywhere, and there's not a man but knows he's likely to be dropped any time. He told Marline to come and practice, and I'll go my last dollar that is all."

"Still Marline has every reason to suppose he'll be given a show in some sort of a game."

"Huah! If he supposes too much, he'll get left."

"I don't like to crowd anybody. You know that, Hally."

"You are too careful about crowding somebody. You are forever preaching that any fellow must fight his way through this world, but you never fight unless forced to do so. By the way, how could you apologize to that overbearing cur?"

"Well," said Frank, deliberately, "I permitted my good judgment to govern my action."

"Good judgment be hanged! Why, he was insulting!"

"A trifle overbearing, perhaps, but it's natural with him. You know he comes from South Carolina."

"What of that? Is he any better for that reason?"

"Not in the least, but it is probable that he has been brought up to think so. And it is certain that he has sand. He can't be driven into his boots, and I'll bet on it. South Carolina produces tigers, and Marline is one of them, or I have taken his measure wrong."

Halliday looked at Frank in doubt and astonishment.

"Is it possible you are afraid of Robert Marline, Merriwell?" he asked.

"No," was the calm reply; "but I think you will remember that I had a little trouble with one hot-blooded Southerner since entering college. The Southern aristocrat seldom fights with his fists, but he is none the less ready to fight. I am willing to confess that I do not care to become involved in a duel with pistols or swords. Can't afford to take the chances of being found out and expelled, even though honor should be satisfied without the death of either concerned. I have been hot-headed in my day, but I'm trying to hold myself down. I'd rather apologize for the accident to Marline than to have him challenge me to a duel. That's the whole of it, and——"

"What will the fellows think?"

"Let them think what they like!" exclaimed Frank, flushing. "A person who is forever considering what some one will think if he does this, that or the other is forever miserable and uneasy."

"But they'll say Marline cowed you."

"Let them."

"They'll say it is proof you have not the courage every one has thought."

"Let them."

Ben looked hard at Frank, and then slowly observed:

"Thought I understood you, Merriwell, but I'm blowed if I do!"

CHAPTER XXVIII.

FRANK'S VISITORS.

Despite himself, Frank was somewhat disturbed by what had taken place that afternoon. He knew Halliday was right in saying it would be believed he had apologized to Marline through fear of the proud Southerner.

Merriwell was no more than human; he did not fancy being thought a coward.

Who does?

Had it been simply one or two persons who thought him afraid of the lad from South Carolina he would not have minded, but for nearly every one in college to think so—well, that was different.

And the peculiar combination of circumstances made the situation more trying than otherwise it could have been.

Frank could not help feeling some sympathy for Marline, for all of the fellow's natural arrogance and overbearing manner. It was easy for Merriwell to imagine himself in Marline's position.

"It would cut me," he thought. "I might hold my temper, but it would cut me to have any fellow step in and shove me out without letting me have a show to see what I might do."

Sentiment demanded that Marline should be given an opportunity to play full-back on the Yale team; but sentiment should not enter into college sports, and no one knew that better than Frank Merriwell. The football or baseball team that is run on sentiment can never be a winner.

Yet it seemed to Merry that, under any circumstances, he would be placed in a false position before every one. He had refused to take an interest in football, and had held aloof till the very day that it was known Halliday had been changed from full-back to quarter-back and Marline had been given Ben's former position. Then Merry had suddenly appeared on the scene and seemed to oust the new man before the latter had a show to prove his capability.

To Frank this seemed a cowardly thing to do, and nothing but the knowledge that the eleven was

weak and really needed him could have induced him to go on the field.

He did not want to fight Marline, and he was determined not to fight Marline if he could avoid it. Still he realized that his enemies would say he feared the lad from South Carolina, and his friends might believe it was true.

"Well," thought Frank, after meditating on the situation, "it will not be the first time I have been thought a coward. I can stand it. If Forrest says he needs me I shall play for the love of dear old Yale. Rather than have Yale lose through my failure to do everything in my power, I'd be branded a coward for life!"

This settled in his mind, he went to bed that night and slept peacefully, quite unaware that at Morey's a gay party had gathered about Rob Marline, who was "opening things" and vowing publicly that he would drive Frank Merriwell off the gridiron forever.

In case Frank showed a determination to get into the game again, Marline swore he would never give him a moment of peace till they met face to face on the "field of honor."

"I come of fighting stock, gentlemen," said Rob, his face flushed, his legs unsteady, his tongue unloosed, and a glass of "velvet" held aloft. "My grandfather killed his man, and my father has been concerned in more than one affair of honor. I am an expert with the sword, and I can shoot as well as the mountaineers of my native State—the fairest spot on the American continent Merriwell will not have a chance with me if we ever do meet. With the blades, gentlemen, I'll run him through in less than thirty seconds; with pistols I'll lodge a ball in his heart at the first fire. But he'll never dare to meet me. The way he took water to-day proved that. He will crawl like a whipped dog."

If Marline had not been drinking freely he would not have said so much. The wine was in his head, and he was not responsible. But he meant every word he spoke, and he did not require "Dutch courage" in order to back up his talk.

In the morning Frank awoke refreshed by a good night's sleep, took a cool dip, scrubbed down hastily, got into his clothes in a hurry, and was away to chapel, looking as fresh and rosy as a healthy youth should.

Merriwell took such care of himself that he was in perfect condition. He had not given up physical exercise, although he had thought of keeping out of football that season. Every day he spent a certain amount of time in the gym, and not a minute of that time was wasted.

Under no circumstances did Merriwell believe in radical dieting. At the same time he believed in common sense, and he knew a fellow could do himself no more harm than by overloading his stomach. The gourmand makes himself heavy of body, and dull of brain.

Frank had quite forgotten the unpleasant occurrence of the previous afternoon, and he dipped into his studies after the earnest manner that had marked him of late.

On returning from recitation in the middle of the forenoon, he found visitors in his room. They had been admitted by "Honest John," the colored porter.

"Lor' bress yeh!" grinned the white-headed old darky, showing his teeth in a broad grin—"Lor' bress yeh, Mistah Merriwell! Nebber see no purtier gal in all mah bawn days!"

"Girl!" cried Frank, astonished.

"Lor' bress yeh, yes! Purty's a picter, Mistah Merriwell."

"Girl in my room?"

"Yes, sah."

"You let her in, John?"

"Yes, sah; but dar's a lady wif her, sah."

"Oh, ha!"

"Yes, sah—got a face dat'll stop a trolley car, sah. Looks like it war cut out of wood, sah, an' mighty hard wood at dat. De gal smile, but de ole woman nebber smile at all."

Frank looked puzzled, and Honest John began to look troubled.

"Hope Ah ain't done no harm, sah?" he faltered. "De ladies said dey knowed yeh, sah, an' dey war yeh friends."

"But I do not know of any friends in New Haven who would come to my room."

John showed alarm.

"Lor', sah! hope dis ain't no scrape, sah! Mebbe yeh don't want teh see 'em? I'll jes' go an' 'splain yeh ain' heah—I'll say yeh been called away sudden by de deff ob yeh grandmam."

"Never mind, John. My grandmothers died years ago, and my visitors may be aware of the fact. I'll see them myself, although I don't care to be bothered by visitors at this time of the day."

"Hope it's all right, sah," said John. "Yo' boys hab to be careful, sah. If yo' git too wild—"

But Frank was hurrying to his room, regardless of the darky's words.

Honest John followed. He listened outside the door after Frank entered. He heard a girlish cry of delight, and an exclamation of pleasure from Merriwell.

"Lor' sakes!" he chuckled, holding one crooked hand over his mouth, as he stood crouching at the door. "Suah dat don' soun' lek trubble! Yo' am all right, John. Jes' yo' watch fo' Mistah Merriwell when he come out, an' yeh'll get a tip fer lettin' de ladies in. Hey—what am dat?"

He held his ear close to the door and listened again. Then the crooked black hand was pressed still closer over his mouth, and his whole body shook with emotion as he tiptoed away.

"Lordy! Lordy!" he exploded, when he considered himself at a safe distance. "I know dat soun' any time Ah heah it. Smack! smack! Dat war kissin'! Heuh! a-he-uh! a-he-uh! If Mistah Merriwell don' make dat tip a whole dollah, dis coon ain't took his size an' suckumfrence!"

CHAPTER XXIX.

AN UNWILLING PROMISE.

When Frank stepped into his room he was astonished to find himself face to face with his old-time sweetheart, Inza Burrage, and her aunt, Miss Abigail Gale.

Inza hurried toward him, uttering a joyous cry, and an exclamation of surprise and delight escaped his lips.

In a moment, regardless of the presence of her aunt, the girl flung her arms about Frank's neck and kissed him.

Miss Gale's hard face did not soften, but she turned her back toward them, and pretended to be greatly interested in a strange crooked dagger, having a point smeared with some green substance, the dagger being locked in a case with a heavy glass door. Upon the glass of the case was pasted a slip of paper bearing these words:

"The Snake Knife of the Pampas."

"Inza!" exclaimed Frank, as if somewhat in doubt. "Inza—here?"

"Yes!" she cried. "Isn't it a surprise? I knew I would surprise you, Frank."

"A surprise indeed! Why, you didn't let me know you were coming."

"No."

"How does it happen?"

"Aunt Abby knows some friends in New Haven, and she wished to visit them while she was in the East, so she asked me to come with her. You may be sure I was ready enough to come, and, as father is getting along very well, we were able to leave him."

"Then your father—he is improved?"

"A great deal since getting back to America. He raced all over Europe looking for health, but continued to get worse till he returned home. Now he says he believes this the healthiest country on the face of the earth."

"And he is right. If a person is not strong enough to endure the rigors of our Northern climate, there is the perfect climate of California. But I don't suppose you came here to talk climate."

Frank said this with a laugh, and they advanced, hand-in-hand, toward Miss Gale, who had turned her attention from the queer knife to some still queerer images and ornaments that adorned the mantel.

"Aunty says you'll be a museum manager if you keep on," laughed Inza. "Says she never saw so many queer things."

"Goodness, no!" exclaimed Miss Gale, severely, turning to look at Frank over the rims of her spectacles. "I hope you ain't a crank, Mr. Merriwell."

"I trust not, Miss Gale," smiled Frank, with extended hand, which Abigail rather awkwardly accepted, but shook with a heartiness that was expressive of her esteem for Merry.

"What be some of these horrid-looking things?" asked the spinster. "What be they good for?"

"Some of them are mementoes, and some of them are simply for the purpose of decoration. Those little images, those odd vases, the pottery on that shelf—I gathered those things as ornaments."

"Do tell! I want to know if that ain't just like some folks! Them things are so hombly I'd want to hide 'em or put 'em all in the fire if I had 'em in my house. Some real pretty chromo pictures would look so much better in place of them. If you want vases, why you can get pretty glass ones

almost anywhere from fifteen to thirty cents each, and land knows they'd look better than them things! Then there's that great stuffed tiger. Goodness! It scared me awful when I saw it standing there in the corner of the room. I thought it was living, and was shooing at it when Inza ran over and put her hand right on it. Whatever in the world can induce you to have such a thing in your room?"

"At first I found it difficult to induce Aunt Abby to remain in this room," laughed Inza. "She wanted to go outside and wait for you. I am afraid she has obtained an unfavorable impression of you by coming here."

"I sincerely trust not," said Frank, who had worked hard when he first met Miss Gale in Santa Barbara to win her good esteem, a task at which he had been most successful. "I should regret it very much if I thought such was the case."

Miss Abigail's hard face did not soften, but she immediately said:

"I suppose we all must have some weak point, and it seems to be Mr. Merriwell's weakness to gather such hideous truck. I'm sure he's a gentleman, and I think just as much of him as I ever did."

Frank bowed gracefully and expressed his thanks.

"Can't help looking at the stuff," said the spinster, readjusting her spectacles and turning her back squarely on Frank and Inza. "I like to see what crazy notions they do get up."

She appeared to be very busy examining the collection of bric-a-brac and curiosities.

Frank and Inza looked at each other a moment, and then their hands met. He drew her to a seat on the sofa.

For some time they chatted of various matters that interested them alone, Miss Gale being strangely taken up with the trinkets in the meantime.

"Is this the way she usually chaperones you, Inza?" asked Frank, after a while, smiling.

"Goodness, no!" replied the girl. "If you were any one but Frank Merriwell she would be sitting stiff and straight on a chair, never taking her eyes off us for a moment. But you—she thinks you are the finest young man in the world. You have completely won her withered old heart, Frank. You should hear her praise you to papa."

"I'm lucky to have such a champion. Has your father given over the hope of marrying you off to some rich man?"

"I don't know about that. He hasn't mentioned it of late. I think his ill luck has discouraged him."

"Two years after this will take me through college, and then——"

"And then——"

His hand found hers once more, and the look that he gave her she could not misunderstand. Her eyes drooped, and the warm color surged into her cheeks.

To Frank it seemed that Inza grew more handsome each time he saw her. Certainly she was destined to become a strikingly attractive woman.

After a little their conversation drifted onto the subject of college sports, and Inza suddenly said: "I am so glad you are not playing football this season, Frank."

"Glad?" questioned Frank, surprised. "Why?"

"Oh, just because—because—I am."

This was unlike Inza. She had ever taken a great interest in manly sports and games, and, in the old days at Fardale, her smiles and encouraging words had fired him with enthusiasm to do his best in many a contest.

"I don't think I understand you," he said, slowly. "You used to be glad for quite the other reason."

"But—but it's different now."

"How?"

"Oh, I can't tell; but it is."

"Well, Inza, I have not played football this season, but I am thinking of playing in the two principal games—the ones with Harvard and Princeton."

Inza appeared startled.

"Don't do it, Frank—don't play football this year!" she exclaimed. "Promise me that you will not."

"Oh, I can't do that, Inza. Yale is not as strong as she should be this fall, and, if I can do anything to help her win, I feel that I must."

Inza secured both his hands, leaned toward him, and looked straight into his eyes, as she deliberately asked:

"If I didn't want you to play, would you do so?"

Frank's position was rather unpleasant, and he showed confusion.

"If there was a reason why you did not want me to play——"

"There is."

"Tell it to me."

"Not now—sometime. But I want you to promise me that you will not go on the field this season. Will you promise?"

In her dark eyes there was a command, as well as an entreaty. He felt that he could not resist her if he looked into those eyes, and he turned his head away.

Instantly Inza sprang up.

"I think we had better go, Aunt Abby," she exclaimed.

Frank was on his feet instantly.

"Now, Inza," he exclaimed, "I know you are angry. It seems to me that you are unreasonable. If you would tell me why you don't want me to play, I—I——"

"It is very plain that I have been mistaken in you," she said, severely. "I thought of you when my father was trying to force me into marriage with an Englishman with a title—and I ran away from the Englishman. Perhaps, if I had known you would refuse me such a little thing as this—perhaps I might have married that odious old Englishman out of spite!"

Her eyes flashed, and she stamped her small foot.

She was right; he felt it. She had done much for him, and truly he might please her in this matter. Marline could play full-back all right, and it was no more than fair that Marline should have a chance. He had not intended to play football, but Halliday had tried to drag him into it.

"Don't be angry, Inza," he said. "Let's talk it over. Perhaps I will promise."

"I have talked enough," she said, without relenting. "If you care for me as I fancied you did, you will promise without another word."

One more moment of hesitation, and then Frank said:

"That settles it—I promise."

"You will not play football this season?"

"No."

"You are a dear, good boy!"

Then she suddenly kissed him again.

CHAPTER XXX.

"FALSE TO HIS COLORS."

As the hour to start for the park that afternoon approached Halliday came hurrying into Merriwell's room, and found Frank digging away at his Greek again.

"Hey, there!" cried Ben. "Have you forgotten, old man?"

"Hello!" said Frank, looking up with an uncertain smile. "Forgotten what?"

"Practice."

"No."

"But you're not ready."

"No."

"Forrest wants us there on the dot. Come, Frank, get into your old suit, and we'll make a rush for the car."

Frank put down his book, saying:

"I'm not going, Ben."

"Hey?" cried Halliday, staggering. "Come again."

"I'm not going."

"Not? Come off! What are you giving us? Don't try any funny business with me, Merry!"

"There is no funny business about this. I have decided not to go."

"You can't afford to miss an afternoon if you are going to get in shape for the same with the Cambridge fellows."

"I am not going to try to get into shape."

That was another staggerer for Halliday. He gasped for breath and stared at Merriwell.

"Not going to try?" he slowly repeated. "Why—why, it can't be that——"

"Yes it can, Hally; I'm out of it. I have decided to stick to my studies and let football alone."

Ben groped for a chair, upon which he weakly dropped.

"Is this a dream?" he muttered; "or did my ears deceive me? It can't be that I heard aright!"

"There is no joking about this," said Frank, getting up and standing before his visitor. "I have decided at last, and my mind is made up."

Ben was silent, but he stared and stared and stared at Frank. He seemed trying to comprehend it.

"I wouldn't have believed it," he muttered—"I won't believe it now! It isn't Frank Merriwell! He wouldn't do a thing like that. He has a mind of his own, and he does not change his mind with every change of the wind."

Frank flushed painfully, but said:

"Only fools never change their minds, Hally. Men of reason and good sense are forced to change their minds occasionally."

As soon as he seemed able to comprehend it fully, Ben got up and approached Merriwell.

"Look here, Merry," he said, entreatingly, "don't be a fool! I'm going to talk plain with you! By Jove! Somebody should talk plain to you! I don't care if you kick me out of your room! If you whiffle around again you'll be the butt of ridicule for everybody. You'll never again have any standing in Yale. Man, you are throwing away your reputation! Can't you see it?"

Frank paled somewhat, but a firm look settled about his mouth, and he was unmoved.

"Surely, I have a mind of my own, and I have a right to do as I please in this matter," he said, his voice cold and steady. "I am my own master."

"Yes," confessed Ben, desperately, "but you must listen to reason. I haven't an idea why you have whiffled around again, but I do know it will ruin your reputation. Word has gone out that you will play full-back in the Harvard game. Forrest has the same as stated that he should put you in at the start, with Marline as substitute. Now think—think what it will mean if you again withdraw! Cæsar's ghost! Merry, you will be a dead duck in athletics and sports. You will be regarded with contempt."

"Can't help it."

Holiday's desperation increased.

"Think of Marline."

"I have."

"They'll say he cowed you—say you backed down because you feared him."

"It will not be true."

"But it will go, all the same."

"Can't help it."

"You must have a reason for this new move."

"My studies."

"That's the old reason. There must be another."

"Perhaps."

"Will you tell me what it is?"

"No."

"And do you want me to go out to the park without you?"

"You will have to go without me, for I am not going."

"And I have been bragging about getting him back on the eleven!" muttered Ben. "They'll jolly me to death, and I shall be so ashamed that I'll want to crawl into some sort of a hole."

"I am sorry about that, Hally," said Frank. "Believe me, I care more about it than about anything else."

"You do not mind the ruin of your own reputation?"

"I scarcely think my reputation will be damaged so badly."

"But it will—it will! If you were sure it would, wouldn't you go along with me?"

"No!"

That was like the blow of a hammer, and it took the last bit of hope from Halliday's heart.

"I think more of my word of honor than anything else," said Frank, grimly. "If I always stand by that, I'll risk my reputation."

"They'll say he is a traitor to Yale," muttered Ben, as if Frank could not hear. "They'll say he refused to do his duty—refused to fight for the honor of old Eli. They'll say he is false to his colors."

Frank winced somewhat. He could not help it, for he was touched on a tender spot.

"No fellow can have the interest of Old Eli more at heart than I," he declared. "But I think the importance of playing me full-back on the eleven is overestimated. There are several fellows who are able to play the position. Marline did excellent work in practice yesterday, and I believe he will show up finely in a game. I won't crowd him out—that's all. It's no use to talk to me."

He sat down and picked up his book.

Halliday stood looking at Frank, his face showing wrath and disgust, then turned and left the room. As he passed out Frank heard him mutter:

"False to his colors!"

CHAPTER XXXI.

FRANK IS MISERABLE.

Frank was expecting a call from Forrest. It came. The captain of the eleven brought Yates and Parker with him. He did not beat about the bush, but immediately asked Frank why he had not come out to practice.

With equal directness, Merriwell told him he had finally decided for good and all that he could not play football that season.

Parker looked dismayed; Yates looked disgusted. Forrest did not give up.

"You can't refuse," he said. "We need you, and you must play."

But Frank was determined, and persuasion proved of no avail. He firmly refused to think of playing.

"Come away!" exclaimed Yates, with a sneer. "It's no use to talk to him. I did think he was all right, but this settled his case in my mind."

Frank bit his lip, and all the color left his face, while his eyes gleamed dangerously.

"Mr. Yates," he said, "you are in my room, and I cannot lift a hand here. Any time you see fit to insult me outside I'll do my best to resent it."

"Bah!" cried Yates. "If you haven't the courage to face Marline, you'll never stand up to me. I have discovered that you are a big stiff! You're a case of bluff!"

Merriwell quivered, and his hands were clinched till his finger nails cut into the palms of his hands. It was plain that he was making a battle to restrain himself.

"Mr. Yates," he said, hoarsely, "you and I have had our troubles before, and, if I remember correctly, you did not come off with flying colors. It is plain you delight in this opportunity for retaliation, but I warn you to take care. There is a limit, and you may overstep it. If you do——"

"What then?"

"You'll find you have made a big mistake."

"Bah!"

Duncan Yates was withering in his scorn. With a contemptuous gesture he turned toward the door.

It seemed that Merriwell was on the point of leaping after him, but Frank still managed to hold himself in restraint.

Puss Parker seemed grieved.

"It's too bad!" he said, shaking his head. "I wouldn't have believed it. You are done for here, Merriwell."

"That's right," nodded Forrest. "You can never recover after this. It's the greatest mistake of your life, man."

"Come!" cried Yates from the door, which he was holding open. "You are foolish to waste further breath on him."

Then all three went out, not one of them saying good-by.

When they were gone Frank felt like tearing up and down the room and slamming things about, but he did nothing of the sort. He believed in controlling his emotions, and so he stood quite still till the first fierce anger had left him.

Then came regret and doubt. He was sorry he had shown himself on the football field, and he regretted that he had given Inza his promise not to play the game.

But it was too late for regret. He could not quell his doubts. He was not certain he had done right, and that was enough to make him wretched.

That night Frank was the most miserable fellow in Yale. It did not seem any fault of his that had brought him into such a wretched predicament, and yet he was thoroughly disgusted with himself.

He could not study, he could do nothing but think. Sometimes he was determined to go to Inza and ask her to release him from his promise, and then he would think how his enemies would say he had been driven into it.

Then came another thought. If he were to come out now and offer to fill a place on the eleven, would he be accepted? He had fallen so in the esteem of Forrest that it was quite likely the captain would refuse to take him on the team.

He tried to devise some way of setting himself aright, but could think of none.

Had any one told him two days before that he could be so utterly miserable, he would have laughed at them.

Only a short time before this turn in events he had been the best known and most popular student in the college. His fame had spread all over New Haven and gone abroad to other college places. He was regarded with awe as a great traveler and a wonderful athlete.

Now—well, it was different now!

Finding he could not rest, study or think of anything but his wretched position, Frank went out for a walk. He tried to tire himself out physically, so that weariness of body would force his mind to rest. Miles he tramped, far out into the country. He drove along like one walking on a wager, paying no attention to the frosty air which nipped his nose and ears.

It was eleven o'clock when Frank was passing Morey's on his way to South Middle. In front of the place he paused. He remembered the many jolly times he had enjoyed in there. He remembered when he was the chief one of any little circle that might gather in that famous resort. Now he felt like an outcast—an outsider.

Three students came out. They did not see him, and they were chatting and laughing merrily. He watched them as they strolled away, his heart growing heavier and heavier.

"Anderson, Cobb and Nash," he muttered. "They're always jolly—never seem to have any troubles. They drink and sport too much to stand high in their classes, but they will get through college all right, and every one will call them first-class fellows. Isn't that better than to be valedictorian and a hermit? I was getting along all right, although I was not showing up brilliantly in Greek. I'd have scrubbed through and held my position on the football team if I had tried. It's plain I made a big mistake."

It seemed plainer and plainer the more he thought about it, but he could see no way of turning back now and taking the path he had abandoned. He had burned his bridges, and he must go forward.

A great curiosity seized him. He knew well enough a party of students would be gathered in Morey's little back room, and he longed to know how he would be received among them.

"I'm going in there," he muttered. "Haven't been around for a long time. Here I go!"

In he went. He was known the moment he appeared. Straight for the famous back room he made his way, and he was immediately admitted, his face being his passport.

He was right in thinking a party was gathered there. At least a dozen fellows were sitting about drinking ale. They were not laughing or talking loudly, but as Frank entered the room, he distinctly heard his name spoken by one of them.

CHAPTER XXXII.

"THE MARBLE HEART."

"Hello, fellows!" called Merriwell, attempting to be cheerful. "Thought I'd drop in."

There was a sudden silence. All turned to look at him. Two of them sat with their half-lifted glasses suspended.

Then somebody muttered:

"Speak of the devil——"

Frank was embarrassed. There had been a time when his appearance at Morey's was greeted with a shout of welcome. The silence was freezing.

Marline was not there. Frank felt relieved when he discovered this, and still, for the first time in his life it seemed that there was a cowardly sensation in his heart.

He knew he was not a coward, but the position in which he stood at that moment made him feel like one.

The silence was maddening. His soul revolted against such a reception. For the first time in his life he fancied he understood what it was to be regarded with universal contempt.

And the injustice of it was what cut him to the heart. A little more and the limit would be reached. He would go forth ready to fight, and he knew that his first blow would be aimed at Rob Marline.

Thoughts like these flashed through his head in a moment, then he advanced into the room with old-time grace.

"A jolly party you have here," he said. "I'm glad to see you making merry. Drink up—drink up, everybody, and have a round with me."

Charlie Creighton was there, and Frank was sure he had a staunch friend in Charlie.

The fellows fell to speaking together in low tones, casting sidelong glances toward Frank. None of them seemed eager or ready to accept his invitation. They seemed to draw a barrier about him, as if they intended to shut him out.

Frank felt it—saw it plainly. He was quick to understand the situation, but he was not satisfied.

"They shall be put to the test," he mentally vowed. "I'll find out who are my friends and who are my enemies."

Then, one by one, he asked them what they would have to drink. Some had excuses, some flatly declined to take anything at all. Some showed their partly emptied glasses, and some said they had quite enough.

Frank's face grew hard and cold as he progressed and met with nothing but refusals. He was coming to Putnam, Stubbs and Creighton. Surely they would not refuse to drink with him!

Putnam saw he was to be asked in a moment. He hastily dashed off half a glass of ale and got up, remarking that he must be going.

"Hold on a moment, old man," said Frank. "I am going to have a lemon-seltzer. Have a drink with me."

"Excuse me," mumbled "Old Put." "I don't care for anything more."

"But you will have one drink with me?" urged Frank.

"No," said Putnam, shortly, "I've had enough."

Then he sauntered toward the door.

Merriwell bit his lips and turned on Stubbs.

"You'll have something, Bink?" he said, huskily.

"No, thanks," said the little fellow. "I'm going, too."

He followed Putnam.

Creighton was Merriwell's last resort. As old readers know, he had been a guest at Charlie's home in Philadelphia.

"Come, Creighton, you surely will not decline to take something with me, old fellow?"

Charlie hesitated, flushed to the roots of his hair, looked at Frank and at the others, then got up quickly, saying:

"You'll have to excuse me, too, Merriwell."

With that he bolted out of the room, and all the others followed, leaving Frank there alone.

For some moments the stunned and astonished lad stood as if turned to stone, staring with distended eyes toward the door by which they had passed out. His hands were clinched, his nostrils dilated, his head thrown back and his attitude that of a warrior wounded to the heart, but still unconquered in spirit.

He was aroused by a touch on the arm, and the smooth, almost sneering voice of a waiter asked:

"What will you drink, sir?"

Frank lifted one hand to his head and seemed to awaken from a dream. He looked at the waiter doubtfully, as if he did not understand the question that was put to him, then, after a bit, said:

"Thank you, I never drink."

The corners of the waiter's mouth curled upward in the faintest smile—a smile in which pity and scorn seemed to mingle. That aroused all the fury in Frank Merriwell's heart, and, with his eyes blazing, he half-lifted his fist as if he would strike the man in the face. Then he as quickly dropped his hand at his side, shivering as if he had been touched by a sudden chill.

The waiter had shrunk away with Merriwell's menacing movement, but when he saw there was no danger, he softly said:

"I beg your pardon—I thought you were going to drink, as you asked the others to have something with you."

How the words cut and stung! It was as if the man had struck him across the face with a whip. He fell back, half-lifting his hand, and his chin quivered.

"I did ask them!" he hoarsely whispered—"and they refused! Not one of them but would have considered it a high honor to have me ask them a month ago! And I have come to this!"

His words were incoherent, but his face told the story of his wounded pride. He remembered how many times he had been welcomed with a shout in that little room where the famous tables hung upon the wall. He remembered how his admirers had gathered about him, eager to listen to every word he might speak, and roar with laughter at his stories and jests. He remembered the songs, the speeches, all the jolly times in that room.

Little had he dreamed the time would come when the very ones he had counted as his warm friends would refuse to drink with him there and turn their backs on him in disdain.

Nothing could have hurt him more than that. His pride was cut to the core, and his spirit was shaken as it had never been before.

His first thought was that he would find a way to get even with them all. Then he realized how great a task that would be. He saw himself scorned and ostracized by the whole college, and, for a fleeting moment, he thought of leaving New Haven forever that very night.

His brain began to whirl. The waiter was standing there, looking at him in a manner that seemed rather insolent.

"What do you want?" he snapped.

"I beg your pardon," returned the waiter; "what do you want?"

"Whiskey!" cried Frank Merriwell—"bring me whiskey, waiter, and bring it quick!"

CHAPTER XXXIII.

"FOR THE HONOR OF OLD YALE."

The order was filled, the whiskey was brought. It was placed on the table at which Frank sat. He stared at it in surprise.

"What's that?" he asked.

"Why, sir, it's the whiskey you ordered," answered the waiter.

"Whiskey?" said Merriwell, in a dazed way. "Did I order that?"

"Yes, sir."

He paid for it.

Later, when a gay party dropped in, he was sitting at that table, with the untasted whiskey before him. He sat there staring and scowling at the table, but paid no attention to any one. The expression on his face made him look like anything but his old jolly self.

No one spoke to him. Newcomers drank, joked, laughed and went out. Still he sat there, scowling and staring at the table.

The report spread that Merriwell had been cut by his old friends. Curious ones strolled in and

ordered a drink just to get a look at him. He seemed quite unaware of this.

Never in his life had Frank tasted whiskey, but for one moment he had weakened and thought of easing the blow to his pride by resorting to the stuff.

Merriwell was human, but still that weakness lasted no more than a moment. Then he came to himself, and he was ashamed to think that he had contemplated such a course. It seemed cowardly.

"They say I am a coward," he thought; "but I am not a coward enough for that."

For more than an hour he sat there at the table. Finally he seemed to come out of the stupor that had seized upon him.

"Waiter," he called.

His voice was calm and natural, the scowl had vanished from his face, and he was himself once more.

"Waiter, you may remove this whiskey and bring me a lemon-seltzer. I don't care for this stuff."

When this order was filled, he calmly drank the lemon-seltzer, paid for it, rose to his feet, pulled on his gloves, and left Morey's with an air of combined nonchalance and dignity.

He was his own master once more. He had been insulted by fellows he formerly believed friends, but he was still Frank Merriwell. He felt within himself that he was a man and the equal of the best of them. Some day they should be ashamed when they remembered their act. He felt confident that day would come.

That night he slept as peacefully as a child, and arose in the morning refreshed and undisturbed. He would not permit his mind to dwell on what had happened, but resolutely set himself at his studies.

Those who had thought Merriwell, having once been so popular, would be crushed, soon found out their mistake. He was calm, quiet, and dignified. He did not seek the society of his fellows, but seemed the same old Merriwell to those who came to him. He was perfect in his recitations. He attended the gym., as usual, taking his daily exercise. He paid not the least attention to sneering words and scornful looks.

Frank's bitterest enemies were dissatisfied. They had fancied he would be utterly broken by his downfall, and they could not understand his dignity and disregard for public opinion.

Those who had reluctantly turned against him were impressed by his strength of spirit and dignity. He carried about him an air of manliness that won their admiration, despite themselves.

But every one had not turned against him. Bruce Browning was staunch and true, although he fiercely berated Merriwell for his course.

Harry Rattleton tried to remain unchanged, and never a word of reproach did he utter, no matter what he thought.

Jack Diamond did not say anything, but it was because he could not trust himself to speak. In his heart he felt like punching Frank and whipping his enemies and traducers; but he knew enough to let Merry alone.

Halliday held aloof. He was thoroughly disgusted with Merriwell. At first he said as much, and then he became silent and would say nothing at all.

So the days went by. Frank called on Inza, but did not mention what had happened. He had thought of telling her everything, and then he decided that it would do no good, and he would tell her nothing. It was too late for him to change his course, and it could do no good to talk it over. He preferred not to think about it.

The football team continued to practice and get ready for the great game at Cambridge. It was said that Harvard had the strongest eleven put on the field by her in five years. Her games with the higher teams had shown she was "out for blood." There was doubt and uncertainty in the Yale camp.

Ott, Marline's substitute, was not satisfactory. Those who understood the situation best said that an injury to Marline early in the game would ruin Yale's prospects.

The anxiety increased as the day of the game approached. Some claimed the eleven had not been properly trained, others asserted they had been overtrained.

From Frank Merriwell's manner one could not have suspected he had ever taken the slightest interest in football. He did not seem to know anything of the general gossip.

It was the night before the game. Merry had been studying. He was alone in his room. At last, feeling exhausted, he flung open the window and looked out.

It was a perfect night, cold, clear and light. The sky was filled with stars. From across the campus came the sound of a rollicking song.

Directly beneath Frank's window was a group of students who were excitedly discussing

something. Their words attracted Merriwell's attention.

"It's settled," said the voice of Paul Pierson. "Yale will not be in the game for a minute. What can a team do without a first-class full-back?"

"Isn't there a chance that Marline's ankle will be all right in time for the game?" asked another of the group.

"Not a chance," positively asserted Pierson. "The doctor says he'll not step on it for three days, at least. It is a bad sprain."

"Such beastly luck!" growled Randy Robinson. "Now if Merriwell——"

"Don't speak of that fellow," exclaimed two or three.

"He is the only hope for Yale," declared Pierson. "Ott isn't in it for a minute. Frank Merriwell must be appealed to for the honor of old Yale."

"Who'll appeal to him?"

"I will, if they'll give me authority. I know he will play when he understands the situation."

Merriwell drew in his head and closed the window. His face was pale. Up and down the floor he walked.

"For the honor of old Yale!" he muttered.

Then he suddenly cried:

"For the honor of old Yale I will do anything!"

Then came a knock on his door.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

A SENSATION ON THE FIELD.

The day of the great football game between Harvard and Yale had arrived. The hour approached.

Jarvis Field was ready for the great struggle. The white marks of the gridiron were regularly and beautifully made.

The sun shone down from a clear sky. There was no breeze, but the air was crisp, for all of the sunshine.

At either side the stands were filled; hundreds upon hundreds were standing; hundreds upon hundreds were coming. A better day for the game could not have been ordered, and spectators were turning out in force.

Harvard students were there in a body. They flaunted the crimson and sung their songs of glee. Their faces were radiant, and they were confident of victory.

Yale had sent her representatives by hundreds. They wore the blue, they waved the blue, they cheered for the blue.

Everywhere the blue and the crimson could be seen. Everybody was partisan; everybody had a favorite.

Back of the dark mass of human beings, beyond the limit of the field, were the trees and the great buildings with their many windows, upon which the sunshine glinted coldly.

Policemen kept back the standing mass of spectators, or those in the rear would have pressed those in advance forward upon the field.

A few of those in the rear had obtained boxes or stools, upon which they were standing in order to look over the heads of those before them. A wagon was covered with spectators; they were standing on the spokes of the wheels.

The excitement and the eager anticipation was most intense. It betrayed itself on every face.

Not far from the point where the mass of Yale blue was thickest two lads were talking. One wore the blue, the other wore the crimson. The first was Sport Harris, and the other was Rolf Harlow, who had been forced to leave Harvard after being exposed as a crooked gambler.

"Every dollar is up," said Harlow, gleefully. "We are in to win a good pile on this game if what you say is right."

"What I have told you is straight."

"Marline can't play?"

"No."

"Ott is a poor man?"

"Sure."

"And there is no chance that Frank Merriwell will be run in?"

"Bah!" exclaimed Harris, disdainfully. "Merriwell is a dead duck at Yale. He'll never count in anything more. He is an outcast now. What do you think?—he's universally rated as a coward."

"Oh, say!" exclaimed Harlow; "that's too much! You don't expect me to believe that about Frank Merriwell?"

"Believe it or not, it's true."

"I don't understand how it could come about, for you and I know there is not a drop of cowardly blood in Merriwell. Confound him! If there had been, some things that have happened would not have taken place."

"Circumstances have conspired to put him where he is, and he'll never dig out. He has a few enemies who will take care to keep him down, now he is down."

"Well, I'm glad he's not on the team. We'll make a fat thing out of this, old man."

"Yes, I gave you every dollar I could raise, so you must know I am dead sure Harvard will win. If, by any fluke, Yale should happen to pull off this game I shall be busted."

"Same here."

"In that case, we'd have to stand in together and catch some suckers. We've done it before."

"And been exposed in it by that cursed Merriwell! Oh, I'd like to get a good rap at that fellow! He has spoiled a number of good, soft things for me since we first met."

"You can't hate him more than I do."

"I don't know about that; but he has been a lucky devil. I'm glad he's not going to play for Yale to-day."

"He couldn't win the game alone."

"No, but it would be Yale's luck to win if Merriwell played. He has been a mascot for Yale in almost everything."

Harris believed this, for he remembered how many times Frank Merriwell had been the instrument by which Yale had snatched victory from apparent, certain defeat.

Suddenly a band struck up, and out upon the field came the Harvard eleven on the trot. What a cheer went up—what a wild roar of greeting!

For the moment it seemed that the crimson was everywhere. The band hammered away, and the blood was leaping in the veins of the thousands of spectators.

Harvard immediately took a bit of preliminary practice.

"They are the boys to polish Yale off this year!" laughed Harlow. "It's going to be a snap for Harvard."

"I believe it," grinned Harris. "We'll have money to burn after this game."

Suddenly another kind of a cheer rent the air, and now the blue was waving everywhere. Onto the field came the Yale eleven at a sharp trot.

Harris and Harlowe laughed and nudged each other with their elbows.

"See the little lambs!" chuckled the sport.

"Coming to the slaughter!" grinned Rolf.

"Too bad!"

"It's a shame!"

"I feel for them."

"I expect to feel for that money. Where's Ott?"

"Why, he's right over—over there—where the dickens is Ott?"

"Can't you see him?"

"Can't seem to, but he must be there. Yes, there he is with the group out to the right."

"Those are the substitutes. Why is he with them?"

Harris stared, quite as much puzzled as Harlow, for he had understood that Ott was to be put in as full-back for Yale at the very start.

"It must be—it can't be—it can't be Marline is going to try it!"

"You said he couldn't step on his foot."

"He can't."

"Then he isn't in it."

"Of course not."

"Who is?"

"You tell!"

Then, all at once, Harlowe caught Harris by the shoulder, and, pointing toward the field, almost screamed in his ear:

"Ten thousand furies! Look there—look there, you blunderer! See him—see that tall, straight fellow?"

"Where?—who?"

"Where? Who? Right there, with the Yale captain—with Forrest! By all the living fiends, it is——"

"Frank Merriwell!" gasped Harris.

"Yes, and he is going to play full-back for Yale! He'll hoodoo Harvard! Yale will win this game!"

CHAPTER XXXV.

STOPPING A TOUCHDOWN.

Frank Merriwell was there. His appearance was a surprise to nearly all the Yale crowd; it created a sensation.

"Merriwell has been taken in to fill Marline's place!" was the excited statement that went around.

"It's a foolish move," declared scores. "He has not been practicing with the team. He's not in condition."

They did not know Frank Merriwell thoroughly, for he kept himself in condition constantly.

At first his appearance seemed to create doubt and uncertainty among the spectators who were interested in Yale. Gradually, however, enthusiasm grew. It was remembered how he had carried the ball right through Princeton's center in the game the year before, making the most remarkable run ever known on a football field. Yale had felt her chance was a desperate one; surely it could not be any worse. Perhaps it might be bettered by the placing of Merriwell at full-back. It was a desperate resort, but who could say the result would not justify the move?

Forrest was talking to Merriwell, having drawn Frank aside. They were in earnest conversation.

A little negro boy came on the field. How he escaped the vigilance of the officers was a mystery, but he reached the group of substitutes.

"Heah!" he called, flourishing something in his hand: "heah am suffin' to Mistah Merriwell. Where am he?"

It was a folded scrap of paper. One of the substitutes took it and told the boy to "chase himself."

"I's done got mah pay fo' bringin' it," he chuckled, as he scudded off.

The note reached Merriwell when he had finished talking with Forrest. He took it in surprise, and then opened it hastily. A gasp came from his lips when he saw the writing.

"From Inza!" he whispered.

This is what he read:

"DEAR FRANK: Did not receive your letter till this morning. Too late then to answer. Had left New Haven for Boston before I read it. You asked me to release you from your promise not to play football. No, I will not! You must not play! If you do, I'll never speak to you again! I know Yale will win if you play! You must not play! Hastily,

"INZA."

"Line up!"

The game was about to begin!

Frank tore the note into many pieces, and those pieces he tossed aside. His face was stern and determined.

"It's for old Yale—dear old Yale!" he muttered. "She has no right to ask so much of me without giving me a reason for it. I must play—I will play!"

Out to positions went the two teams. They lined up for business, and a great hush came over the mighty jam of spectators.

Yale had the first kick-off, and Merriwell balanced himself for it.

Pung!—away sailed the ball clean through Harvard's goal posts, causing the uninitiated to tremble, as it was an exquisite exhibition of kicking.

But this kick really gave Yale no advantage, for the rule gives the ball to the opponents on such a play.

Harvard's full-back sent it spinning back into the center of the field. It looked like another kick by Merriwell, but, instead of that, Yale tried Mills, the right-half, who could make only two yards against Harvard's heavy forwards.

The game was on in all its fury, and the excitement was intense. Kick followed kick in quick succession, but that style of play did not seem to gain anything worth gaining for either side.

Yale got the ball and tried the revolving wedge on Harvard. They could not make a big gain, for the Cambridge lads were like a stone wall.

Again and again was this style of play tried, till Harvard got the ball on downs.

Then came Harvard's turn to see what she could do, and the first attempt was a try at the tandem play, made famous by Pennsylvania.

Yale seemed ready enough for that, and the way she cut through and broke Harvard's line showed immediately that the tandem was not likely to prove very effective.

Then Harvard called on Benjamin, her right-half, and a moment later the rush line did a fine piece of work, opening Yale's center and letting the little fellow through.

Benjamin had the speed of the wind. He also had the ball. Away he went with it, and there was a clear field before him.

Harvard admirers roared from all over the field. The crimson flaunted everywhere.

It looked like a sure touchdown for Harvard. Every Yale spectator held his breath in racking suspense.

Benjamin was flying over the ground. It seemed that his feet scarcely touched the turf.

Where is Yale now? What chance has she to stop the little fellow with wings on his feet?

Three seconds of suspense seemed like three hours of torture. It was awful!

A Yale man was after little Benjamin—was gaining! Could he stop the little fellow in time? It must be a tackle from behind, if at all, and the slightest slip would bring failure.

Behind them came all the others on the run, strung out raggedly.

Benjamin would make it—he was sure to make it. His pursuer could not reach him in time.

Then it seemed that the Yale man had springs in his legs, for he sailed over the ground like a frightened rabbit. He closed in on Benjamin and flung himself headlong at the little fellow.

Down slipped the tackler's hands, down from the hips to the knees, to the ankles. Down went Benjamin with a hard thump, stopped within three yards of Yale's line.

Twenty men piled upon tackler and tackled.

Deep down beneath that mass was Frank Merriwell, his hands clinging like hooks to Benjamin's ankles.

He had stopped what seemed to be a sure touchdown for Harvard at that early stage of the game.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

WON BACK.

Beside Inza Burrage, in a splendid position to watch the game, sat a pretty girl with fluffy hair. She wore Harvard's colors, and seemed greatly excited.

"There he is!" she exclaimed, at various stages of the game—"there is Jack! See him, Inza!"

"Yes," said Inza, "I see him."

But her eyes were not on the one meant by her companion. She was watching Frank Merriwell, and she bit her lip as she watched.

She had seen him receive her note, she had seen him read it, tear it in pieces, cast the pieces aside.

"He will play!" she muttered. "He will break his promise to me!"

Her companion heard her words.

"You said Merriwell would not go into the game," she cried.

"Yes, I said so, but I was wrong. He gave me his promise not to play, and last night he sent me a letter asking to be released from that pledge. The note I sent to him a short time ago was a reminder of his promise, and a refusal to release him."

"Yet he will play?"

"He is going into the game."

"Then it can't be that he thinks as much of you as you supposed."

"He does not. This has settled that point."

"I'm afraid Harvard will not win, Inza. Jack says Frank Merriwell has been Harvard's hoodoo in everything. He was sure Harvard would obtain this game if Merriwell did not play. You said he did not mean to play, but I wanted you to ask him not to do so."

"I did ask him, something I should not have done had we not been such friends, Paula, although I was curious to know how much influence I had over him. Oh, I think he is the meanest fellow! I shall hate him now!"

Inza's eyes were flashing and her face flushed. She was intensely angry, and she showed it.

Paula Benjamin was startled.

"Oh, you musn't be too hard on him!" she said. "You know how much Jack loves Harvard, and how crazy he is for Harvard to beat Yale in this game. I was almost as crazy myself, and that is why I wanted you to ask Mr. Merriwell not to play."

"I shall never trust him again," whispered Inza, hoarsely—"never! He has broken his promise to me."

"It is certain he loves Yale as dearly as Jack loves Harvard. He may think it is his duty to break his word for the sake of Yale."

"I don't care! I don't care! I do hope Harvard will beat!"

With breathless interest the two girls watched the game. They were nerved to a point of intense excitement. They saw Harvard stand like a stone wall against Yale's repeated assaults. It was a battle of gladiators.

Then came Harvard's tiger-like assault upon Yale's center, and Jack Benjamin went through with the ball. The great crowd of spectators rose as one person, seething with excitement, as Benjamin flew toward Yale's line.

"Hurrah!" cried the sister of the little fellow. "That is Jack—my brother Jack! He'll make a touchdown! They can't catch him—they can't stop him!"

"Wait a bit!" palpitated Inza Burrage, who was clinging convulsively to Paula's arm. "Look—look there! Frank is after him! See them run! Frank is gaining!"

"He can't catch Jack—my brother Jack! I know he can't do it! Jack has the start! Hurrah! Hurrah!"

"He will catch him! He's gaining! See—see him again! He is getting nearer—nearer! Now—now—Oh-o-o-oh!"

Frank Merriwell had flung himself at the Harvard man and pulled him down. Then the other players piled upon them.

"I knew it!" cried Inza, with a hysterical laugh. "I knew he could not get away from Frank!"

"Oh, the brute!" sobbed Paula—"the brute to throw my brother like that! Jack was right! Frank Merriwell will keep Harvard from winning! I hate him!"

"Yes," fluttered Inza, "he will do it if it is in his power. Oh, he is a wonderful player! But he thinks more of his old college than he does of me! I'll never speak to him again!"

Paula sat down and cried, while Inza did her best to comfort her friend.

Soon the game was on again, as fierce as ever. Yale fought desperately, driving Harvard back a little, but it seemed that Harvard had the superior team. All the fighting was on Yale's territory. At last, as the first half drew to a close, Harvard's left half-back went around Yale's end, and the most masterly interference prevented Yale from stopping him. He crossed the line and made a touchdown. Then Harvard's full-back had time enough to kick a goal, and the first half ended with Harvard triumphant.

"Har-vard! Har-vard! Harvard! Rah-rah-rah! Rah-rah-rah! Rah-rah-rah! Harvard!"

It was a sense of wild rejoicing. Crimson fluttered all over the great throng.

Where was the blue?

"Yale isn't in the game for a minute," said some who were supposed to be experts. "The Yale fellows found they were butting against a stone wall every time they tried a rush. This is Harvard's year."

Ralph Harlow was beaming with triumph.

"It's going to be an easy thing for our money, Harris," he chuckled. "Yale can't do anything with Harvard to-day."

"That's the way it looks," admitted Harris; "but the game is not over."

"The game will run the same way till, it is over. Yale's rushers could do nothing with Harvard's line. Frank Merriwell is the only man who has distinguished himself for Yale, and he could do nothing but delay the inevitable for a short time."

"That was the only real good opportunity Merriwell has had," said Sport. "He showed what he could do then. You remember his run through Princeton's line last year?"

"That's all right. Yale can't break an opening to let him through Harvard's line this year."

"I hope not, but I shan't feel sure of it till the game is over."

The Harvard crowd cheered and sang songs till they were hoarse. They hugged each other, tooted horns and indulged in wild antics to give vent to the exuberance of their feelings.

The sons of Old Eli who had come up from New Haven to see the game were dolefully silent. They had seen Yale fling herself upon Harvard time after time and rebound as a ball rebounds from a solid wall, and their hearts were weak within them.

Paula Benjamin was almost crazy with joy. She laughed and cried by turns.

"Oh, the dear fellows!" she exclaimed. "I could hug every one of them!"

Inza Burrage said nothing, but upon her face there was a look of unspeakable disappointment and dismay. In her heart she was crying:

"Will Yale let them beat? Will Frank be beaten? If he is, I am sure I'll never speak to him again!"

Soon the men formed for the beginning of the second half. Harvard went into the game on the jump, and Yale was forced to resort to defense play. It seemed that there was no stopping the crimson in its onward march to victory. Foot by foot and inch by inch Yale was beaten back till the ball was on the twenty-yard line.

Then Halliday revived hope in a measure by taking it back to the center of the field, where he was downed with such violence that he was picked up quite unconscious, and another man had to be put in his place, while he was carried from the field, limp and covered with dirt and glory.

It seemed that Halliday's desperate do-or-die break gave Yale courage and hope. For some time she held Harvard at the center of the field, not allowing a gain of a foot. Then Old Eli got the ball and rushed it into Harvard's territory.

What a glorious fight it was! Now every Yale man in the crowd was on his feet cheering like mad. Those cheers seemed to make fiends of the defenders of the blue. They played, every man of 'em, as if they were in battle and ready to sacrifice their lives without a moment of hesitation. They were irresistible. Harvard's stone wall was broken at last. Merriwell was in the thick of it. Four times he advanced the ball. Others took turns, and, at last, the ball was on Harvard's twenty-five-yard line.

Then there was a hush, for it suddenly became plain that Merriwell would try to kick a goal from the field. It was a desperate expedient. Yale feared to lose the ball and have it carried back to the center in a minute. Such a loss would be fatal, and Forrest knew it Frank had been given the signal to kick.

"He can't do it!" cried scores.

Then they thought of the beautiful kick he had made at the very beginning of the game and were silent.

Frank advanced to the proper position, exactly the right blade of grass. There he poised himself.

Cross fiddled with the ball between his legs. The suspense became intense.

Suddenly the ball was snapped and passed back. Punk—Frank kicked it. Away it sailed.

He did it before those Harvard tigers could down him. It was a glorious kick. Through the goal posts and over the bar it sailed.

Then the Yale yell was heard.

But the game was not over. Harvard had secured a touchdown and a goal. Yale had secured a goal. It seemed that she had feared utter defeat, else she would have fought for the touchdown.

The Harvard crowd remained confident. They crowed, for they said Yale had displayed her own lack of confidence by kicking a goal from the field.

The time was growing short, and there seemed little chance for Yale to do anything more. Harvard men laughed and said Harvard would obtain another touchdown and goal before the end.

Little time was lost in putting the ball into play again. Harvard immediately started out with rushes. Now, to the astonishment of all, Yale was the stone wall.

Soon the ball went to Yale. Mills took it around Harvard's end for fifteen yards. Powell bucked the center with it and gained some ground.

Harvard men began to get anxious. Things had changed since the first half. Harvard was on the defensive now. What had caused the change no one could tell.

Back and still back the Harvard line was forced. Would Yale try to secure another goal from the field? That was the question.

Paula Benjamin was almost crying.

"It's Frank Merriwell!" she said. "Jack said he would hoodoo Harvard, and he has!"

"It is Frank!" thought Inza. "He has put life into the Yale men. He has given them confidence somehow. He must win now—he will!"

The ball was getting dangerously near Harvard's line. The Cambridge men fought to hold it during the last few minutes of the game.

Then, with a sudden movement, a man was sent through Harvard's center, although an around-the-end play had been anticipated. It was a tricky move, and took Harvard by surprise.

Like a shot that man went through Harvard's line. He ran with wonderful speed, with interferers on either side and a bit in advance.

It was Frank making a last desperate effort for a touchdown!

One by one the interferers were flung aside till he was alone, hugging the ball, running as if for his life.

Three men came down on him while he had fifteen yards to go. They flung themselves on him like famished wolves. They thought to crush him to the ground.

Then ten thousand people gasped with astonishment, scarcely able to believe what they saw.

It did not seem that Merriwell slackened speed much, and he still went forward, carrying those three men on his back and shoulders. They tried to drag him down, and others tried to reach him. They could not break him to the ground, and, with them all on his back he carried the ball over the line. Then he fell, and the ball was beneath him.

It was a touchdown for Yale! Besides that, it was the most wonderful touchdown ever made on a football field. A mighty roar went up from the spectators when they realized what had happened. Never before had they witnessed anything like that. They knew the man who made the play had won fame. To-morrow his picture would be in every Boston and New York newspaper.

Oh, how the Yale men shrieked, and screamed, and roared! They were like human beings gone mad. They were crazed with their admiration for the man who had done that trick. They longed to take him in their arms, to bear him on their shoulders, to do him every honor.

Gloriously had Frank Merriwell won back his lost prestige! Let a man breathe a slur against him now and there would be a hundred ready to knock that man down.

When the mass untangled Merriwell was seen lifted to his feet. He stood up, wavering a bit, supported by Forrest, who had an arm around Frank's body.

Then Frank pushed Forrest off. Time was precious, and his soul was strong.

Hasty preparations were made, and, for all of what he had just passed through, Merriwell kicked a goal.

Three seconds later the game was over, and Yale had won.

Then all Merriwell's admirers rushed upon the field to surround him, to fight for a look at him, and to roar their delight.

"Rah for Yale!"

"Three cheers for Frank Merriwell!"

"They can't down Old Eli!"

So the cries rang on.

It was truly a scene never to be forgotten.

But at that moment Frank did not think of the game.

He was wondering what Inza would say.

Would she forgive him for what he had done?

"Oh, I hope she does," was his thought. "If she doesn't—" And he could think no further.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

INZA BEGINS TO UNDERSTAND.

"How did the game come out?" asked Miss Abigail Gale, Inza's aunt, as the two girls returned to Paula's home, which was a handsome house in an aristocratic portion of the Back Bay.

Miss Gale was knitting. For all of her luxurious surroundings, she was plainly dressed, and she was practicing economy by knitting herself some winter stockings. Reputed to be comfortably rich, Miss Gale was "close-handed" and thrifty.

"Yale won, of course!" cried Inza, who had not recovered from her enthusiasm. "Oh, Aunt Abby, you should have seen it!"

"No, no!" exclaimed the spinster, shaking her head.

"You would have gone crazy over it!"

"It's brutal. I have no sympathy with such brutal games. I didn't want to see it, and I stayed away."

"But it was such a splendid spectacle. Twenty-two young gladiators, clad in the armor of the football field, flinging themselves upon each other, struggling like Trojans, swaying, straining, striving, going down all together, getting up, and—"

"Land!" cried Miss Abigail, holding up both hands. "It must have been awful! It makes my blood run cold! Don't tell me any more!"

"At first Harvard rushed Yale down the field. Yale could not hold them back. It was easy for Harvard. Jack got the ball—Jack Benjamin. He went through Yale's line. The coast was cleared. He made a touchdown. He ran like a deer. How his legs did fly!"

"Good!" cried Miss Abigail, getting excited and dropping her knitting—"good for Jack!"

"But a Yale man was after him, and the Yale man could run. The crowd was wild with excitement. Jack tore up the earth. The Yale man tore up the earth—"

"He couldn't catch Jack!" exclaimed the spinster. "It wasn't any use for him to try."

"He did catch him—jumped at him—caught his ankles—pulled him down!"

"You don't say! He'd ought to be walloped!"

"Then the others came up, and they all piled on Jack and Frank."

"Frank? Frank who?"

"Why, Frank Merriwell, of course."

"Was he the one that caught Jack?"

"Yes."

"I might have known it. No use for Jack to try to run away from Frank. He couldn't do that. But I thought Frank wasn't going to play?"

"He broke his promise to me—he did play."

"Do tell! I'm surprised!"

"So was I. He stopped Jack, but Harvard scored in the first half, and Yale didn't get a thing. Then came the other half. Yale went at Harvard with new life. Frank seemed to give it to them. He rushed the ball down the field. Harvard couldn't hold him."

"Of course not."

"He got the ball close down to Harvard's line. Then he kicked a goal."

"Hurrah!" cried Miss Abigail, with an astonishing burst of enthusiasm. "Go on, Inza."

"The ball was put into play again. Again Yale got it and rushed it down through Harvard's line. Harvard made a furious struggle to hold it back. Frank got it at last—he broke through—they couldn't stop him. Then—then, with three Harvard men on his back, he carried the ball over the line for a touchdown, kicked a goal, and won the game."

Miss Abigail was palpitating with excitement.

"Goodness me!" she gurgled. "And Frank did all that? I didn't see him do it, either! Goodness me!"

It must have been grand—it must have been! What a fool I was to stay at home!"

Inza laughed, and then became sober, suddenly.

"Yale won," she said, "but I'll never speak to him again."

"Him? Who?"

"Frank."

"Won't speak to Frank Merriwell?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"He broke his promise to me. Harvard would have won if he hadn't. Look at Paula! She is heartbroken! It was mean of Frank—just as mean as it could be!"

"It was mean," said Paula, "and Frank Merriwell ought to be ashamed. I think he must be an awfully cheap fellow to do anything like that."

Miss Abigail's face grew hard as iron.

"Now, you hold right on, Paula Benjamin!" she said, severely. "Don't you talk about him! Your mother and me was schoolmates, but I won't stay in this house to hear Frank Merriwell traduced! I know him, and he's a fine young man."

"He may be," reluctantly admitted Paula, seeing Miss Gale was thoroughly aroused; "but it seems to me that a fine young man should keep a pledge."

"You don't know his circumstances. There must have been a good reason why he broke his pledge."

"I presume he was called on to play when Mr. Marline injured his ankle."

Inza looked at Paula quickly.

"Mr. Marline?" she said. "I think Frank spoke of him. Who is he?"

"He was to play full-back for Yale, but he sprained his ankle, and so he could not play."

"Do you know him?"

"I have been introduced to him. Jack knows him very well. We met him when we were South two years ago."

"How do you know he sprained his ankle?"

"Jack heard of it last night."

"Then word must have been sent from New Haven. Did it come through a traitor or a spy?"

Paula flushed, and then said:

"Through neither. Mr. Marline expected to see us after the game, and he sent word that he could not very well, as he had sprained his ankle and might not be able to come on. I saw him with the Yale boys, though. He was on crutches."

"I begin to understand Frank's position," thought Inza. "He was forced into the game. Well, I have said I'd never speak to him again, and I shall keep my word. I don't care if it breaks my heart! I know he thinks more of his old college than he does of me."

Jack Benjamin came home bruised in body and crushed in spirit. Paula met him at the door, and drew him into the sitting-room, where Inza and Miss Gale were.

"It's too bad, Jack!" cried his sister, her sympathetic heart wrung by the look of pain on his face. "I think it is just awfully mean that Harvard didn't win!"

"Harvard would have won if it hadn't been for that fellow, Frank Merriwell!" growled Benjamin. "I said he'd hoodoo us, and I was right. We can't down Yale at any game he is in. It's no use to try. Why, we out-classed Yale all around to-day, and still he won the game for them. That's what I call infernal luck!"

Inza repressed her elation, but something like a grim smile came to Miss Abigail's hard face.

"If Marline hadn't hurt his ankle, we'd been all right," declared Jack, as he sat with his elbows on his knees and his chin on his hands, looking down at the floor. "Rob is a good man, they say, but he could not have done the things Merriwell did. Why, hang it!" he suddenly cried, getting on his feet, sinking his hands deep in his pockets, and stamping around the room, "that fellow actually carried Woodbury, Stanton and Glim on his back for more than fifteen yards! They couldn't pull or crush him down. I wouldn't believe it possible if I hadn't seen it. He's a terror!"

Inza's eyes sparkled.

Paula followed Jack and took his arm.

"I hate him!" she cried. "I saw him pull you down, the big, strong ruffian!"

"Yes," nodded Jack, "and a pretty tackle it was. He didn't pile upon me like a wooden man, but his hands went down to my ankles and flipped me in a second. If he'd bungled the least bit, I'd made a touchdown. Oh, he is a terror!"

"But I hate him!" persisted Paula. "I was so sure you would make a touchdown. What right had he to grasp you that way and throw you so hard?"

"That's the game, sister mine. Any Yale man would have done it—if they could."

"I don't care! Why was he playing?"

"That's right!" cried Jack, turning to Inza. "I thought he wasn't in the game this season? I thought he gave you his promise not to play?"

Inza flushed with shame and embarrassment.

"He did," she confessed.

Jack whistled.

"And broke his promise—I see! It can't be that he thinks much of his word."

It seemed for an instant that Inza would defend him, but she did not. For the first time Frank had broken a promise to her, and she felt it keenly. She turned away.

Miss Gale looked grim, but remained silent. She knew herself, and realized she might say too much, if she spoke at all.

It was an hour or so before Jack could cool down, so stirred up was he by the result of the game. Finally, he went upstairs to take a bath.

Before dinner there was a ring at the bell, and a servant brought in a card, which she gave to Jack, who was enjoying his first smoke of weeks, now that the game was over.

"Hello!" he cried. "Rob Marline! I didn't expect him."

"Rob Marline!" exclaimed Paula, in no little confusion. "Gracious! I must be looking like a fright! Come up to my room with me, Inza, and see that I am presentable."

So the girls ran up to Paula's room, and Jack directed that Marline be brought directly to the smoking-room.

"I want to look my best when Mr. Marline comes," said Paula, when they were in her boudoir. "I am sure my hair looks bad, and I must be a perfect fright."

Inza laughed.

"It seems to me you are very particular about Mr. Marline."

"I am," confessed Paula, busying herself before the mirror. "You know, he is Jack's particular friend."

"Oh, he's Jack's particular friend!"

The manner in which Inza said that brought a warm flush to Paula's cheeks, and she endeavored to hide her confusion, but in vain.

"I've discovered your secret, dear!" cried Inza, with her arm about her friend's waist. "Now I know why you take such an interest in Robert Marline."

"Nonsense! I like him, because—because——"

"Just because you do."

"No; because he is Jack's friend."

"Now, don't try to deceive me, Paula!" cried Inza, holding up one finger. "You can't do it. You would like Rob Marline just as much if your brother was not in it."

"Oh, it's no use to talk to you," fluttered Paula. "You are one of the girls who will have your own way."

"No, not always. I did not have my way to-day. Frank Merriwell played football. But, Paula, I think I am beginning to understand more fully just why you were so anxious Mr. Merriwell should not play on the Yale eleven. He was Mr. Marline's natural rival for the position of full-back. If Frank Merriwell played, Rob Marline could not. I'm sure I am right. You did not tell me the entire truth, but I have found it out."

Paula was more than ever confused, but she could not deny Inza's charge.

"If I told you that," she confessed, with sudden frankness, "I feared you would not try to induce Mr. Merriwell not to play. Now, don't be angry with me, Inza! I know it was Rob's—I mean Mr. Marline's ambition to play full-back on the Yale team, and I wanted him to do so. That's all. Perhaps I ought to have told you in the first place. Do forgive me, dear!"

It was not in Inza's heart to be unforgiving, and so the girls hugged each other, kissed and assisted each other in getting ready to go down and meet the visitor.

They found Jack and Marline in the library. The Yale lad arose with difficulty. His crutches were lying on the floor beside the chair on which he sat.

Paula blushed prettily as she shook hands with Marline, and then she presented Inza.

Thirty minutes later, while they were chatting, there was another ring at the bell, and the servant brought a card to Inza.

"Gentleman wishes to see you, miss."

Inza looked at the card, turned pale, and then, her voice quivering a bit, said:

"Tell Mr. Merriwell I will not see him!"

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

A BLOW FOR FRANK.

"Eh? What's that?" exclaimed Miss Abigail, who entered the library just in time to catch Inza's words.

"Frank Merriwell has had the impudence to call here to see me—as soon as this!" flared Inza, her face flaming.

"Eh?" exclaimed Miss Abigail, once more. "Impudence?"

"Yes—insolence! After he did not keep his promise to me!"

Rob Marline was greatly interested, although he pretended not to notice what was going on.

"Oh, well, dear," said the spinster, "you must not blame him."

"But I do!"

"You do not know the circumstances."

"I know he broke his promise, and I know I'll never speak to him again as long as I live—never!"

"You think so now, but——"

"I shall think so always."

"Don't be foolish, child! Mr. Merriwell is a splendid young man, and you——"

"I will not see him! That is all."

Then Inza again instructed the servant to tell Mr. Merriwell that she would not see him.

"If you won't see him, I will," said Miss Abigail. "Is he in the parlor? I'll go to him."

"Now, aunt!" cried Inza, catching her arm, "you need not try to fix anything up. He broke his promise to me, and I said I'd never speak to him again. I meant it! He may just stay away, for I don't want to see him. Tell him so for me."

"All right, I will, but I'm going to tell him you're all fluttered, and don't know what you're talking about."

So Miss Gale went to see Frank in the parlor, while Inza remained in the library.

Paula was not hard-hearted, for all that she had declared she hated Frank Merriwell, and, when she saw Inza was in earnest about not seeing Frank, she drew her aside, and said:

"Perhaps you had better see him. I don't want to be the cause of a misunderstanding between you."

"Don't let that worry you," said Inza, with affected lightness. "I don't want anything to do with a fellow who cares so little for me that he will break a pledge the way Mr. Merriwell did."

"But—but he was loyal to his colors and his college."

"Which shows he thinks more of his old college than he does of me. I have said I'd never speak to him again, and you shall see that I can keep my word."

Paula was distressed, for she began to think herself responsible for the misunderstanding between Frank and Inza. She knew Inza well enough, however, to realize it was useless to attempt to reason with her when her mind was set on anything. The more one tried to reason, the more set she became.

Rob Marline had taken in all that passed, although he pretended to be interested in Jack

Benjamin's talk about the football game.

Marline felt elated, for he saw Merriwell had done something to turn against him this pretty girl, who was Paula's friend. At first glance, this Yale student from South Carolina had been strongly impressed by Inza's appearance, and there was something about her spirit and her manners that impressed him more and more.

"If I could cut Merriwell out with her!" he thought. "Ah! that would be a rich revenge! But Paula might object! Never mind; I've given Paula no particular reason to think I am stuck on her. If she is stuck on me, it's not my fault. There is no reason why I should not try to catch on with Miss Burrage."

He compared Inza and Paula, and he saw that the former was far the handsomer girl. She had a strikingly attractive face with large dark eyes, red lips and perfect teeth, while the color that came and went in her cheeks told the tale of perfect health. He could see that she was destined to become the kind of a young lady who always creates a sensation when she enters a drawing-room and causes men to turn and look after her on the street.

The more Marline thought it over, the firmer became his determination to do his best to win Inza from Frank Merriwell. He laughed to himself when he thought what a revenge that would be upon the fellow he hated.

"What are you laughing at?" cried Benjamin, somewhat offended. "I tell you Harvard would have won in a walk if it hadn't been for that fellow Merriwell."

"Beg pardon," said Marline, quickly. "Did I laugh? Excuse me. Still, I think you overestimate Merriwell."

"Not a bit of it. He's the best man on the Yale eleven. Besides that, he is one of the best baseball pitchers who ever twirled a ball. He has done more for Yale sports and athletics than any one man ever did before in the same length of time."

"He had the opportunities to-day," said Marline. "That's how he happened to do so much."

"He made the opportunities," declared Benjamin. "What kind of an opportunity was it when three of our men piled upon him and he carried them more than fifteen yards? That was something wonderful!"

"Don't speak so loud, Jack," cautioned Paula. "He is in the parlor, and he might hear you."

"Well, I'm sure I'm not saying anything that could offend him."

"It might give him the swelled head," put in Marline.

Inza turned on him like a flash.

"It is evident you do not know him very well, Mr. Marline," she said, severely. "Frank Merriwell never gets the swelled head."

Marline was somewhat embarrassed, but, with the utmost suavity, he bowed to her, smoothly saying:

"It is possible I do not know him very well, as you say; but I am sure almost any fellow might be in danger of getting a touch of swelled head had he done the things Mr. Merriwell did to-day."

He said this so gracefully that Inza's threatened anger was averted, and she fell to chatting with him, much to his satisfaction.

They were standing close together, talking earnestly, Marline supporting himself by leaning on the back of a chair, when Frank left the parlor, saying to Miss Gale that he must hasten to catch a train back to New Haven.

The library door opened into the hall, and Frank saw Inza chatting with Rob Marline in a manner that seemed very friendly and familiar. The sight gave him a start, and the hot blood rushed to his cheeks.

Inza knew Frank had seen them, but she did not turn to look at him. She began to laugh in her most bewitching manner, as if amused very much at something Marline had said, and leaned a little nearer her companion.

Frank seemed dazed. The sight of Rob Marline in that house chatting thus with Inza seemed a revelation to him. All at once, he fancied he understood the situation—fancied he knew why Inza had not wished him to play on the Yale football team.

"We shall be in New Haven the last of the week, Mr. Merriwell," said Miss Abigail. "She'll get over it by that time, and we'll call. It's nothing but a foolish whim."

She spoke the words just loud enough for Frank to hear, but he did not seem to understand. Like one in a dream, he took his cap from the rack and turned toward the door.

"Good-day, Mr. Merriwell," called the old maid.

"Eh? Oh! Good-day!"

Frank paused at the door and looked back; then he spoke, loudly enough to be heard in the library:

"I shall be pleased to see you at any time, Miss Gale, but, if you call on me, perhaps it would be well not to bring a certain person with you. It might be embarrassing and unpleasant. Good-day."

Bounding down the steps, Frank walked swiftly away. There was a hard, set look on his face, which had grown singularly pale.

"Yes," he muttered, "I understand it all now. She would not tell me why she did not wish me to play on the eleven, but I know now. Somewhere she has met Rob Marline, and she is stuck on him. He wanted to play full-back for Yale, and she aided him all she could by inducing me to promise that I would not play. I see through the whole game! She was playing me for a fool! I did not think that of her, but it is as clear as crystal."

And Marline had cut him out with Inza! He felt sure of that.

"Well," he grated, "I have been easy with that fellow. Now we are enemies to the bitter end! Let him look out for me!"

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE HOMEWARD JOURNEY.

"What's the matter with Merriwell?" asked Lewis Little, speaking to a group of jolly lads who were on the train that bore the Yale football team out of Boston on its way to New Haven. "He's grouchy."

"Is he?" cried Paul Pierson. "Well, he ought to be ashamed of himself! Why, he's the hero of the day! All the papers will have his picture to-morrow. I saw at least five persons snapping him with cameras on the field. Grouchy, is he? Well, confound him! He has no right to get a grouch on."

"Not a bit of it!" cried Charlie Creighton. "What's the matter with him? Where is he?"

"He's sitting back in the end of the car, looking fierce enough to eat anybody."

Creighton, Pierson and several others sprang to their feet and looked for Frank. They saw him.

He was staring out of the window in a blank manner, although he did not seem to notice anything the train passed. He was paying no attention to the gang of shouting, singing, laughing students, who filled the smoker and were perched on the backs of the seats and crowded into the aisles.

"Hey, Merry!" shouted Creighton. "Shake it, old man—shake it! Come up here! Get into the game!"

Frank looked around, shook his head, and then looked out of the window again.

"Well, hang him!" growled Charlie. "Any one would think he had played with Harvard, instead of winning the game for Yale! What can be the matter with him?"

No one seemed to know. Creighton went down and talked to Frank, but could get no satisfaction out of him.

As soon as he was let alone again, Merriwell fell to gazing out of the window, seeming quite unaware of the shouts and songs of the jolly lads in the car.

When strangers crowded into the car to get a look at the man who had won the game for Yale, having heard he was on the train, he still continued to gaze out of the window, and it was not apparent that he heard any of their remarks.

"Tell you what," said Creighton, as he returned to Pierson and the others of the little group, "Merriwell is sore."

"Sore?" cried Tom Thornton, "he can't be any sorer than I am! Why, I was jumped on, kicked, rammed into the earth, and annihilated more than twenty times during that game. A little more of it would have made a regular jellyfish out of me. I'll be sore for a month, but I believe in being jolly at the same time."

Then he broke forth into a song of victory, in which every one in that car seemed to join, judging by the manner in which the chorus was roared forth.

"Boom-to-de-ay, boom-ta-de-ay,
Boom-to, de-boom-ta, de-boom-ta-de-ay;
We won to-day, we won to-day,
We won, oh, we won, oh, we won to-day."

Any one who has not heard a great crowd of college lads singing this chorus cannot conceive the volume of sound it seems to produce. When they all "bear down together" on the "boom-ta," the explosive sound is like a staggering blow from the shoulder.

But even this song of victory did not seem to arouse Frank in the least. He remained silent and grim, being so much unlike his usual self that all who knew him were filled with astonishment.

"I did not mean that he was sore of body," said Creighton. "I think he is chewing an old rag."

"What do you mean by that?"

"Well, you know, we all gave him the marble heart when we thought he had decided not to play football because he was afraid for certain reasons. I think he is sore over that, and I don't know that I blame him. I swear, fellows, we did use him shabby!"

"That's it," nodded Pierson; "that's just it. And he is proud and sensitive. He would not show he cared a continental before the game, but, now he was the means of saving the day for Yale, I fancy he is chewing over it a little."

"Never thought of that," said Bink Stubbs. "Bet you're right, fellows. We'll have to get down on our hulks to him to make it all right. I'm ready to say I'm ashamed of myself, and ask him to forget it."

The others expressed themselves as equally willing, and so it came about that Frank was much surprised to have them come to him, one after another, and confess they had used him shabbily. He was ready enough to shake hands with them all, while he assured them he did not hold the least hardness.

They saw he was in earnest, they were satisfied he was willing and ready to forget they had ever treated him with contempt, and yet he did not cheer up, which was something they could not understand.

"Better let him alone," advised Creighton, after a little. "It may be something we don't know anything about, that he is chewing. Anyway, he's not himself."

Bruce Browning, big and lazy ever, was one of the group. He had been keeping still, but now he observed:

"That's right, let him alone. I've traveled with him, and I never saw him this way before. I tell you he is dangerous, and somebody may get hurt."

"Keep away from the window, my love and my dove—
Keep away from the window, don't you hear!
Come round some other night,
For there's gwine to be a fight,
And there'll be razzers a-fly'n' through the air."

Thus sang Bink Stubbs.

"Look at Harris!" laughed Thornton, nudging the fellow nearest him. "Don't he look sour? They say he got hit to-day."

"Got hit?"

"Yes."

"What with?"

"A roll."

"A roll of what?"

"Bank notes."

"You mean he has been betting?"

"Sure."

"But you don't mean he bet on Harvard?"

"I understand he put his last cent on Harvard, and went broke. He was fortunate enough to have a return ticket to New Haven, so he didn't have to borrow money to get back on."

Harris was sitting in a seat, looking sulky and disgusted, fiercely trying to chew the end of his short black mustache. His hat was pulled over his eyes, and he did not seem to take much interest in what was going on in the car.

Stubbs and Creighton got a crowd together to jolly Harris, and they descended on him in a body.

"Hello, old man!" cried Charlie, gayly. "Is it straight that you won three hundred on Yale to-day?"

"I heard it was five hundred," chirped Bink Stubbs, "What a pull to make! Congratulations, old man!"

"You'll have to ball the crowd when we get to New Haven, Sport," said Lewis Little. "You can afford to open fizz."

Harris smiled in a sickly way, and tried to say something, but Paul Pierson got him by the hand and gave him a shaking up that literally took away his breath.

"Good boy!" cried Paul. "I'm glad you stuck by old Eli! But did you have the nerve to bet every cent you had that Yale would take that game? My, my! You are a nery fellow, Sport, old chap. You were the only man who had all that confidence."

"Sport never goes back on old Yale," laughed Little. "He knew the chance of Yale's winning looked slim, but still he backed her up. That's what makes him look so cheerful now."

"You would have felt bad if you had bet your money on Harvard, now wouldn't you?" cried Thornton.

"Oh, yes, I certainly should," gasped Harris, who was suffering tortures.

"What a jolly time we'll have drinking fizz on you, old man!" exclaimed Bink Stubbs. "I feel as if I might get away with about four quarts."

"Oh, we'll make a hole in your winnings!" laughed Pierson. "I am so dry this minute that my neck squeaks."

"So are we all!" shouted the others.

Harris could not repress a groan. He wondered if they were fooling with him, but they seemed so much in earnest that he could not tell. Perhaps they really thought he had won a big roll on Yale. He couldn't tell them he had bet on Harvard. What could he do?

He was forced to pretend that he was delighted, but over and over he promised himself that he would give them the slip, even if he had to leap from the train while it was running at full speed. Pay for fizz! Why, he didn't have enough left to pay for a glass of plain beer!

CHAPTER XL.

REJOICING AT YALE.

Harris found his opportunity to slip away when the train drew into the station at New Haven.

A band of music was on hand to meet the returning conquerors. A wild mob of screaming, cheering, horn-toting students was there.

It was evening, and the Yale lads had come down to the station with torches, prepared to give the eleven such a reception as no other football team had ever met.

When the train drew into the station, the band was hammering away at a blood-stirring tune. When the train stopped, the great crowd of young men and boys presented a perfect sea of upturned faces beneath the flaring light of the torches. Blue was everywhere. It was Yale's great day, and all New Haven wore the color.

The train stopped. Then there was a fierce swaying and surging of the crowd, a flutter of flags, followed by a mighty cheer that was like a savage yell of joy over the downfall of a defeated and slain enemy.

How they shouted for Yale! How they swayed and surged! How like lunatics they were!

The sound of the band was drowned, and not a strain of music could be heard. The musicians continued to play, but they might have saved their breath.

The crowd knew well enough that the eleven would be on the smoker. That was the car in which the victors could disport themselves as hilariously as they pleased.

The smoker began to discharge its passengers. Paul Pierson was the first to get off, and he was followed closely by a stream of Yale men.

The general cheering had died down, but almost every man who stepped from the train was greeted in some peculiar manner.

"What's the matter with Yale?" howled a voice.

Then a thousand throats seemed to roar back:

"She's all right! 'Rah! 'rah! 'rah! 'Rah! 'rah! 'rah! Yale!"

Bruce Browning appeared.

"Hey, Brownie!" cried some one on the platform. "How's your corns?"

"Sore," answered the big fellow. "Strained 'em cheering for Yale."

Bink Stubbs came forth riding astride Puss Parker's shoulders. Somewhere on the train he had captured a silk hat that was much too large for him, and it had dropped down over his head to his ears, which were lopped forward by the weight of it. In the hatband was stuck the short staff of a small flag. Bink had a horn, and he blew a hoarse blast the moment he was outside the car.

"Where'd you get that horn?" called a voice.

"This horn's nothing," returned the little fellow. "I've had about twenty horns besides this, and still my neck is dry."

Four fellows came off the car, carrying a fifth. They held their caps in their hands, and were as mournful and sad-appearing as possible. The one who was carried had a big white placard on his breast. On the card were these words:

"I bet a dime on Harvard, and dropped dead after the game!"

It was not an easy thing to carry him down the steps, but the mournful-appearing bearers succeeded in doing the trick.

Dismal Jones came forth from the car. He was holding a handkerchief to his eyes and pretending to weep.

This brought a shout of delight, and some one yelled back:

"Weep for poor old Harvard. She needs it."

Then Capt. Forrest of the eleven appeared.

A mighty roar went up the moment he was seen. It was a great shout of admiration and welcome. It brought a hot flush of satisfaction to his cheeks, and he stood bowing and smiling on the platform.

"What's the matter with Forrest?" shrieked a voice, when the noise lulled somewhat.

"He's a lulu!" shrieked another voice.

"He's all right—he is!" roared the crowd.

Then they cheered for him in the regular manner.

Each player was received with an ovation as he came out of the car, and they must have felt themselves well repaid for their weeks of hard training and practice.

Frank Merriwell was nearly the last one to show himself. The crowd had been waiting for him.

What a shout went up! The torches flared, and it seemed that the very stars quivered with the volume of sound.

"Merriwell! Merriwell! Merriwell!" roared the vast throng.

Roar! roar! roar! It seemed that they would never stop. It was an ovation that might have pleased a monarch.

Frank would have been less than human had he not thrilled with satisfaction as he heard them cheering him thus. He took off his cap and bowed again and again. He tried to descend from the steps and mingle with the throng, but some of them held him back. They seemed to want him up there where they could look at him.

It was some time before the cheering subsided. At last, somebody began to shout:

"Speech! speech! speech!"

Frank shook his head, but it was useless. They were determined he should say something. He saw he could not escape, so he held up one hand.

Silence fell on the great crowd beneath the torchlights.

Then Frank spoke—a single sentence:

"Every man of us did his level best for dear old Yale!"

That was enough. They went mad again, and again they roared till they were hoarse. They cheered for Yale, they cheered for Forrest, they cheered for Merriwell. Of everything for which they cheered, Merriwell created the greatest enthusiasm.

Then he was lifted from the steps and carried away on the shoulders of his admirers, while the mob swarmed after him.

The band got out and formed to head the parade of triumph. The crowd of students fell in behind. The band struck up, and away they went, with the Yale eleven close behind them.

Great crowds had turned out to witness the spectacle, knowing the students meant to give their victorious team a rousing reception. All along the line the spectators cheered and waved hats, flags and handkerchiefs.

A committee had raised a fund for fireworks, and Roman candles began to pop up balls of fire, while rockets went whizzing into the air from the head of the procession.

No one interfered with the rejoicing students. It was their night, and the city fathers remained in the background and permitted them to have a glorious time.

Some of the business places were prepared for their appearance with illuminated windows. All New Haven seemed delighted.

This year every one had seemed to expect Harvard would "wipe up the gridiron" with Yale, and this victory was so unexpected that it set the people wild with delight.

All along the line the students sang and cheered. Now and then the band could be heard pounding away industriously.

In this manner they marched to the college grounds. As they drew near the college, Browning suddenly descended on the trombone player and captured his horn.

That was a signal for a general rush upon the band by the boys, and, within three minutes, every instrument was in the hands of a Yale student.

Some of the boys could play on the instruments they captured, and some could simply make a noise.

"Attention!" roared Browning, who seemed to have awakened from the lethargy that had been on him so long, and was once more a leader in a genuine racket. "We will play the 'Star-Spangled Banner.' All ready! Let her rip!"

They played! Such a wild medley of sounds never was heard before. Puss Parker had a cornet, and he was playing the air of the "Star Spangled Banner," while Browning was putting in the variations with the trombone. But the others played anything they could think of and some things they could not think of! "John Brown's Body," "Yankee Doodle," "Marching Through Georgia," "Suwanee River," and "Hail Columbia," were some of the tunes that mingled in that medley. Those who could not play anything at all added to the hideous din by making the captured horns bleat forth horrible sounds. Bink Stubbs had secured the bass drumstick, and the way he hammered the big drum was a caution. He did his best to break in the head—and finally succeeded!

In this manner the rejoicing students marched right in upon the campus, regardless of policemen, professors, rules or regulations.

CHAPTER XLI.

A CONTRAST IN ENEMIES.

It was a wild night on the Yale campus. Even the worst old "grind" in the college came out and looked on while the hilarious students made merry, even if he did not join in the riotous proceedings.

A bonfire was built. Once there had been rules prohibiting such fires, but of what use were rules now! Boxes, barrels, lumber, fencing, almost anything that would make a blaze was brought in and heaped up there. It was done in a rush in a manner that showed all preparations had been made in advance, although the combustible material had not been piled up till the time arrived when the fire was required.

Around the great fire the students with the instruments belonging to the band marched and tooted and sang. Bink Stubbs had knocked in one end of the bass drum, but he continued to hammer away on the other end, apparently doing his best to break that in also. Bruce Browning "tore off" music and other sounds with the trombone, while Puss Parker astounded those who knew him best by his skill with the cornet, for he really could play at some tunes.

About twenty fellows tied handkerchiefs over their faces, turned their coats, and attempted to rush the band and capture the instruments.

Then there was war, and the real owners of the instruments looked on in horror, wondering what would become of the horns.

The police were called upon to regain the instruments for the proper owners. A dozen of them attempted to do the trick, but they were not permitted to come onto the campus.

There were rumors of a rush. It was reported that the freshmen were coming out with canes.

But the freshmen were not fools, and they knew it was a bad time to bring about a cane rush. They mingled with the rejoicing crowd, but sported no canes.

Some of the band instruments were ruined in the struggle, but a cheap band had been engaged, and the instruments were of poor grade, so the boys did not mind their destruction, although all felt that somebody would have to settle the bill for damages.

Some one placed Danny Griswold on a box and yelled for a speech. Danny never made a speech in his life, but he felt elated, and he started in to say something. The moment he opened his mouth everybody cheered. When they stopped cheering, Danny started again.

"This is——"

Not another word was heard. Again they cheered, drowning his voice. He waited for them to stop. They stopped.

"This is——"

"Rah! 'rah! 'rah! Whooper up! whooper up! 'Rah! 'rah! 'rah!"

Danny waited again. Now he felt that he wanted to make a speech. He was determined to make a speech.

"This is——"

He couldn't get beyond "is," and he was growing disgusted. He longed for a fireman's hose and good head of water.

As they began to cheer all at once, they stopped all together.

Once more Danny tried it:

"This is——"

It was no use. The mere sound of his voice seemed to arouse them to the wildest enthusiasm. He shook his fist at them.

"Go to thunder!" he screamed, getting black in the face.

But they laughed and cheered so he could not hear the sound of his own voice.

Some fellows found Frank and carried him around and around the fire. They tried to induce him to get on the box in Danny's place, and say something, but he was too shrewd to try that, even if he had wished to do so.

Sport Harris, holding aloof, his heart sour with disappointment and disgust, saw a fellow swinging himself along on crutches, but refraining from taking any part in the celebration.

"It's Marline," thought Sport. "He must be somewhat sore himself."

Then he approached and spoke to the unlucky student, who had lost the opportunity to play full-back when he sprained his ankle.

"Hello, Marline!" called Harris. "Why aren't you whooping her up with the others?"

Marline looked at him in doubt, and then remembered that Harris and Merriwell had never been good friends.

"Why should I celebrate?" he asked, sourly.

"Yale won."

"Yes, and I sat where I could see the fellow who filled my place secure the opportunities to win, which must have been mine had I played."

"It was hard luck for you to be knocked out in such a manner."

"Hard luck! It was beastly! But it was worse luck to have that fellow, Merriwell, run into the game and get all the opportunities to cover himself with glory."

"Well, he got 'em, and he improved 'em."

"Any fellow fit for the position could have done the same thing."

"Think so?"

"I know it."

"How about carrying three men on his back the way Merriwell did?"

"That was nothing."

"Everybody seems to think it was a great trick."

"It was nothing, I tell you. Those Harvard chumps tackled him in the most foolish manner possible. Not one of them tried to get low down on him, but all piled upon his back."

"Still, it seems that three of them ought to have crushed him into the ground."

"Not if he had any back at all. You could have stood up under it."

"Thanks!" said Harris, dryly. "I don't care to try."

"I know I could."

"But Merriwell carried them right along on his back."

"What of it?"

"Wasn't that something? He scarcely seemed to slacken his speed in the least, for all of their weight."

"Rot! They came upon him from behind, and when they leaped on him they hurled him forward still faster than he was going, if anything."

"It's a wonder they didn't hurl him forward on his face."

"Wonder—nothing! Are you stuck on that fellow?"

"Well, I should say not! I have no reason to admire him."

"Nor I! I despise him, and I am willing he should know it. Wait till my ankle gets well."

"What will you do then?"

"I am making no talk about what I'll do," said Marline, lowering his voice and hissing forth the words; "but Frank Merriwell had better steer clear of me."

"He is a bad man to have for an enemy," said Harris, "I know, for he is my enemy."

"How does he happen to be your enemy?" asked Marline. "You are not in athletics. What made him your enemy?"

Harris hesitated, and then said:

"Some time ago he wrongfully accused me of cheating at cards. I have hated him ever since."

A sudden change came over Marline. He remembered now. He had heard something about it at the time, but it had slipped his mind. He remembered that he had heard from a reliable source that Merriwell had exposed Harris in a crooked game.

Involuntarily, Marline drew away from Harris. The lad from South Carolina had very high ideas of honor, and he could feel nothing but contempt for a card sharp. Sometimes he played cards himself, but he would have died rather than do a crooked or dishonorable thing. A moment before, he had seemed to feel a bond between himself and Sport, as they were both enemies to Merriwell, but now there was a feeling of repulsion.

No matter what Rob Marline's faults might be, and he had many of them, there was not a dishonest streak in him.

Harris seemed to see the change come over the other, and regretted that he had told the truth, for he knew Marline was "encumbered" by a fine sense of honor. He tried to set himself right by fiercely declaring he had been unjustly accused by Merriwell.

"That's what makes me hate the fellow so," he said. "He has injured me by leading some fellows to think I was crooked, and that is the worst injury he could do anybody."

"I agree with you on that point," nodded Marline.

"Some time I'll square it up with him," grated Harris. "We both hate him, and I see no reason why we shouldn't pull together."

Marline hesitated a moment, then shook his head.

"No," he said, "I'll not make a compact with any one against him. I hate him, and I am willing he should know it. I'll meet him face to face and man to man, and I'll make him crawl, or I'll fix him so he won't play football for a long time to come!"

CHAPTER XLII.

A CHALLENGE ACCEPTED.

The day after the great game the Boston and New York morning papers gave columns to a full report of the contest. All the evening papers of the day before had contained reports, but on the following morning the story was told more fully and accurately.

Not a morning paper appeared in either city that did not contain Frank Merriwell's picture. It made little difference if some of the pictures were poor, Frank's name was beneath each and every one of them.

The papers gave him glaring headlines. He was called "The Yale Trojan," "The Sensation of the Season," "The Boy of Iron," and many other complimentary things.

All Yale was reading the papers, and Frank was more than ever the topic of conversation, for his fellow-students began to realize that he had played an even more important part in the game than was at first thought possible by those who had not witnessed it.

If Frank had smoked or drunk he would not have found it necessary to buy a cigar or a drink for weeks to come. Scores of fellows would have considered it a great honor to buy smokes and drinks for him.

But Merriwell neither smoked nor drank. He had never indulged in tobacco or liquor. Who knows how much that was responsible for his wonderful strength, nerve and wind?

At the fence a group gathered early and read and discussed the newspaper reports. Rob Marline

seemed to be the only man who did not have a paper.

"What's the matter with you, old man?" asked Tom Thornton. "You are looking as blue as if we had lost yesterday."

"I'm feeling grouchy," confessed Marline.

"Ankle?"

"Has something to do with it."

"Too bad! It was tough to be knocked out just before the game, but you can feel satisfied that your place was filled by a good man."

Marline seemed to turn yellow.

"That is it, sah—that's just it!" he exclaimed, "Look at all the stuff in the papers about him! And I might have had the opportunities he had if I had played."

"Perhaps not."

"Why not?"

"The change might have made considerable difference in the play. You know as well as I, no two men will play just the same under the same circumstances. They may attempt similar plays, but they do not carry them out in precisely the same manner."

"I don't like the way you use that word 'attempt,' sah!" said Marline, flaming up a bit. "It seems like an insinuation that I might have failed in the attempt, while Merriwell succeeded."

"You are altogether too suspicious and sensitive, Marline. I did not hint anything of the sort, although even you cannot be sure you would have succeeded as well as Merriwell. Indeed, what he did in that game was phenomenal."

"Rot, sah!"

"I believe you are jealous of him, Marline. If you are, take my advice, and conceal it, or the boys will jolly you to death."

Rob Marline drew himself up with as much haughtiness as possible, considering his lame ankle.

"Sah," he said, hissing the words through his white teeth, "the boys had better be careful. I am in no condition to be jollied on that point, sah."

Had any other fellow at Yale taken such a stand, it would have produced shouts of laughter. As it was, not a fellow of the group grinned, and Burn Putnam observed:

"If you don't want to be jollied, you'd better keep still about Merriwell. All the fellows will be onto you if you keep it up."

Rob flashed Old Put a cutting look, and then haughtily returned:

"My tongue is my own, sah!"

"All right," grunted Burn. "Use it as you please. You'll find I've given you a straight tip."

"I presume, sah, a man has a right to criticise the playing of any fellow on the eleven?"

"Sure; but it doesn't come very well from you, as you and Merriwell were rivals."

"We were not rivals, if you please. He was substituted to fill my place after I was injured. But for this ankle, he would not have been on the team."

"But that he refused to play football this season, you would not have been on the team," put in Bandy Robinson.

"Oh, I see all you fellows are standing up for him and are down on me!" fiercely cried Marline. "I don't care if you are. I think Frank Merriwell is——"

"Is what, sir?"

It was Merriwell himself, who had approached the group without being noticed by any of them. He now stepped forward promptly and faced Marline.

Rob turned pale, and his eyes gleamed. For some moments he did not speak, but he did not quail in the least before Merriwell's steady gaze.

At last, gaining control of his voice, he sneered:

"So you were listening. Well, there is an old saying that eavesdroppers seldom hear good of themselves."

"So you call me an eavesdropper?"

"You heard what was not meant for your ears."

"Because I happened to be coming here to join this party. You were talking loudly and in public."

There was no reason why I should not have heard, and I did so in anything but a sneaking manner. Your insinuation that I eavesdropped is an insult."

"What are you going to do about it, sah?"

"Demand satisfaction!" shouted back Frank, who was aroused to such a pitch that he was ready to quarrel with his rival on the slightest provocation.

Marline grinned sarcastically.

"Very well, sah," he said, something like exultation in his voice. "I am ready to give you all the satisfaction you want, sah, as soon as my ankle will permit."

"You will fight me?"

"With pleasure, sah."

"All right; it's settled. I'll agree to give you a pair of nice black eyes."

"No, you won't, sah."

"Eh? You won't be able to stop me."

"Only ruffians and prize fighters use their fists."

"Eh? What do you mean?"

"I mean business, sah!" shot back the boy from South Carolina, drawing himself up, with the aid of his crutch. "You have seen fit, Mr. Merriwell, to consider yourself insulted by me, and you have demanded satisfaction. You shall have it, sah—all you want! We will fight, but not with our fists. I am the challenged party, and I name swords as the weapons!"

Marline's words produced a sensation. Of all who heard them, Frank Merriwell seemed the least startled or surprised. Danny Griswold near fell off the fence. All the boys looked at each other, and then stared at the boy from South Carolina, as if seeking to discover if he could be in earnest.

He was in deadly earnest; there could be no doubt of it. His face was pale, and his eyes gleamed. The fighting blood of the Marlines was aroused.

Then the other lads of the group remembered the record made by the Marlines, the famous fighters of South Carolina. They remembered that Rob Marline's ancestors were duelists before him, and every one of them on record had killed his man!

With such an example in his own family, and with certain notions of the proper course for a man to defend his honor, it was certain Marline meant business when he named swords as the weapons.

But such a meeting could not take place. It was unlawful. Besides that, dueling was not popular in the North, and it was not believed that a man showed cowardice if he refused to consider the challenge of an enemy.

What would Merriwell do? He could not accept Marline's proposal, and still it would not be easy for him to back down, after demanding satisfaction. He was in a trying position, and the boys wondered how he would get out of it.

"Mr. Marline," said Frank, and his voice was perfectly calm and cool, "you must be aware that such a thing as you propose is utterly impossible."

"I am not aware of anything of the sort, sah."

"Then I will tell you so now."

"That means you are afraid—you dare not meet me face to face and man to man! You show the white feather!"

"It means nothing of the sort."

"You can't get out of it, sah."

"I am a Northerner, and I do not believe in personal encounters with deadly weapons, after the rules of the code duello."

"A Northerner!" flung back Marline, with a curl of his lips and a proud toss of his head. "Well, I am a Southerner, and we do believe in the code duello. It is the only way for a man to satisfy his honor."

"It is evident that is a point on which we cannot agree."

"Then, you are going to back down—you will play the coward?"

"You are making your language very strong and offensive. Will you be good enough to remember you are on crutches, which makes it impossible for me to strike you now?"

"No man ever struck a Marline without spilling his blood for the blow! It is a good thing for you, sah, that I am on crutches."

"If you were not crippled, you could not use the language you have within the past few moments, without getting my fist between the eyes."

Marline sucked in his breath with a hissing sound through his teeth.

"Never mind my condition, sah—hit me! Nothing would give me greater satisfaction, sah!"

"It is impossible. You will not be crippled long."

"I shall recover as swiftly as possible. You may be sure of that, sah!"

"There will be time enough to settle this little affair between us then."

"But the preliminaries can be arranged in advance, Mr. Merriwell. My representative will call on any friend you may name, sah."

It was plain enough to all that Marline intended to force a duel or compel Merriwell to back down squarely.

"If I decline to name a friend—if I decline to meet you in a regular duel——"

"I shall brand you as a pusillanimous cur, sah!"

Frank's face paled a bit, but still his eyes met Marline's steadily.

"You seem to forget you are not in the South," he calmly said. "If you were on your own soil, you might be justified in pushing this thing as you are, for that is the not entirely obsolete custom among Southern gentlemen. But you are in the North, where duelists are criminals who have not even the sympathy of the public in general. Under such circumstances, you have no right to try to force such an encounter with me."

"You demanded satisfaction, sah, and I named the weapons. I know nothing of your Northern ideas, and I care less. I do know that a man of honor in your position would name a representative and have this affair settled properly."

"You have raised a point of honor on which we cannot agree, that is all."

"Then you refuse to meet me? You take water? Ha! ha! ha! I swear I did think you were a coward all along! A short time ago all Yale said you were a coward, but now, because you made two or three lucky plays in the football game, all Yale is praising you to the skies. Well, sah, I will show them the kind of a man you are! I will show them that you challenged me, and then dared not meet me. I will brand you as the coward you are, sah! It will give me great satisfaction, I assure you."

"Look here, Marline," broke in Burn Putnam, "you are carrying this thing beyond the limit. Merriwell has explained to you his position and made it clear that such a meeting as you propose is utterly impossible."

"That's right, that's right!" chorused the others.

"Mr. Merriwell knew me at the beginning," said the boy from the South, unrelentingly. "He knew I did not take any stock in fist-fighting—that I made no pretensions of being what you call a scrapper. Yet he demanded satisfaction of me for what he chose to consider an insult. That gave me the chance to name the weapons, and I named them. It seems that he sought to take an unfair advantage of me, thinking to force me into a fist-fight, about which he knew I knew nothing, and, having the advantage of me thus, give me a drubbing. It was a brutal attempt to take advantage of me, but he was check-mated. Now, under the circumstances, I have a right to push this matter as far as possible, and I will do it! He'll meet me in a regular duel, or I will take great trouble to brand him as a craven."

"You'll get yourself into a very bad scrape, Marline," said Thornton. "Sympathy will not be with you."

"Bah! What do I care! I can stand alone! I am a Marline!"

"Besides that," continued Tom, "there is another point to be considered."

Rob made a gesture of disdain, but Thornton hastened on:

"Suppose you two would fight a duel and one of you should be seriously wounded, what then? Why, an investigation would follow, and the truth would come out. That would mean expulsion for you both—it would mean disgrace."

"Bah!" cried Marline, once more. "I presumed I was dealing with a man of honor, and that every person here was a man of honor. In such a case, if one of us should be wounded, he would keep his lips closed, even if he were dying. Not a word of the truth would he disclose, and no amount of investigation would discover the truth. The victor would be safe."

"That is much easier to talk about than it would be to put in practice. I, for one, am against anything of the sort."

"You do not count, sah."

"Don't, eh? Well, we'll see about that! Frank Merriwell can't meet you, and that settles it. If you

try to force him, I'll report the whole matter to the faculty, and the chances are about ten to one that you will be fired from college. There, Mr. Marline, you have it straight from the shoulder, and I trust you are satisfied."

Thornton was astonished with himself for taking such a stand, as he was, as a rule, a good follower, but no leader. He had a way of thinking of things after others put them into execution, but now he was the one to take the lead.

Marline made a gesture of scorn.

"Yes, sah, I am satisfied," he said; "I am satisfied that Mr. Merriwell is a coward. He was looking for a loophole to crawl through, and you have provided him with that loophole. He should feel very grateful to you, sah!"

"Marline," said Frank, sharply, "you can make a mistake by heaping this on too thick! I can't stand everything, and you'd better drop it."

"Yes, drop it, Marline!" cried some of the others.

"Oh, I'll drop it for the present," said Rob, with deep significance—"for the present, you understand. But I am not done with Mr. Merriwell. My ankle will be all right in a short time, and then——"

He paused, giving Frank a stare of hatred. Then, without another word, he turned and swung himself away, aided by his crutches.

All felt sure that the affair was not ended.

CHAPTER XLIII.

AN UNPLEASANT SITUATION.

"Great Scott!" gurgled Old Put, staring after Marline. "But he is a regular fire eater!"

"He's a bad man—a blamed bad man!" fluttered Danny Griswold.

"That's right," nodded Lewis Little. "He really wants to fight with swords, I believe."

"Of course, he does," nodded Andy Emery, who had not said a word during all the talk between Merriwell and Marline. "Jack Diamond was another fellow just like him when he first came to Yale."

"So he was," said Putnam. "And it seems to me I have heard that Merriwell met him."

Frank smiled a bit.

"We had a little go," he said. "He put up a fierce fight, too, for a fellow that knew nothing about the science."

"Oh, everybody knows about that!" said Put. "It was the other affair I was speaking of. Didn't he force you into a duel with swords?"

"That affair was not very serious," said Frank, evasively.

"But I know it took place. He was a fire eater, and he had just such ideas of honor as Marline holds. Thought it a disgrace to fight with fists, and all that. You couldn't get out of meeting him in a regular duel, and you did so. I've heard the fellows talking it over. Let's see, who got the best of it?"

"It was interrupted before the end," said Frank. "The sophs came down on us, and we thought them the faculty. Everybody took to his heels."

"And Diamond would have been captured if it hadn't been for Merriwell, who stayed behind to help him out," put in Thornton. "The duel was never finished."

"Don't try it again, Merry," cried Danny Griswold. "The next one wouldn't come out as well as that."

"But what am I going to do?" asked Frank. "This fellow Marline will not let up on me."

"Don't pay any attention to him," advised Little.

"That's right, ignore him," said the others.

"That will be a hard thing to do. I am no bully, as you all know, but I cannot ignore a man who tries to ride me."

"Better do that than get into a fight with deadly weapons, and be killed," said Put.

"Or kill him," added Griswold.

"Never mind if he does try to brand you as a coward," advised Emery. "He can't make the brand stick. You are known too well here."

Frank flushed a bit.

"I don't know about that," he asserted. "It was only a few days ago that almost everybody here seemed to think me a coward because I declined to play football. They would be thinking so now if I had not played through absolute necessity."

"But what you did in that game has settled it so no man can call you a coward hereafter, and have his words carry any weight," said Putnam. "I believe you can afford to ignore Rob Marline. He is sore now because he was unable to play in the game, and because you put up such a game. He'll get over that after a time, and it's quite likely he'll be ashamed of himself for making such a fuss. He's not much good, anyway."

"Right there is where I think you make a big mistake," said Frank. "Marline has been underestimated by many persons. He has sand, and plenty of it. He is not responsible for his peculiar notions as to the proper manner for a man to settle an affair of honor, for he was born and brought up where such settlements are generally made with pistols."

"Well, you can't fight him in the manner he has named, and that's all there is to it. Nobody will blame you for not meeting him. Let him go it till he cools off."

"Perhaps he will be cool by the time his ankle gets well," said Griswold.

Others came along and joined the crowd, and the talk turned to football. Everybody seemed to want to shake hands with Frank, and his arm was worked up and down till it ached. He was congratulated on every hand.

Sport Harris stood at a distance and saw all this, while his face wore a sour, hateful sneer.

"It makes me sick to see them slobbering over him!" he muttered. "He'll swell up and burst with conceit now. Hang him! He beat me out of my last dollar yesterday, and now I'll have to take some of my clothes down to 'uncle' and raise the wind on them. Ain't got even enough for a beer this morning, and my account is full at Morey's. This is what I call hard luck! Wonder how Harlow feels this morning?"

Rolf Harlow had formerly been a Harvard man, and he was an inveterate gambler. Through him Harris had placed all his money on the Harvard eleven. Sport had tipped Harlow to the condition of the team, and the apparent fact that Harvard was sure to win, on which tip Rolf had hastened to stake everything on the Cambridge boys. At the close of the game Harris got away from Harlow as quickly as possible, finding him anything but agreeable as a companion.

Harris knew Marline hated Merriwell, and he felt sure the boy from the South had nerve and courage, but, to his wonderment and disgust, Rob would not enter into any sort of a compact against Frank.

"Together, we might be able to do up Merriwell," thought Harris. "The only man I ever, found who had the nerve to stick by me against Merriwell was Hartwicke, and he was forced to leave college. I'll get the best of the fellow some day."

Later on, Sport heard something of the encounter between Merriwell and Marline that morning. He listened eagerly to this, and he was seized by a few thoughts.

What did he care about Marline? If Merriwell could be led into a genuine duel with the lad from South Carolina, it might result in the expulsion of both from Yale, either if neither should be seriously injured.

If Merriwell should be injured, all the better. If he wounded Marline, the whole story might come out on investigation, and that would put him in a bad box.

Anyway, a duel between the two might bring about Merriwell's downfall.

Harris set about stirring the matter up. He reported that Marline had driven Merriwell "into his boots." There were a few fellows who "took some stock" in Sport, and through them he worked to spread the story.

Harris was industrious, and before another night all sorts of tales concerning the encounter between the rivals were in circulation.

Harry Rattleton, Frank's old-time chum, heard some of the reports, and he lost no time in telling Frank just what was being said. Merriwell smiled grimly, and said nothing.

"What are you going to do about it?" asked Harry, excitedly.

"Nothing," said Frank.

"What's that?" shouted Rattleton. "If you don't do anything, lots of the fellows will think the stories are true."

"Let them."

"I wouldn't stand it! I'd hunch somebody's ped—I mean, punch somebody's head."

"The fellows who heard it all know if Marline drove me into my boots."

"All right!" said Rattleton. "If you don't do anything about it, I shall. I'm going to find out who started the yarns, and then I'm going to punch him!"

And Rattleton went forth in search of some one to punch.

And he was not the only one, as we shall see.

Within three days Marline was able to get around, with the aid of a cane. His ankle was improving swiftly, and he expected it would be nearly as well as ever in less than a week.

Marline had a following. There were some rattle-brained young fellows in the college who looked on him with admiration, as it was known he came from a fighting family, and was just as ready to face a foe on "the field of honor" as any of his ancestors had been before him.

Marline considered himself a "careful drinker," for he took about a certain number of drinks each day, seldom allowing himself to indulge in more than his allowance.

He always took whiskey. Beer and ale he called "slops." Such stuff was well enough to boys and Dutchmen, but "whiskey was the stuff for a man."

Rob did not know he was forming one of the worst habits a man can acquire—that of "drinking moderately." The moderate drinker becomes the steady drinker, and, in time, he gets his system into such a condition that he cannot get along without his regular allowance of "stuff." The moment he tries to cut down that allowance, he feels miserable and "out of sorts." Then he "throws in" a lot of it to brace up on. Perhaps it is some time before he realizes what a hold drink has on him, and, when he does realize it, in almost every case it is too late to break off the habit. Gradually he increases his "allowance," and thus the moderate drinker becomes a slave to liquor, and a drunkard.

The only "safe way" to handle liquor is not to handle it at all.

Marline had a father with plenty of money, and he was provided with more than a liberal allowance while at college. He had money to spend, and now, knowing the value of popularity, he began to spend it with unusual liberality. As a result, there was a crowd of fellows who clung to him closely in order to get as many drinks as possible out of him.

Although Frank did not drink, he often went around with fellows who did. He had a strong mind, and it was not difficult for him to resist temptation.

Thus it came about that Merriwell and Marline sometimes saw each other in Morey's or Treager's, two well-known students' resorts. At first, they seemed to avoid each other. Then Marline got the idea that Merriwell was afraid of him, and he took to flinging out scornful insinuations and staring at Frank contemptuously.

It was difficult for Merriwell to restrain his passions, for never had he known a fellow who could anger him like Marline, but he held onto himself with a close hand.

Jack Diamond heard of the affair between Frank and the boy from South Carolina. Although Jack was from the South, he knew Merriwell as well as anybody at Yale, and his knowledge told him Frank was in the right.

It galled Diamond to think that anybody could sneer at Merriwell, and not be called to account. He did not say much at first, but, after a time, he began to feel that he had stood it about as long as possible.

"Look here, Merry!" he exclaimed, as he stalked into Merriwell's room one evening; "how long are you going to stand this?"

Frank had been studying, but he flung down his book immediately.

"Stand what?" he asked, smiling.

"Why, the insolence of this fellow from South Carolina. I heard him in Morey's last evening when he made that sneering remark about you, and it has been galling me all day. I expected you would jump him on the spot, but you never moved an eyelash."

"What did you think I'd do?"

"Punch him, confound it!"

"How can I?"

"How can you? With your fist, of course."

"But I can't do it, you know. He has acknowledged publicly that he is no fighter with his fists, and I'd seem like a bully if I hit him."

"Oh, rot!" exploded Jack. "Think I'd let any fellow insult me and then rub it in without giving him a thump on the jaw? Not much!"

"Your ideas on that point seem to have changed since you came to Yale. You will remember you did not believe in fighting with fists when you came here."

"That's right," nodded Jack. "I thought gentlemen never fought in such a manner, but I have found out that even gentlemen are occasionally forced to do so."

"Marline holds just the same ideas as you held. I demanded satisfaction of him, and he said he'd give it to me, with swords."

"He's a chump! What he really needs is a good drubbing, and you ought to give it to him."

"And be called a bully. They would say it was a cowardly thing to do. Really, Jack, I'm in a confounded nasty place!"

"I believe you are," admitted Diamond, slowly. "But you must do something."

"Suggest something."

"Fight him with the weapons he named!" cried the Virginian, hotly. "You can do it, and I know you can get the best of him. I haven't forgotten our little duel. Not much! Why, Merriwell, you disarmed me twice! You can do the same trick with him."

"Perhaps not."

"I know you can. If you disarm him twice, you can call him a bungler, and refuse to continue the duel. Do it, Merry!" excitedly urged Jack. "I'll stand by you—I'll be your second."

"Thank you, old man; but aren't you afraid of getting into serious trouble? If the faculty——"

"Hang the faculty! We'll have to take chances. You can't stand his insults, Merry, and you'll have to fight him with the weapons he has named. That's the only thing you can do."

"You may be right," said Frank, slowly. "I am getting sick of the way the thing is going, but I don't want to make a fool of myself."

"You won't; but you'll make a monkey of Rob Marline, and I'll bet on it. Why, Merry, you are wonderfully clever with the foils, and you have nerves of iron."

"Still, there might be a slip, you know."

"Are you afraid he'll do you up?"

"Not that," said Frank, "although I know he might. I'll tell you the truth. I hate Marline, and I might do him up. A sword is a nasty weapon. What if I should run him through?"

"I never saw the time yet when you were not your own master. I don't think there is any danger that you will kill Marline, but you pink him, just so he would remember you. He wouldn't blow. He's from the South. He wouldn't blow if you pinked him for keeps."

"I think you are right about that. Well, Jack, there's no telling what I may be driven into. If I have to meet him in a duel, I shall call on you to act as my second."

"You may depend on me. I'll serve you with great satisfaction. Call him out, Merry—call him out!"

CHAPTER XLIV.

STUDENTS' RACKETS.

Inza Burrage came back to New Haven with Miss Gale. Frank discovered she was there by seeing her on the street. He started to join her and speak, but she entered a store, and he lost her.

That evening he started out to call on her, resolved to have a talk with her and come to a complete understanding, if she would see him.

He knew where Miss Gale was stopping, and he made his way to the house by a roundabout course, thinking over what he would say in case Inza consented to see him.

As he approached the house he saw some one ascending the steps. The person going up the steps carried a cane.

Frank halted abruptly.

"Marline!" he whispered.

It was his rival.

Rob rang the bell and was admitted to the house.

Frank turned about and walked swiftly away.

"That settles it!" he grated. "I don't want to see her now, for I am sure she was playing double with me. She is stuck on Rob Marline. It's all right! it's all right! I'll have to take Diamond's advice. Marline shall have all the satisfaction he desires."

On his way back to his room he met Browning, Diamond, Rattleton and several other fellows, who

were starting out for a jolly time. They were singing, "Here's to Good Old Yale," and he immediately joined in with them, his beautiful baritone adding to the melody which floated out on the crisp evening air.

"Hurrah!" cried Rattleton. "It's Merry! Come on, old man, and we'll have some sport."

To the surprise of all, Merriwell joined them, without asking where they were going. He seemed ready enough for any kind of sport, and his laughter rang the loudest and merriest of them all. He was overflowing with jokes and witty sayings, so that the boys began to say to each other that he was like the Frank Merriwell of old.

They made the rounds of the "places." Nearly all of them drank beer, but, although Frank seemed in a reckless mood, not a drop of beer or liquor touched his lips. He seemed to enjoy the sport as much as any of them, and still he remained sober.

In fact, Frank was a leader in wild pranks that night. Before the evening was over, the boys got two policemen after them, and were forced to run to escape arrest.

Rattleton was somewhat slower than the others in starting, and he soon found one of the policemen was close upon him.

"Stop!" cried the officer.

"Go to thunder!" flung back Harry.

"Stop, I tell yer!"

"Save your wind! You can't catch me in a thousand years."

"Can't?"

Whiz—something flew through the air. It struck Harry between the shoulders, knocking him forward on his hands and knees.

Then the officer pounced upon him, picking up his stick, which he had flung at the boy.

"Oh, I've got yer!" grated the policeman. "I'll teach yer to be tearin' down an' shiftin' round people's signs! I saw yer when yer pulled down the sign in front of the Chinese laundry, and the charge'll be larceny. We're goin' to fix some of you frisky students."

The police had been sore ever since their ineffectual attempt to get upon the campus and arrest the students who were parading with the horns captured from the band. Word had gone the rounds among the students that the "cops" were watching for an opportunity to retaliate. Evidently this policeman fancied his opportunity had come.

Larceny! Harry realized the full meaning of the charge, and he knew it would go hard with him if he were convicted. Thoughts of making a desperate effort to slip out of his coat, and leave it in the officer's clutch, flashed through his head; but the blow of the club had knocked the wind out of him, and, just then, he did not have the strength to make the effort.

Where were the others? Had they all escaped? Had they abandoned him?

"Git up!" ordered the policeman, releasing his grip on Harry a bit, in order to change his hold.

Swish! thump! bump!

A dark body came out of the shadows and struck the policeman with the force of a catapult.

The officer was hurled through the air, his hold on Harry being broken. He struck the stone paving heavily.

A hand fastened on Rattleton's collar, a strong arm jerked him to his feet, a familiar voice hissed in his ear:

"Run!"

It was Merriwell! Harry's heart leaped as he realized that. Frank had not deserted him. Frank never deserted a friend.

Rattleton was somewhat dazed, but Merriwell's hand directed him, and away they sped. They heard the policeman behind them, heard him shout breathlessly for them to stop, but they had no thought of obeying.

Into a narrow space between two buildings plunged Frank, telling Harry to follow. Merriwell came to a gate, but he seemed to see it, for all of the intense darkness.

"Over here!" he called to Harry.

They heard the policeman plunge in behind them. Over the gate they scrambled, not daring to pause long enough to find the way it was fastened. Out into a back yard they dashed, hearing the officer run into the gate and grunt as he was flung backward.

There was a high fence around the yard, and it seemed that they might be in a trap.

Frank felt for a clothesline and found it. He seemed to see in the dark.

"Over the fence, Harry—over the fence!" he whispered.

"Come on!"

"In a moment."

"What are you doing?"

"Lowering this line, so it will just catch Mr. Officer under the chin. Get over the fence."

Rattleton obeyed. He found a place where he could scramble to the top of the fence, and there he sat, calling to Frank:

"Come on—hurry!"

The policeman came out into the yard. It seemed that Merriwell had been waiting for him. Frank started to run, and the officer started after him.

"I have yer now!" grated the policeman.

Frank led him directly toward the clothesline. Just before the line was reached, Frank seemed to stumble and nearly fall. He did it in order to duck under the line.

A triumphant exclamation broke from the officer. It was cut short by another sort of exclamation.

The clothesline caught him under the chin. It snapped his head backward and his heels forward. He went down flat on his back with a terrible thump, and there he lay.

With a triumphant laugh, Frank shinned up the fence and perched on the top beside Rattleton.

The officer was sitting up. He had seen more stars and fireworks than it had ever been his fortune to behold before.

"Ta, ta, old chappie!" tauntingly called Merriwell. "We'll see you some other evening."

"Stop—stop right where you are!" ordered the policeman, in a bewildered way, looking around for the speaker. "You can't get away. It's no use for you to try."

"You're twisted, old man," laughed Frank. "Good-night, and pleasant dreams! We certainly had you on a string to-night. Ha! ha! ha!"

Then the boys dropped down from the fence into the next yard, made their way to the street, and hastened toward Morey's.

"Christopher? what a racket!" laughed Rattleton. "Why, I haven't been in anything like this since I was a freshman."

"It's good for a fellow once in a while," said Frank. "It stirs up his blood."

"But I was in a hard place when you came to my rescue, Merry. The cop had me pinched, and he said the charge would be larceny. I thought I was in for it."

"I wasn't going to leave anybody to be locked up."

"You never do, Merry; you always stick. It does me good to see you out on a time like this, for you have not been like yourself in weeks. Now you seem like the old Frank Merriwell."

They reached Morey's safely. Entering, they discovered nearly all the others of their party there ahead of them.

And Rob Marline was there, drinking whiskey.

As soon as Frank and Harry appeared, the others of the party surrounded them, asking about their adventures.

Bruce Browning was wiping the perspiration from his flushed face, while he growled:

"Haven't done anything like that for a long time. It was awful! Wouldn't done it then if it hadn't been to escape arrest. Cæsar's ghost! think of being arrested."

"I was arrested!" said Rattleton.

"What?" cried the others. "Come again!"

"A cop pinched me."

"No? How did you get away?"

"Merriwell came to my rescue. He didn't desert me, if the rest of you did. He saw the cop nail me, and he sent his buttons flying by running into him. That gave me a chance to skip. I tell you, it took nerve to tackle a cop like that."

Rob Marline laughed sarcastically, but did not say anything. Rattleton flushed with anger, but Merriwell did not seem to notice it.

Harry went on with his story, telling of their adventures, and the party shouted with laughter when he related the clothesline incident.

The fellows were gathering about Merriwell, and Marline found that he was being deserted, which added to his bitterness. He saw the boys listening to the story of Merriwell's attack on the officer and the trick with the clothesline, and the soul of the boy from the South was filled with bitterness.

"He's cutting ice with the gang again," thought Marline. "That must be stopped."

But how could he stop it? He thought of calling to those who had been with him before Merriwell came in, and asking them to have another drink. Then it seemed that he would humiliate himself by doing so, for he would cause everybody to notice how he had been abandoned. So he ordered another drink for himself, and drank it sullenly.

Every time the boys laughed Marline grated his teeth. Things had not gone right with him that night, and he was in an ugly mood. He had called to see Inza Burrage, and had attempted to make himself "solid" with her. In the course of his conversation he had made some disparaging remark about Frank Merriwell.

That remark was like a spark of fire in a keg of powder. In a moment Inza flared up and exploded. She told him Frank Merriwell was a gentleman. She told him Frank Merriwell was too much of a man of honor to malign an enemy behind his back. She showed deep scorn and contempt, and Marline left the house crestfallen and raging with anger.

He had been touched on a tender spot. To have any one insinuate that Frank Merriwell was more honorable than he, was like stabbing him to the heart.

The whiskey made Marline desperate. Little did he know that the boy he hated was in a most reckless mood. Had he known it, he would not have cared. There was not a drop of cowardly blood in Marline's body. He longed for an encounter with Merriwell.

At length, when he could stand it no longer, he arose to his feet. Some one was complimenting Merriwell on his nerve. Marline had not tasted the last glass of whiskey brought him. He took it in his hand, made two steps toward Frank, and flung the stuff full into Merry's face!

"If Mr. Merriwell has so much nerve, let him resent that!" rang out the hoarse voice of the boy from South Carolina. "We'll see how much nerve he has!"

Frank took out a handkerchief and slowly wiped the liquid from his face. He was very pale, and his eyes gleamed with a glare that his best friends had never seen in them before. But he laughed, and those who knew him best shuddered at that laugh.

"Mr. Marline," he said, his voice calm and modulated, "will you be kind enough to name your friend?"

Marline looked around. Sport Harris was at his side in a moment.

"I'll serve you!" Sport eagerly whispered.

Marline felt that almost any one was preferable to Harris, but he saw the others had drawn away. Harris seemed to be the only one with nerve enough to stand by him. He felt forced to accept Sport.

"Mr. Harris is my man," he said.

Frank bowed gracefully.

"Mr. Diamond will wait on him."

A gleam of exultation came into Marline's face, for he felt that he had driven Merriwell to the wall at last.

Frank and Jack immediately withdrew from Morey's, and, later, the Virginian sought Harris in his room.

Frank awaited Diamond's return. He came back in about an hour

"To-morrow, at sunrise," he said.

CHAPTER XLV.

THE DUEL.

"Are you ready, gentlemen?"

The sun was just peeping over the horizon.

Beyond the city limits, near a strip of timber far down the Sound, five persons had met.

Two of them were Frank Merriwell and Robert Marline, who were to fight a deadly duel there that beautiful morning.

Two more were their seconds, Jack Diamond and Sport Harris.

The fifth was a young collegian named Morton, who was studying medicine and surgery. He had brought along a case of instruments, although he was not certain this was to be a duel in deadly earnest.

Merriwell and Marline, despite the fact that the morning air was keen and cold, had stripped off their coats and vests and were in their shirt sleeves.

Now they stood facing each other, weapons in hand.

Frank's face was calm and confident, as if he had not the least doubt concerning the outcome of the affair. His nerves were under admirable control. He was a trifle paler than usual.

Marline, on the other hand, was flushed and nervous. He had taken several drinks of whiskey to brace him, and Merriwell's calm confidence was something he could not understand. At that moment, Frank seemed like the duelist and Marline like the novice.

The sun shot a single lance of light across the world, and then Diamond, who had been chosen to give the signal, spoke the word that set the rivals at each other.

Clash! clash! clash! The bright blades clanged sharply on the morning air. The sunshine glittered coldly on their polished lengths.

At first the work was of a very scientific order, for each man seemed feeling of the other to discover just how much skill he possessed.

Marline was more than ever astonished, for he had scarcely fancied Frank could be an expert with such a weapon. Now, however, he saw by the manner in which Frank handled himself, by his every move, that he was a skillful swordsman.

The boy from the South attempted to force the fighting. The whiskey went to his head, and he fought savagely, his teeth set and his eyes gleaming. Deadly determination was in his every move. The seconds and the surgeon watched breathlessly.

Suddenly there was a cry. By a twisting movement of his wrist, Frank had disarmed his enemy, sending Marline's blade spinning into the air.

The sword fell with a clang on the frozen ground at Rob's feet, and he instantly snatched it up. Then he came at Frank with the fury of one driven mad.

Merriwell was forced to give ground before the fierce onslaught of his enemy. He knew well enough that Marline was exceedingly dangerous, for he had flung discretion to the winds and was exposing himself in all ways by his fierce desire to get at Frank.

Merriwell did not wish to wound Marline, but hoped to humble him. However, it began to look as if Frank would be forced to do his best in self-defense.

He had remarkable control of himself, and watched his chance. It came in a short time, and again he twisted the sword from Marline's hand.

Marline fell back before Merriwell's half-lifted sword.

"Kill me!" he passionately cried. "Kill me now, or I'll kill you!"

Merriwell lowered his blade.

In a moment Marline sprang to the spot where his sword had fallen, caught it up, and turned on Frank again.

"On guard!" he shouted.

Like a whirlwind, he came at Merriwell.

Clash! clash! clash! It was a terrific battle now. The young surgeon was excited and frightened.

"It must be stopped!" he cried. "Marline is determined to kill him! We must stop it!"

Snap!—Frank Merriwell's blade broke within a foot of the hilt!

With a hoarse shout of victorious fury, Marline thrust straight at Frank's breast!

Merriwell succeeded in foiling the thrust with the part of his weapon that remained in his hand, but Marline's sword passed through Frank's shirt sleeve at the shoulder.

The seconds and the surgeon had started forward to interfere, but, with a gasping curse, Marline flung his sword on the ground and covered his eyes with his hands, his whole body quivering.

Diamond caught up the weapon the Southerner had flung down, muttering:

"There's no telling what he may try to do next. I'll keep this out of his reach."

But Marline had no thought of resuming the duel. When he lowered his hand from his face, his shame was betrayed.

"Mr. Merriwell," he said, his voice quivering, "I wish to apologize to you."

All were astonished.

"For what?" asked Frank, calmly.

"You have shown yourself more honorable than I," said Marline, although every word cut him like the stroke of a knife. "Twice you disarmed me and took no advantage of it. But when my turn came, my hatred for you was so great I lost my head. I tried to kill you. I offer a humble apology, and say what I never expected to say to any living being—you have shown yourself more honorable than I."

That was enough to touch Frank, and all the past was forgotten in a moment. With an impulse of generosity, he held out his hand.

"Take it!" he cried. "Let's call the past buried."

Marline shook his head.

"I can't!" he exclaimed. "I can't be a hypocrite. You have shown yourself the more honorable, Merriwell, but I hate you still. I shall try to forget it, but, with my disposition, it will not be easy. If I conquer myself, some day, perhaps, I'll accept your hand—if you care to offer it then."

"When the time comes," said Frank, "my hand will be open to you."

Then the dueling party broke up.

When Frank reached his room, he found a letter from Inza awaiting him. This is what he read:

"DEAR FRANK: I have been a foolish girl, and I am ashamed. I can't say more this way, but will explain everything when I see you. Please come to me. Come as soon as possible.

"INZA."

Frank's heart gave a great bound as he read this communication. He could not go to see Inza at once, but he sent word that he would call that evening.

When he arrived, he found Inza awaiting him alone, the girl's aunt having wisely withdrawn.

"Oh, Frank—I—I—" she began, and then she could not go on, for he caught her in his arms and gave her a tight squeeze.

"Don't let's talk about it," he said, cheerily. "I guess it was all a mistake."

"I had no right to bind you down, Frank," said Inza, softly. "It has been a lesson to me. You know what is best, always, and after this you shall have your own way in everything."

"Are you quite sure of that?" he said, softly, looking into her clear eyes, which immediately dropped. "Then, I'm going to have my way now."

And a kiss followed, which seemed to be a complete forgiveness all around.

Then she told him of Marline, and he understood something of what had led to the duel.

But he did not tell Inza of that terrible encounter, and the girl did not learn of it until some time later.

CHAPTER XLVI.

A STUDENTS' CONFAB.

The days passed, and Frank turned again to his studies. He was anxious to prove to the professors that he could learn his lessons, as well as play football.

To be sure, he did not give up his sports entirely, nor his recreation at the gym.

As the days slipped by, many of the students became more or less interested in a big, burly freshman, who went by the name of Hock Mason.

Mason had proved himself a regular bruiser on more than one occasion, and he was such a thoroughly "bad man," that some of the boys grew afraid of him.

One night there was a crowd gathered in Frank's room, and it was not long before the conversation turned upon the "bad man," who was hardly known to our hero.

"He's a terror!"

It was plain Halliday thought so. The manner in which he uttered the words showed that he was fully satisfied on that point.

"Is he scientific?" asked Merriwell.

"No; but he is a bulldog," answered Halliday.

"And a brute!" exclaimed Harry Rattleton.

"That's right," nodded Danny Griswold. "Look at my eye. I hadn't an idea that he thought of hitting me till he let me have it. Knocked me flat. Felt as if I'd been kicked by a mule."

"What did you do to cause him to strike you?" asked Frank.

"Nothing. Just looked at him."

"If he keeps this up," grunted Bruce Browning, who was stretched on the couch, puffing away at a cigarette, "his career at Yale will be short."

"That's right!" cried Jack Diamond, showing his teeth. "Some one will kill him. If he struck me, I'd shoot him in a minute—in a minute!"

Diamond meant it. There was hot blood in his veins. Frank's example had taught him to control his fiery temper to a certain extent, but there were times when it would blaze forth and get the best of him for all of anything he could do.

"It's a pity some fellow can't get at him and lick the stuffing out of him," said Bandy Robinson. "That's what he needs."

"Well, who is there that can do it?" cried Griswold. "He's a perfect giant, over six feet tall, and must weigh nearly two hundred pounds, though there's not an ounce of fat on him. He's all bone and muscle. He strikes a regular prize-fighter blow, and he can't be hurt. I tell you, he is a good man to let alone."

"That's right," agreed Halliday. "I saw him do up those coppers the other night, four of them, and they all had their clubs out."

"Did they hit him?" asked Merriwell.

"Hit him! Well, I should guess yes. They cracked him eight or ten times over the head and shoulders."

"Somebody said it didn't have any effect on him," observed "Uncle" Blossom, who was chewing gum as if his life depended on it.

"Not a bit more than it would if they had hammered a block of wood," declared Halliday. "It made me sick the first time they cracked him on the head, and it sounded exactly as if they struck a piece of hard wood. I expected it would lay him out stiff."

"But he kept on his feet?"

"He never staggered! Cut his scalp open in three places, and he bled frightfully, but that only seemed to make him worse."

"Very interesting," commented Frank, his eyes sparkling. "It would be an honor to subdue such a fellow as that."

"Honor?" cried Halliday and Griswold. "It would be a miracle!"

"If he lives, he'll become a prize fighter," said Blossom. "He has their brutal instincts, and still he seems to have some brains."

"That's what makes him such a bad man—his brains," cried Halliday. "He fights with his head, as well as with his hands."

"I must say, you interest me greatly in this freshman," said Merriwell. "What did you call his name—Mason?"

"Yes, Hock Mason. You've seen him. He's that big, red-headed bruiser, who——"

"Yes, I've seen him," nodded Frank. "I know him by sight."

"It's a wonder he hasn't jumped on you yet. You must have attracted his notice, for you are the most popular man in college."

"Oh, he'll get at Merry in time," grinned Griswold. "All he is waiting for is the opportunity."

Frank laughed.

"I don't know as I care about having any trouble with this freshman bully," he confessed.

"I should say not!" cried the others.

"But I shall not run to get out of his way."

"You'd better."

"Perhaps some of you are aware that I can put up a good, stiff fight myself."

"Yes, but you can't lick a fellow you can't hurt."

"There is no man living that can't be hurt—if you find out his tender spot. If I were forced into trouble with this Hock Mason, I should try to find how I could hurt him."

"While you were finding it, Merry, he would kill you."

Frank laughed again, showing not the least annoyance.

"You think so, and you may be right. As I said before, I don't know as I care to have any trouble with him; but, at the same time, I am not going to run away from him. I never saw a genuine bully yet that was not a squealer when he knew he had met his master, and I'll wager something Mr. Hock Mason can be cowed, for all of his famous fight with the policemen."

"If you'd seen that fight, you might have a different opinion," put in Halliday. "All he had was his bare fists, and he knocked those four cops out. Why, when he struck one of them fairly, the man went down like a stricken ox, and lay quivering on the ground. He knocked out two of them, and then he grabbed the others by the collars. Both let him have it with their clubs, but he just thumped their heads together and dropped them. They were knocked out, and I wondered if their heads were cracked. That made him a king among the freshmen. They're so scared of him that they shiver when he looks at them. I don't believe there is a freshman who likes him, but they pretend to, and they got him to his room after the fight, washed him up, plastered up his head, and then went forth and swore they knew nothing about the affair. The cops couldn't spot their man when they tried, for Mason came out the next morning looking as if nothing had happened. He wears his hair long, and he's had it clipped away around the wounds on his head, plastered the cuts up, and then combed his hair over the plasters. I tell you, he is a bad man!"

"Every bad man meets his match some day," said Frank.

"Mason's match is not to be found in Yale."

"Perhaps not."

"He's bound to be cock of the walk."

"And are freshmen, sophomores, juniors and seniors going to allow this brutal bully to walk on their necks?"

"What else can they do?"

"Kill him!" cried Jack Diamond, fiercely—"kill him, by the eternal gods! He can't walk on my neck! If he tried it, I'd kill him, though I hung for it!"

"I don't think it is necessary to kill him," smiled Frank. "There's always some way of subduing a bully. That way must be discovered, and he must be subdued."

"We'll owe you a vote of thanks if you discover it and do the job," said Griswold.

"Well, you are liable to owe Merriwell a vote of thanks, then," grunted Browning. "I've traveled all over with him, and I never saw him take water for anything that stood on legs. There are a few bad men out West, but they didn't faze him."

"Merry is all right," said Halliday. "He's a corker, and athlete, and is built of pure sand, but he'd have to be built of iron to go up against a big ruffian like this Mason. About the only way to subdue that fellow is to kill him, as Diamond suggests."

"He is growing more and more insolent and aggressive every day," said Griswold. "If something isn't done to check him, he and his crowd of followers will run over us. They are all getting insolent, and we have received notice that they'll appear in a body to-night with tall hats and canes. Mason will lead them, and they don't think we'll dare tackle them."

"We'll rush them, if we're killed!" cried Diamond, springing to his feet and wildly pacing up and down the floor. "Are you in it, fellows? Hark—what's that? They're out now! They're singing! It's a challenge! Oh, there'll be a hot time around here to-night!"

CHAPTER XLVII.

DIAMOND STRIKES A BLOW.

Forty freshmen, with tall hats and canes, commanded by the giant, Hock Mason, were singing, "That Bully." In the most belligerent manner possible, they shouted the line:

"We're lookin' for that bully, and he must be found."

Behind them were more freshmen without silk hats and canes, but prepared to take a hand in the scrimmage, if the juniors tried a rush.

The freshmen had grown bold and saucy. Hock Mason bullied them, and they were afraid of him, but they knew the juniors were afraid of him, too.

They sang and shouted. They marched up and down with Mason leading. They began to express their fears that the juniors would not dare try a rush.

The juniors saw the freshmen were out in force, and they were not hasty about making an

assault. They seemed to lack a leader. They kept gathering, but held aloof.

The freshmen grew bolder and bolder. They invaded the campus. The juniors were gathered at their fence. It was plain the freshmen meant to rush them, and attempt to take the fence. The juniors prepared to struggle to the bitter end.

On came the freshmen. The others were outnumbered. It looked as if many of them were afraid, and were keeping out of the *mêlée* that must come.

The freshmen marched past the line along the fence. They were insulting. They turned and marched back. Then, at a signal from their giant leader, they attempted to sweep the juniors from the fence, and take it by storm.

There was a charge, a clash, and the battle was on.

But it afterward developed that the juniors were far more crafty than the freshmen thought. They had not concentrated their entire force at the fence, but their main body were keeping out of sight and waiting for the onset to begin, knowing the freshmen were in a mood to try something desperate and unusual.

The moment the freshmen made a rush for the fence, the second body of their antagonists came with a wild charge.

Frank Merriwell led them!

In a moment such a battle was taking place there at the fence as had not been witnessed since the old days at Yale—the good old fighting days.

Almost immediately the freshmen were on the defensive, doing their best to retain their hats and canes.

Frank singled out Hock Mason, believing the best course was to engage his entire attention without delay. He was urging the freshmen on, and no one seemed to stand before him.

With all the nerve he could command, putting all his strength and skill into the effort, Merriwell went at Mason. He came upon the fellow like a tornado.

Frank did not try slugging tactics, but he caught Mason's cane with both hands, and, giving it a twist and a whirl, snapped the big freshman into the air and fairly flung him over his shoulder, tearing away the cane.

It is possible that never before in all his life had Hock Mason been handled in such a summary manner. He struck the ground with a thump, bewildered beyond measure by what had happened, for he had not dreamed any man at Yale could handle him that way, even if he were taken by surprise.

But Mason was not hurt in the least, and he was furious.

Laughing triumphantly, Frank Merriwell spun the cane into the air and caught it with the skill of a baton-thrower when it came down.

Roaring like an enraged lion, Hock Mason scrambled to his feet. Somebody gave Merriwell a push from behind, nearly throwing him down, and Mason struck him behind the ear.

It was one of the giant freshman's sledge-hammer blows, and Frank dropped like a log.

"Cuss ye!" snarled the bully. "I'll fix ye!"

The brute in his nature was aroused, and he kicked the fallen lad in the ribs with his toe.

"Shame! shame!" cried a score of voices.

Bruce Browning, with a roar of rage, tried to reach the brutal fellow, but Jack Diamond was quicker.

Jack had torn a heavy cane from a freshman, and now he wielded it, butt foremost, with all the strength he could command.

Whack!

The blow might have been heard anywhere on the campus. It fell just where the furious Virginian had intended it should—across the side of Mason's head and behind his ear!

The fellow who had stood on his feet before the blows of the policemen's clubs now fell as if he had been shot, pitching headlong over Frank Merriwell.

Frank sat up, still grasping the cane he had captured from the bully. Jack caught his hand and pulled him to his feet.

Hock Mason lay at full length on the ground, gasping for breath.

"He's dying!" cried somebody, horrified.

The rush was over, freshmen and juniors stopped struggling in a moment, and all gathered around the spot where the giant lay. His heavy rasping breathing was terrifying.

"He is dying, Diamond!" whispered Browning, in Jack's ear.

"I don't care!" returned the Virginian, passionately.

"But think—think what that means!"

"I don't care!" repeated Jack. "He struck Frank—kicked him when he was down! You know, Browning—you know how Merriwell stood by me on our trip when all the rest of you turned against me, because I was out of sorts. You know how he stood by me when I raved at him. Another fellow would have told me to go to the Old Nick. I haven't forgotten those things. I am ready to do anything for him!"

"But if it should happen that you have killed this freshman——"

"What then?"

"It will go hard with you. A little while ago, in Merriwell's room, you were saying you would kill him. It will look like a premeditated murder."

This hit Jack hard, but it did not stagger him.

"I can't help it. I did the trick to keep him from killing Merriwell. Merry was down, and that brute was kicking him. No one would dare try to stop Mason with bare hands. I used the best and only means to stop him. If he dies——Well, I'll take my chance with a jury of honest men."

Browning felt that Diamond had nerve, for all that he was hot-headed and passionate.

"Well, we'll hope the fellow isn't hurt much."

Some one was bending over Mason, fanning him, while others were pushing the crowd back.

"Get back—give him air! Do you want to smother him to death?"

"Smother time, perhaps," chirped Danny Griswold, who could not hold back the pun, for all of the gravity of the situation.

The rush had begun and ended so quickly that the faculty did not seem to be aroused. Some of the students were watching for the expected appearance of the professors, however.

Water was brought, and Mason's temples were bathed. He continued to breathe hoarsely for some time, plainly drawing his breath with the utmost difficulty, but the sound gradually lessened, and he finally struggled to sit up.

"What's the matter? What's the matter?" he growled, harshly. "Let me alone! Let me get up!"

Some one offered to help him.

"Get out!" he snarled, flinging the fellow off. "What do I want of help? What's the matter with my head? It is whirling."

He got up, although it was with the utmost difficulty he could do so, and there he stood in the midst of the crowd, swaying and putting his hands to his head.

Some could not believe their eyes. They had not thought it possible Hock Mason could betray weakness.

"Somebody struck me!" he harshly grated, glaring around. "Where is he? I'll wring his neck as if he were a chicken! Where is the fellow?"

All were silent.

"Oh, I'll find out who it is," declared the bully, "and when I do, I'll make him weep tears of blood. I'll make him wish he never had been born. I'll——What's the matter with my head? It's going around—around—around——"

He would have fallen, but some of the freshmen caught hold of him, and he was led from the campus toward his room.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

FACING THE BULLY.

The events of that night created a sensation, forming a topic of general conversation.

Strangely enough, very few seemed to know who had struck Mason, and those who did, kept silent, not wishing to be drawn into the affair, being friendly toward Diamond.

Jack was not at all excited or alarmed over it, and he did not show concern when he was told over and over that the giant freshman would be sure to make good his threat, if possible.

"Let him try it!" said the lad from Virginia. "Next time I will finish him. I do not propose to fool

with a beast like him."

From the campus a party of students went direct to Frank's room. Frank had the cane he had taken from Mason.

"It will make a fine ornament for my room," he laughed, as he placed it conspicuously over the mantel.

"Jove!" cried Danny Griswold. "You should be proud of it. You took it from Mason so quick that the fellow was dazed."

"That was the flittiest pring I ever saw—I mean the prettiest fling I ever saw," excitedly declared Rattleton. "How did you do it, Merry?"

"Oh, that was a simple trick," smiled Frank.

"It would have bumped the wind out of any other fellow, but it didn't seem to damage Mason much," observed Charlie Creighton.

"It was Diamond's little rap that damaged him," grunted Browning, who had again captured a couch.

"That was a corker!" broke forth Banny Robinson.

"A corker!" echoed Halliday. "I should guess yes! It dropped him in his tracks, and I saw the cops hammer him over the head with their clubs till they were tired without bringing him to his knees."

"I intended to lay him out when I struck him," said Jack, his eyes flashing. "I hit him on exactly the right spot."

"I'm sorry you did it, old man," said Creighton, soberly.

"I'm not!" returned Diamond, instantly.

"He is sure to make it hot for you."

"Let him try it! He was kicking Merry, and Merry was down. If I'd had an iron bar, I should have cracked him with it, after seeing him sink his toe into Frank's ribs."

Merriwell took a long step toward Jack and grasped his hand.

"Thank you, Diamond," he said, soberly and sincerely. "It is a true friend who stands by a man when he is down."

He glanced around at the others a moment after saying this, and the eyes of some of them failed to meet his. They remembered how, a short time before, Frank had been somewhat unpopular because of his refusal to play on the football team, and many of them had turned against him. They knew well enough that Merriwell had not forgotten it, and he thought of it when he spoke. Diamond was one of the few who had stood by him when he was most unpopular.

"The time has come," said Browning, slowly, "when this bully must be shown that he is not cock of the walk."

"Who'll show him?" cried several voices.

"Merriwell didn't hesitate about tackling him to-night—and got the best of him in a fair way. He struck a foul blow, and——"

"A terrible blow it was," confessed Frank, soberly. "I felt as if I had been kicked in the head by a mule."

"Oh, he'll kill a weak fellow with a fair blow of his fist!" exclaim Halliday.

"If we can't do anything else," said Browning, "we'll have to organize against him. If we were to do that, we could bring him to time after a while."

Danny Griswold lighted a cigarette, and perched himself on top of the table.

"If Merry will be our leader we may do something," he said.

"I am not in favor of the scheme," declared Frank.

All regarded him in surprise.

"You are not?" they cried.

"No."

"Why not?"

"It seems cowardly for several fellows to band together against one."

"But it's all the way he can be subdued. What can we do?"

"I am not certain it is the only way he can be subdued."

"Suggest another."

"I won't make any suggestions to-night, but I will think it over."

"We should organize for the protection of Diamond," suggested Creighton. "He is bound to find out Jack struck him the blow that knocked him out, and then——"

"Don't worry about me," broke in the Virginian. "I am not afraid of Hock Mason. He might kill me, but he'd never be able to make me squeal."

This was not boasting. Those who knew Jack Diamond best realized that he spoke nothing more than the simple truth. Brute force might conquer him physically, but his heart could not be conquered in such a manner.

Creighton was in earnest about forming some sort of a combination, offensive and defensive, against Mason, but Merriwell would not go into it, and the scheme failed to go into effect.

Some one suggested that Mason might be hurt more severely than they supposed, and Robinson went out to find out, if possible, about it. He finally returned, but brought no information.

"It would be a good thing if he couldn't get into bed for a day or two," said Halliday; "but you'll see him about as well as ever to-morrow."

Ben was right. Mason came forth to chapel in the morning, and, from his appearance, no one could have told that he had been knocked out in such manner the night before.

Straightway the giant freshman set about trying to discover just who it was that struck him, but those he questioned did not know, or lied by saying they did not know.

Mason grew more and more furious as time progressed and he failed to learn what he desired. He swore that he would find out before night, and the fellow should suffer.

At noon a crowd gathered at the fence and talked the matter over. Charlie Creighton was there, and again he was in favor of organizing against the freshmen.

While they were talking, Mason was seen approaching.

"Here he comes!" was the general exclamation.

"And he's out for blood!" declared Creighton. "His manner shows that. There is going to be trouble."

Before reaching the fence, Mason encountered Danny Griswold. Instantly he collared the little fellow.

"Griswold," he said, "I know that you know who struck me last night. If you don't tell, I'm going to give you the worst drubbing you ever received."

Danny shrank away, saying:

"I didn't see the fellow hit you."

"But you know who did it. You can't deny that. Who was it?"

"I can't tell."

Mason raised his heavy fist.

"Tell, or I'll break your pretty little nose!" he grated.

There was a step near at hand, and a calm voice said:

"Drop it, Mason! You should be ashamed to bully a man smaller than yourself. Don't dare to strike him!"

Hock looked around in astonishment.

Frank Merriwell was close at hand, coolly standing there, with his hands thrust into his pockets.

"Hey?" cried Mason, in surprise.

"You heard what I said, freshman," spoke Frank, as coolly as ever.

There was a stir at the fence, for the students there saw all and heard all.

"Jingoes! Merriwell has a nerve!" gasped one.

"Mason will thump him, sure!" said another.

"If he does——"

"Hark!"

"Yes, I heard what you said," flung back the bully; "but what you say chops no frost. If I want to thump this chap I'll thump him, and twenty fellows like you can't stop me."

"You overestimate your ability, freshman," said Frank, and his coolness was most exasperating.

"If you thump that chap, one fellow will thump you."

"Jee whiz!" palpitated one of the students at the fence, "Now he's in for it!"

"There'll be gore spilled!" muttered Creighton.

"I'm sorry for Merriwell!" said another.

"Eh?" gurgled Hock Mason, more astonished than ever. "Is that a fact?"

"That is."

"Well, I'm going to thump him!"

Again he lifted his fist, and Danny Griswold cowered before it.

"Stop, Mason!" cried Frank, his voice hard and cold. "Strike him, and I'll give you a mark to remember me by!"

"Ho, ho!" sneered Mason, and he smashed Griswold in the face.

The moment the bully struck the little fellow, he released his collar and whirled toward Frank.

Merriwell kept his word.

Crack—Frank's fist struck fairly on Hock Mason's left eye, and the big bully was knocked down in a second.

The witnesses gasped with astonishment.

With a roar of rage, Mason leaped to his feet and came at Merriwell, somewhat blinded and dazed, but raging like a mad bull.

With the utmost ease Frank avoided the big fellow, and then he struck Mason again.

The second blow did not knock the giant down, but it stopped him a moment, and the blood began to run down his face.

Frank's fist had cut a long gash over the bully's right eye, and the blood quickly began to blind Hock, for already his left eye was swelling swiftly, showing it might be entirely closed in a few moments.

Mason wiped away the blood with his coat sleeve, and went at Frank with another rush.

Merriwell dodged, thrust out his foot, and tripped the freshman, sending him to the ground with a thud.

Over by the fence a little party witnessed all this with astonishment unspeakable.

Was this Mason, the freshman bully, who was being handled in such a manner by Merriwell? Was this the man who had knocked out four New Haven cops?

Mason had struck at Frank savagely enough to lay him out, but Merriwell easily dodged the blow.

Now the bully got upon his feet the second time. Blood was streaming down his face, and he was fast going blind. He looked around for Merriwell, but saw him dimly and indistinctly.

"Oh, hang you!" he cried. "You took me by surprise, and I can't see you now. If I could get hold of you——"

"But you can't do it, you know," said Frank, cheerfully, as he skipped out of the reach of his enemy's long arms.

Mason whirled around dizzily. He began to realize that it would be foolish to attempt to get the best of Merriwell then.

"Oh, I'll fix you for this—I will!" he grated.

"You think you will, but you won't," was the calm reply. "I shall be on the watch for you, and this is but a taste of what you'll get the next time you go up against me. Your days as a bully around here are over. I told you I would mark you, and I have. Whenever you look in a mirror for some time to come you will see something to remember me by."

"Whenever I look in a mirror for some time to come I shall remember you, and I'll repeat my vow to make you regret the day you ever saw me. Next time we meet to fight, I'll hammer you within an inch of your life!"

Then, holding a blood-stained handkerchief to his bleeding eye, he turned and hastened away.

CHAPTER XLIX.

TO THE RESCUE.

Danny Griswold danced and crowed with delight.

"Oh, scissors!" cried the little fellow. "I don't mind the crack he gave me a bit. It was worth it to see him get done up like that. And it was done so quick!"

The fellows at the fence rushed forward and gathered around Merriwell.

"Never touched you at all, did he?" asked Creighton.

"Didn't come within a hundred miles of me," smiled Frank.

Then they got him by the hand, shook it, congratulated him, complimented him, expressed their wonder, and some of them almost seemed to doubt if they had actually seen Hock Mason done up in less than two minutes.

"Quickest job on record," declared Silas Blossom. "Biff—biff—it was over. Didn't suppose he could be licked like that."

"He wasn't licked," said Frank. "It is a mistake to think that. I took particular pains to give him the first soaker in the left eye, and that eye was closing up on him so he couldn't see out of it very well. Then I let him have the next one on the right eye, and skinned my knuckles, see? Those knuckles cut him over the eye, and he bled as if he had been stabbed. The blood got into his eye, and he was more than half blind. That was what stopped him, and I hoped all the time that I might do it, for I will confess that I have no desire to receive one of his prize-fighter thumps. I was lucky to do the trick just as I planned it."

"And you had a nerve to stand up to him at all," said Deacon Dunning. "Especially here on the campus at this time of day, when it would mean something serious if the faculty knew of the fight."

"That was another thing I was thinking about," said Frank. "I wanted to end the scrap as soon as possible, so we'd not be seen at it by anybody who'd make trouble for us. Hope it won't kick up a muss and get us hauled over the irons."

They were astounded by Merriwell's coolness. He did not seem in the least ruffled by his encounter with the "bad man" of the freshman class, and was not particularly elated by his easy victory. He seemed to take it as a matter of course—a thing he had known would end just as it did.

It was not long before every freshman and junior knew what had happened, but all alike were slow to believe it possible. Frank Merriwell, single-handed, had got the best of Hock Mason—no, no, that could not be true!

The most of them wished to believe it, but could not at first. Mason was not popular among the freshmen, although he was their leader. He had bullied them too much, and he had many secret enemies, who pretended to his face that they were his friends.

The eyewitnesses of the encounter were forced to tell the story over and over till they were tired. Every one seemed to desire to know to the minutest particular just how Merriwell had gone to work to do the trick.

Some said it was pure accident, while others declared Hock Mason could not be knocked out by an accident. The latter were inclined to give Frank credit for all he had done, but the most of them prophesied that Mason would kill Merriwell as soon as his eyes were in condition to allow him to see properly.

Diamond had not seen the encounter, a fact which he bemoaned very much.

"Oh, Christopher!" he cried. "It was just my luck not to be around, and I'd given ten dollars to see it."

Frank told him how Danny had refused to divulge the knowledge Mason had desired.

"That shows little Gris has sand," said Jack. "But I'm sorry he didn't speak right up and tell Mason who it was. I don't want anybody to get thumped for keeping my secrets."

"It's all right. I don't think Mason slugged him hard. Anyway, he only made a sore place on Danny's cheek bone."

"I am going to take pains to let Mason know who it was thumped him with the cane. You're not going to fight him alone, Merry."

But that did not please Frank at all.

"You're going to do nothing of the sort, Diamond," he promptly declared. "The fight is on between Mason and Merriwell now, and you will keep out of it. I haven't made any talk about it, but it's my object to subdue this fellow, if possible, so there will be no further trouble with him."

"You may need help."

"I think not. It will be better for one man to do the job, as that will humiliate him, while he is such a bull-headed chump that he would never submit till he was killed if there was a party against him."

Diamond seemed to feel sorry that he could not get into it somehow. He even accused Frank of crowding him out. He had formed such a strong hatred for Mason that he felt as if it would be the greatest satisfaction of his life to do something to humble and crush the fellow.

But Frank knew Jack well enough to be sure it would not do for the hot-blooded Virginian to be deeply mixed in the affair, as he would not hesitate at anything in order to get the best of the freshman he hated.

Diamond's soul rose up in scorn and contempt for a brutal fellow like Mason. He actually felt that it would be a desirable thing to call Mason out and shoot him in a duel.

Merriwell's popularity rose to the flood when it was known that he had not hesitated to face the freshman bully in defense of Danny Griswold, and had got the best of the encounter. Every one congratulated Frank, and shook hands with him till he was tired of it all, and felt like keeping out of sight in his room.

But he knew it would not do to keep close in his room, for then it would be said that, although he had faced Mason once, he was afraid of the vengeance of the infuriated bully.

Frank went out more than had been his habit for some time. He had been devoting himself with unusual closeness to his studies, his main object being to stand so well in the spring that there would be no drawback about going onto the baseball team.

Mason kept close in his room, had a doctor, and made the excuse that he had inflammation of the eyes so he could not appear at recitations and found it impossible to study.

To those who knew all about it, the bully's excuse provided great amusement.

Three evenings after the encounter a jolly party gathered in Traeger's. Ale was freely consumed, stories told and jokes sprung.

Frank Merriwell was one of the party, and, as usual, he drank nothing but "soft stuff." Under no circumstances could he be induced to take a drink of liquor.

Frank's temperance principles were so well known that it was seldom any one urged him to drink anything. Occasionally they would jolly him, and he was often spoken of as the "Worthy Chief of the Good Templars." He did not mind this, however, and he often said that, as he never drank anything but raw alcohol of the rankest kind, and he couldn't get that at the places he patronized, he refused to take anything at all.

But he could be as jolly as any of the rest, and his stories and songs always "took." He was the life of any party, and, naturally, his society was much sought.

While the party was making merry in Traeger's, Dismal Jones wandered in. He paused and regarded them sadly, then said:

"Feasting, song and merriment within; cold, bitterness and misery without."

"Without what?" chirped Danny Griswold.

"Without yonder portal," solemnly returned Jones. "As I approached this gilded snare of Satan, I chanced to behold one who hath lately removed from one eye a beef-steak poultice, and whose other eye is in the neighborhood of several strips of plaster."

"Mason?" cried several.

"Verily thou hast named him," bowed Dismal. "He stood there shivering in the bitter cold, while about him gathered his wretched followers. It was a sad and heart-rending sight. I was touched—no, I mean I was afraid I would be touched, and I hastened hither to seek something that would drive from me memory that sad spectacle. Hot toddy, please."

"Mason?" exclaimed Diamond. "I wonder why the fellow is hanging around here?"

"Looking for Merry, perhaps," laughed Paul Pierson.

"He wants to look out, or he will get merry thunder," laughed Lewis Little.

"He got that the last time," said Andy Emery.

"Boys," said Danny Griswold, with sudden seriousness, "I believe there is something in the air."

"What?" asked several.

"Dust," chuckled Danny. "There's a high wind to-night."

"Hit him quick!" cried Halliday. "Hit him hard!"

"A-haw! a-haw! a-haw!" laughed Joe Gamp, a big, hulking fellow from New Hampshire. "Darned if that little runt ain't alwus doin' that. A-haw! a-haw! a-haw!"

Gamp had a laugh that was infectious. He seldom burst into a hearty roar that every one in hearing did not roar also. On this occasion Dismal Jones was the only man who did not join in the laughter. Dismal sipped his hot toddy, and looked sad and reproachful.

Mason was forgotten. Jokes and stories followed. Merriwell sang a song. The party showed no

signs of breaking up, and Frank decided that he must get some sleep, so he reluctantly bade them good-night.

"I'm going along," said Rattleton, rising.

"Don't want us all to go to protect you from Mason and his gang, do you?" asked Puss Parker.

"I think not," smiled Frank. "I am not afraid of Mason himself, and I hardly think he'll call on any of his friends to help him lick me. Good-night, fellows."

"Good-night!"

"Good-night, Merry!"

"So long, old man!"

"Good luck, Frank!"

Any one hearing them bid him good-night would have known he was a very popular fellow. Every man there joined in the general chorus, and Frank went out laughing, his heart warm within his bosom.

"A jolly lot of fellows, Rattles," he said, "and white men, every one of them."

"Oh, they are jolly enough," admitted Harry; "but I hope you have not forgotten that almost every one of them turned his back on you when they fancied you were afraid of Rob Marline and did not dare play on the football team."

"It is best to forget such things as that," returned Frank. "It seemed to all of them that I showed the white feather, and, not knowing me as well as they might, they were disgusted. It also seemed that I was willing to let Yale go on the field with a weak team when it might be strengthened if I would play. Yale men are loyal to old Eli. They will forgive a personal affront quicker than anything that looks like cowardice or treachery toward Yale."

"Oh, well, if that's the way you look at it, I have nothing to say."

CHAPTER I.

AGAINST ODDS.

Five minutes after Merriwell and Rattleton left Traeger's the latter came rushing back, hatless, excited and out of breath. He burst in upon the merry party, gasping:

"Quick? quick! They've got him!"

"Hey?" cried several, astounded. "Got who?"

"Merry!"

"Who's got him?"

"Gang with—masks—over—faces!" palpitated Rattleton.

"What's this?" shouted Paul Pierson. "The deuce you say!"

"It's right," declared Harry. "Mason's gang—know it was—Mason's gang!"

Every man was on his feet.

"To the rescue!" shouted Jack Diamond.

Out of Traeger's they poured. Rattleton led them. He took them to the dark street where the gang had suddenly jumped out and pounced upon Merriwell and himself.

"It was right here," he said. "Yes—here's my hat. I got a soaker in the jaw—knocked me stiff for a moment. They piled onto Merry. Had a cab waiting—bundled him into it. Before I could give him a hand, they were carrying him off in the cab."

"How many of them?" asked Pierson.

"I don't know—six or seven."

"Well, they have got away with him. They're gone. There is no cab in sight. What are we going to do?"

"Try to follow some way!" cried Diamond. "We must find them! We must stand by Merriwell! Oh, curse it! We might have known something was up when Jones told us he saw Mason outside."

"Sure!" agreed the others.

"I said there was something in the air," put in Griswold, but no one paid the slightest attention to him.

"We should have gone along with Merry," grated the excited Virginian. "Then, if the gang had tried to jump him—oh, we'd given them a hot time!"

"What do you suppose they'll do with him?" asked somebody.

"Do?" palpitated Rattleton. "The infernal skunks will do something dirty! Mason is playing to get square. He has sworn to hammer the life out of Merry, and he'll try to keep his word."

"It's a dirty trick!" fluttered Diamond. "If Merry is harmed, we should stand together and tar and feather Mason."

"We will!"

Every man there uttered the shout, and they were in earnest.

For some moments they lingered near the spot, and then they started along the street in the direction Rattleton said the cab had taken. They found a policeman after a time, and he had seen a closed cab go past in a hurry. He told them the direction it had taken.

They tried to trace the kidnaped junior, but the attempt was a failure. At last they gave it up. Vowing vengeance on all freshmen in general and Hock Mason in particular, they went back to Traeger's.

The story spread. It was not long before every junior abroad that evening knew what had happened. Fierce were the threats made against the freshmen.

The hour grew late, and some of the fellows decided to go to Merriwell's room and wait for him. They anticipated that he would be released after Mason had obtained his revenge.

To their astonishment, Merriwell's door was not locked. They opened it and walked in.

Merriwell was there!

"Come in, fellows!" called Frank, cheerfully.

He was examining some of his clothes. They were the clothes he had worn that evening, and a glance showed they were torn and ruined.

"Just looking over this suit, to see how much it was damaged," Merriwell laughed. "It strikes me it is knocked out. Won't ever be able to wear it again."

Then he saw them standing and staring at him in astonishment, and he asked:

"What's the matter?"

"Rattleton must have been stringing us!" exclaimed Puss Parker.

"Lot on your nife—I mean not on your life!" spluttered Harry. "I gave it to you straight."

"But Merriwell is here—all right."

"How long have you been here, Merry?" asked Browning.

"Came in about ten minutes ago," answered Frank. "Just had time to change my clothes before you chaps drifted in."

"Then they did carry you off?"

"Rather."

"But you're all right?"

"Never was better."

"Mason didn't get revenge on you?"

"Not this evening."

"Tell us about it!" cried Browning and Halliday, together.

"Yes, tell us," urged Parker. "You've been in some kind of a scrimmage. That's evident by the appearance of the clothes you have taken off. Tell us what happened."

"I suppose Rattles has told you how they jumped us?"

"Yes."

"Well, they had me before I could do a thing. I rather think Mason got his hands on me. Anyhow, it was some big fellow with the strength of Samson. Before I could strike for myself I was bundled into a cab, and two or three of them were in there with me. They told me to keep still. My hands were twisted behind my back and tied. Then they carried me off."

"Didn't I give it to you straight?" cried Harry.

"Where did they carry you?" asked Halliday, eagerly.

"Somewhere out of town. They didn't talk much—didn't want me to recognize their voices, I

suppose. I kept still, as they told me, but I was trying to work my hands free all the time. I found I could do it, but I waited till they stopped and bundled me out of the cab. Then——"

"Then?" cried the listening boys, eagerly.

"Then I slipped my hands out of the ropes and sailed into them."

"Wish I'd been there," grunted Browning, with unusual animation.

"Go on, Frank—go on!" cried the others.

"It was a right tight little scrap," laughed Merriwell; "but they were taken by surprise, and that gave me a show. One or two of them got hold of me. They tore my clothes. Once they got me down, but I managed to get away and got onto my feet. I told them I was going to mark the whole crowd so I would know them in the morning, and I think I did it for the most of them. It was dark, or I should have known them, for I ripped the masks off nearly all of the gang. Every time I could, I slugged a fellow in the eye, and some of them will have their peepers decorated to-morrow."

Rattleton fell to laughing.

"Oh, gee!" he cried. "They were monkeying with a cyclone! They'll remember you, Merry!"

"I intended that they should. At last, seeing I could not lick the gang, and they were bound to get the best of me in the end, if I persisted in trying to do so, I took to my heels and ran for it. One fellow gave me a red-hot chase. He was a sprinter, fellows. I found I had drawn him on ahead of the others, and I slacked till he was close at my heels. He thought he was overtaking me. All at once I stopped short and turned on him. He couldn't stop or dodge, and he ran against my fist. Well, I am dead sure he'll bear my mark to-morrow."

Merriwell was congratulated. Alone and single-handed he had bested his enemies, a feat that was sure to add to his record.

THE END.

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