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, by Matthew M. Colton**

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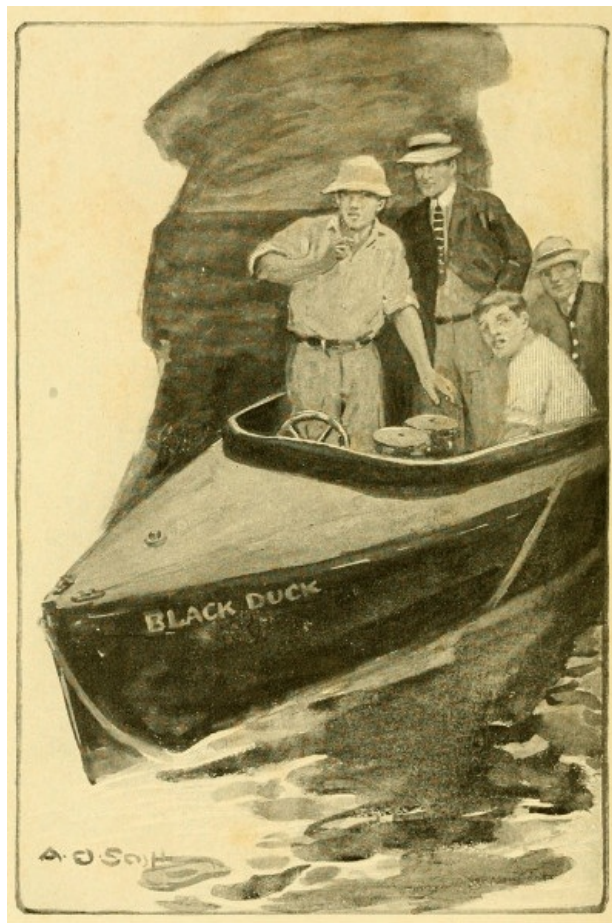
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ARMSTRONG, DROP KICKER \*\*\*



FRANK  
ARMSTRONG &  
DROP KICKER  
MATTHEW M. COLTON





"LISTEN, WHAT WAS THAT?" WHISPERED FRANK.— [Page 83.](#)

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# FRANK ARMSTRONG DROP KICKER

[Pg 1]

BY

**MATTHEW M. COLTON**

Author of "Frank Armstrong's Vacation," "Frank Armstrong  
at Queen's," "Frank Armstrong's Second Term," etc., etc.

WITH FOUR HALFTONE ILLUSTRATIONS BY  
**ARTHUR O. SCOTT**



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"Listen, what was that?" whispered Frank.

[\*Frontispiece\*](#)

Frank turned just in time to see a flash of white disappearing beneath the surface.

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"It's Choctaw!" cried the Codfish. "Who can read Choctaw?"

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Down it went to the ground, rose and was sent spinning on its long flight from Frank's toe.

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# Frank Armstrong, Drop Kicker

## CHAPTER I.

### A NEW ENTERPRISE.

On a certain warm afternoon in the early part of July any one passing along the main street of the little summer resort of Seawall might have observed, had he chanced to glance seaward, a trim sloop riding easily at anchor, her milk-white mainsail swaying idly in the scarce-moving breeze. The water was like glass, excepting that here and there it was wrinkled for a moment by a puff of wind which passed instantly, leaving the mirror-like surface as before. Midway of the sloop's cockpit sat the Ancient Mariner himself, nodding. His back was braced against the gunwale and his pipe hung on his chest—a gentle-looking old man with a long, grizzled beard, taking his siesta as even Nature seemed to be taking hers that afternoon. His toil-worn hand hung over the gunwale, and, had one been near enough, the old man might have been heard to snore softly.

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A quarter of a mile up the bay there appeared three black specks in the water. They might have been corks merely, but as they came steadily along you could have imagined them to be seals. They came nearer, swimming noiselessly, scarcely making a ripple. Now they were right alongside the sloop. Two of the seals, or whatever the dark forms were, glued themselves close under the sweep of the stern. The third swam cautiously toward the outstretched hand of the Ancient Mariner, and tweaked one of the fingers which hung within reach of any fish that might be bold enough to try a bite at the tempting morsel. Instantly the Ancient was in motion and the "seal" disappeared below the surface in a twinkling.

"Shiver my bloomin' timbers, what was that?" yelled the Mariner as he jumped to his feet. "Some ding-busted dog-fish trying to make a meal?" and he reached for his pike-pole to do execution to the attacking dog-fish.

At this burst from the Ancient there came from under the stern an answering burst of laughter. Another and still another joyful chuckle followed, and in an instant there bobbed up three heads to the astonished gaze of the occupant of the boat.

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"You young rapsCALLIONS, so it wasn't a dog-fish after all," said the Ancient. And then, rubbing his eyes, he looked again. "Bust my bulkhead, if it isn't little Frank Armstrong!"

"Surest thing you know, Captain Silas," shouted Frank, treading water and keeping his hands going at the same time with a fin-like motion that held him out of the water to his shoulders. "Come on out, Jimmy; come out, Lewis; no use hiding now."

"Well, I swan!" was all Captain Silas could say, for it was indeed the old captain himself. "What are you doin' away out here in the bay? You're worse nor a parcel of fish."

"Oh, Captain," cried Jimmy Turner, shooting out from the boat on his back and splashing water in Lewis Carroll's face, "we expected to have a lot of fun, but this galoot of a Lewis had to snigger out loud, and that spoiled everything."

"You sniggered yourself," retorted Lewis.

"We couldn't help it," said Frank. "Did it scare you much, Captain?"

"Well, I reckon it wouldn't have scared me so much if I hadn't been dreaming I was hauling in a big sword-fish, and just as I was going to grab him with my gaff, up he jumps and grabs my hand. I give such a jump that I near fell out the other side o' the boat."

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The boys laughed again and splashed water.

"Come on into the boat," said the captain, grinning at the joke that had been played on him. "Come on in and let's see how you look," and he held out a gnarled hand to Frank, who seized it and was soon over the side. Jimmy followed easily, but it took two of them to get Lewis aboard, who, in spite of all his athletic endeavors, continued to grow more like an



ordinary washtub every day. But finally, after much tugging, they landed Lewis safely. The three swimmers sat and dripped water over Captain Silas' seats.

"Must have come into a fortune, Captain," exclaimed Frank, looking over the trim boat and aloft at the white sail, which was now swinging a little more widely with the land breeze.

"Oh, no," was the reply. "Couldn't make much outen my old fishing job, so I took my little nest-egg outen the bank and put it in this here boat."

"Going pirating?" inquired Jimmy.

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"Not 'xactly that, kinder social piratin' maybe. I carry the city swells that want to go fer a sail. It pays better nor lobsters."

"Just a different kind of lobster, eh?" broke in Lewis.

"I take parties out for sails at twenty-five cents the head," continued the captain, not noticing the interruption by Lewis, "but it's been bad business these last two or three days, not a breeze big enuff to blow a han'kerchief. So I was havin' a snooze when you fellers give me such a start," and the old man grinned pleasantly. "But it's breezin' up a bit now and maybe we can have a sail before the sun goes down. Want to come?"

"You bet we do!" was the simultaneous response of the three, who had scattered themselves comfortably around on the little deck forward with their faces up to the blue sky.

"Hadn't you better go and git some clothes on your backs? You'll freeze to death in them there skinny little bathing suits of yours."

"Oh, no, we'll be as warm as toast. See, our suits are nearly dry. We've put in most of the time these last two weeks in these rigs and we're used to it," said Frank.

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The breeze was picking up every minute, and the captain, casting an eye to the pier end without seeing any prospective passengers, and apparently nothing loth to have back with him again the three spirited youngsters, began to pull up his anchor and make ready. In this the boys helped, and soon the sloop was heading off down the bay careening to the freshening breeze.

"Gee whiz!" sighed Jimmy, prone on his back and stretched out like a star-fish, arms and legs extended, "but this beats school all hollow."

"And what ye been doin' at school? Learnin' your lessons, I s'pose?" said the captain, who had heard the remark. "S'pose your heads are just crammed full of knowledge, eh?"

"Not exactly that," replied Frank, grinning. "There are a lot of blank spaces in my cranium that haven't been touched yet. But Lewis is fearfully educated."

"Yes," added Jimmy jokingly, "he's what they call a high-stand man."

"Wouldn't think it," said the old man, scrutinizing Lewis closely. "I'd say he was a wide-stand man," still looking Lewis over critically. Frank and Jimmy laughed heartily at this, and the captain joined in when it was explained to him that this particular kind of stand had nothing to do with the physique.

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"I say, Captain," said Frank, coming down from the deck to where Captain Brown sat at the tiller, "can't we do something to help you run the ship?"

"She don't need no running mor'n she's doin' now. All you got to do is just keep 'er steddy, same's I'm doin' now. You're not big enuff to steer. I'm 'fraid she'd wallop ye all about in a heavy sea."

"Oh, I don't mean sailing her; I'm not much on that. But couldn't we help with the passengers? Couldn't we put up the gangplank or put it down or whatever you do with it?" continued Frank. "We are three husky fellows, and we want to do something to keep in training."

"Trainin', what fer?" said the old man.

"Oh, just training for football. We want to be ready for the fall and have our muscles hard and our wind good."

"Yes," broke in Lewis, "we are going to be on the football team this fall up at Queen's School. Frank is going to be drop kicker, and I——"

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"Oh, ho," laughed Jimmy from his place up in the bow-sprit, where he had just stretched himself full length, face downward, with his legs coiled about the timber to keep himself from rolling into the sea, "did

you hear Lewis say 'we'? Lewis has to keep in condition, so please, Captain, give him some heavy work to do; let him spank the spinnaker and reef the anchor and splice the jib-boom."

"I could do any of them," said Lewis, throwing out his chest; and the captain chuckled.

"I tell you," he said, "we can let Lewis dust the mains'l; that would give him good exercise. But leavin' jokin' behind, ef ye want somethin' to do, why don't you get a motor boat and take out people for little runs among the islands here, same as I do? Lots o' people want to go quicker nor I can go, but I wouldn't touch one of the pesky things."

"By jiminy!" exclaimed Frank, "that's an idea!"

"Yes, and where's your motor boat coming from?" said Jimmy. "Motor boats cost something, and I don't see any good, kind gentleman coming around handing us one."

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"We might hire one," said Lewis, "and pay the rent from our profits. If we had luck we might be able to buy her by fall."

"Yes, and a house and lot and two yachts," said Jimmy, who was skeptical about the plan.

"Guess I know where you boys might pick up one cheap," broke in the captain, as he dexterously swung the boat over on the starboard tack and headed her up the bay. "Old man Simpkins has a motor boat he hasn't used for mor'n a year. It's layin' hitched up to his wharf down Turner's Point way."

"Oh, I know who he is," said Frank. "Lives in that big house by the pine grove a little way this side of the Point."

"That's the feller," said the captain. "Has a little girl, all kinder crippled up with some disease or other. Comes down to sail with me two or three times a week. Had a son at college who died of fever or something. It was his boat. That's the reason the boat's never used, I guess; old gentleman don't care for it no more."

"Great whippoowills, but there's our chance!" said Frank. "Jimmy, get over your pessimism and think up some scheme for renting that boat. Why, man," as Jimmy just grinned, "there's millions in it. We'll organize a company."

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"I'll be with you on condition that you'll let me steer it," said Jimmy. "You can be captain if you want to."

"All right, my son, you may, and I'll take care of the motor," said Frank. "That's a job for the best man."

"And what am I to be?" said Lewis. "Can't I be skipper, or something like that?"

"You'll be the ballast," said Jimmy, grinning from his perch on the bow-sprit. He had turned over on his back now and was balancing precariously, one toe hooked in a coil of rope at the foot of the mast being his only anchorage from a bath in the cool green sea racing along a couple of feet below him.

"We are talking as if we had the boat in commission already. But 'nothing venture, nothing have,' as the old saying goes. I'm going down to-morrow to see Mr. Simpkins and try my powers of persuasion on him."

"Beware of the dog," warned Jimmy.

"Dog or no dog, I'm going to try."

"What's this navigation company going to be called?" inquired Lewis.

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"The name will be the 'Queen's Ferry,'" said Frank.

"Sounds like an old English romance, but it's good," commented Jimmy; "the Queen's Ferry, Armstrong, Captain, Carroll, first mate—"

"I don't want to be first mate," corrected Lewis. "I want to be a skipper."

"Well, if you want to have such a lively name go ahead and take it. If skipper means anything speedy, you've got the most terrifically misplaced confidence in yourself I ever saw,—but if you must, you must, so you are to be the skipper."

"And James Turner will be first mate and helmsman," said Frank.

"Aye, aye, sir," came the response.

"Now, that being done, we've got to have an agent to drum up our business, to see that the great and waiting public may know that at last

in Seawall there is a proper conveyance; a guide and courier, a kind of advertising man who will present our magnificent possibilities in transportation."

The three boys looked at each other.

"The Codfish!" they shouted in chorus.

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"The Codfish is the man. And he's coming to visit me in a week," added Frank.

"Too long to wait," said Jimmy, shaking his head. "We are losing profits every minute. Let's telegraph him to come now. 'Do it now'—or before—is my motto."

"Good!" said Frank; "we'll telegraph to-night and offer him the job. Let's see, this is Thursday; we ought to begin our trips Monday. Yes, Monday's the best day to begin anything on. We might get started on Saturday if the Codfish comes right away."

"Did you kids ever hear tell of countin' chickens before they was hatched?" broke in the voice of Captain Silas. "You haint got the boat yit," and the old man chuckled. "But that's the way youth do run on. And then how about drivin' poor old Captain Silas Brown out of bisness with one o' them fast motor boats?"

"Oh, Captain, do you think it would hurt your trade? We wouldn't do it for the world. We'll give it up. I didn't think of that," cried the generous boys in a breath.

"Go along with you, 'twon't hurt me. I was only jokin'. There'll be more than we all can do and I'm a thinkin' you'll get tired of it pretty quick. I'll help you all I can to git hold of the old boat, but don't ever ask me to go to sea in one o' the consarned things. 'Member what happened to your old boat last year?"

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The boys looked at each other.

"You bet we do!" they exclaimed in a breath.

"But there are to be no matches aboard any boats I command in the future," cried Frank.

"Well, here we are back again," said the captain, as he brought the *Seagull*, for such was her name, up into the wind. "I'll take you off in my dinghy in a minnit."

"Thank you, Captain, for a fine sail and a brilliant idea, and we won't bother you to take us off; we have our fins," said Frank. "See you later," and one after the other the boys popped into the water like so many porpoises, and, led by Frank, swimming a graceful and easy overhand, they went ploughing up the beach in the direction of the Armstrong cottage.

"Water rats, nuthin' but derved water rats," said the old man, as his kindly eye followed the three swimmers pulling rapidly away towards the shore.

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## CHAPTER II.

### FAILURE AND A PROVIDENTIAL RESCUE.

"Dad," said Frank that night at the supper table, "we boys are going into the transportation business. Got any objection?"

"Into the what?" said Mr. Armstrong, pausing in the act of filling his healthy son's plate for the second time.

"Transportation, if you please, sir," said Frank, grinning and reaching for the full dish. "It's like this: Old Captain Silas says there are lots of people about here who want to take little cruises around the islands these fine days. That's condition No. 1."

"Condition No. 1," repeated his father, smiling. "Go on."

"And condition No. 2 is, three strong, husky, able-bodied seamen, Jimmy Turner, Lewis, and your dutiful son, who want to make some money and keep ourselves busy at the same time."

"What about Old Captain Silas himself?" inquired Mrs. Armstrong.

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"Can't he take care of all the excursionists himself? Or does he want to take you boys into partnership?"

"No, mother, this is going to be a rapid passenger service," and in a few words he outlined the plan put into his head that afternoon by the old captain's remark. "The only things we need now are a ship and a manager."

"Not much, is it?" said Mr. Armstrong, laughing. "Perhaps Colonel Powers would let you have his yacht."

"Oh, dad, I'm not joking. We are in a fair way to have both. At least we know where there's a motor boat, and the Codfish was born to be a manager of the outfit. It is providential. We'll get him here ahead of time."

"Where's your motor boat?" inquired Mrs. Armstrong, smiling indulgently at her son's eagerness.

"It is anchored down the shore a ways, belongs to Mr. Simpkins, and we're going to tackle him to-morrow. I think I can show him," added Frank, cocking his head on one side, wisely, "that there would be good money in it for him to rent it. We can charge twenty-five cents a head for all passengers. Let's see," counting on his fingers, "we ought to be able to carry half a dozen besides our crew if the boat's any size,—that'd be a dollar and a half for a trip of an hour. And we can make four or five trips a day, sure. That'd be seven dollars and fifty cents a day, and, six days a week, that'd be about forty-five dollars," triumphantly. "Running expenses ought not to be more than fifteen dollars, and that would leave thirty dollars to divvy up between the four of us." Frank's ambitions were running away with him. "And besides that, we'd have a better time than doing nothing. Can't we do it, dad?"

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"Well, I don't see any very strong objections," returned Mr. Armstrong, smiling at his wife across the table, "but if you are figuring on that boat of Mr. Simpkins' I wouldn't build my scheme too high, for it might tumble. Mr. Simpkins wouldn't probably be interested in dividends, for he has a pile of money, and, besides that, he is a pretty crusty old gentleman."

"Crusty or no crusty, we are going down to see him in the morning, provided you and mother don't say no." It was finally agreed in the family that there would be no objection.

"They will soon get tired of it, mother," said Mr. Armstrong, "and it's dollars to pins that Mr. Simpkins will set the dog on them instead of handing over his motor boat, even though he doesn't use it himself."

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"And only one thing more," cried Frank, in great glee that his parents threw no obstacle in the way of the Queen's Ferry Company. "The Codfish is coming down to make us a visit next week. Can't we have him down right away? We need his head in this big venture."

"Glad to have him come along. We would like to see this wonderful roommate of yours, wouldn't we, mother?" said Mr. Armstrong.

"Whoop!" shouted Frank, "then we'll telegraph. I'm off to meet the other officers of the company."

The result of the conference between the captain, the helmsman, and the skipper was that this telegram was dispatched to the Codfish:

"Big transportation company formed. You are elected manager. No work, big profits. Come on next train.

"(Signed) FRANK, LEWIS, JIMMY."

About the middle of the next forenoon the boys met at the Armstrong household and girt up their loins, or, in other words, nerved themselves for the negotiations with Mr. Simpkins.

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"You do the talking, Frank," said Jimmy. "You have the gift of gab. I'll guard the way and Lewis can protect us from the dog."

"Protect nothing," said Lewis. "I'm too important a member of this company to fatten any bulldogs in this neighborhood."

"If any one is to be sacrificed on this expedition, it might as well be you," retorted Jimmy. "Skippers are always the first to be sacrificed."

Bantering each other, the three boys made their way down the shore walk, and boldly ascended the path to the big yellow house where Mr. Simpkins lived in solitary grandeur. They might have retreated before this point had not they strengthened their drooping spirits with a hurried

inspection of the motor boat moored to the little pier. A long, racy-looking boat it was, lying close on the water and with every evidence of speed. The lines swept back from the bow in a graceful curve to a rather full beam at midships, and then swung in slightly as they approached the stern, ending abruptly in a square hull. The motor was covered by a rubber tarpaulin, and so they were not able to tell much about it. A generous bulk testified, however, to ample power to drive the craft at high speed. A kind of canvas awning partially protected the interior woodwork of the boat, but in spite of this the craft had a forlorn appearance.

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"She's a little the worse for weather, but she's a beauty in spite of it," exclaimed Frank, as he looked her over. "She has *The Foam* knocked galley-west," he added.

"That's a fact," was Jimmy's only comment. He thought of the poor old *Foam* lying at the bottom out in the bay there.

"Well, here goes," said Frank, and he led the way up the wide and imposing steps of the Simpkins homestead. "Here's where the Queen's Ferry Transportation Company sees the light or is buried thirty fathoms under. 'Screw up your courage to the sticking point,' as Hamlet said, and follow me." The big door opened to their ring and they stepped within in a huddled group.

Ten minutes later three dejected youths might have been seen making their way slowly towards Seawall. Disappointment was written deeply on each countenance. "He's what I call an old skinflint," said Jimmy savagely. "Didn't want the boat, wouldn't sell it, or lend it, or rent it," and he kicked an inoffensive shell out of the track.

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"A regular dog-in-the-manger," commented Lewis.

"Well, that's settled, anyway," said Frank, taking a long breath. "We've no ship, and of course we can't sail without a ship."

In their disappointment the boys hunted up Captain Silas Brown, who was hoisting his mainsail to the breeze and preparing for the prospective trippers. The old man listened to their story.

"I'll tell you what I'll do," he said. "I need some one to help me out for a day or two with this old craft. I've got a touch of the rheumatiz, and I'm not so smart as I might be."

Together they talked it all over and decided that that very afternoon the boys were to ship as able-bodied seamen. This somewhat cheered the officers of the defunct Queen's Ferry Company.

Suddenly Frank sprang up. "Great Scott, fellows, we forgot to telegraph the Codfish! No use of him coming now. Let's wire him the disaster. We don't want to get him here under false pretenses."

The three boys hurried off to the telegraph office. Arrived there, they called for a blank and Frank was just getting the sad information down in the form of a telegram, when the clerk behind the counter said: "You're the fellows who sent a message to G. W. Gleason at Yarmouth this morning?"

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"Yes."

"Well, here's an answer. It has just come in, pretty quick work that."

Frank tore the end off the yellow envelope, for it was addressed to him, and read:

"Don't care for the salary, too much money already, but the job with no work appeals to me. I'll be at Seawall to-morrow night at six o'clock if the train stays on the track.

"(Signed) THE CODFISH."

"Well, here's a pickle! But never mind, I know mother and father won't mind," said Frank. "So let him come." The Codfish was a great favorite with the three, in spite of his sharp tongue and rather unusual ways. They were not sorry that he was coming.

That afternoon our trio reported to Captain Silas Brown just as he was making up his party of voyagers at the end of Seawall pier. It turned out to be a gallant sailing day. A steady wind blew from the southwest, making the *Seagull* dance merrily alongside the float to which the captain had drawn her to take on his passengers, of whom there were an unusually large number, attracted probably by the fair prospects for the afternoon. They were mostly women and children, and the three new

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assistants made themselves very useful at lending a hand as the passengers stepped into the rocking sloop. Soon all were aboard and the mooring ropes were cast off. The sloop moved swiftly away down the bay under the guidance of Captain Silas on what proved to be an eventful voyage. The day was a glorious one, and the wind strong enough to heel the *Seagull* over till her bright green underbody showed well above the water on the windward side. Every now and then a stronger puff of wind laid the *Seagull* so far over that her lee side was buried under the foaming water. But the passengers had confidence in the steady hand of Captain Silas, and chatted merrily, for the cockpit was protected from wave tops by a high wooden edge, and there was apparently no danger. The occasional dash of spray which came aboard was just enough to add zest to the outing, and the passengers enjoyed the lively dance of the sloop over the rolling water.



FRANK TURNED JUST IN TIME TO SEE A FLASH OF WHITE  
DISAPPEARING BENEATH THE SURFACE.—[Page 27.](#)

All of a sudden, when rounding the point off High Island, there came a violent blast of wind which plucked the hat from the head of a little girl who had sat all the while very quietly with her maid on the leeward side of the sloop. She jumped to her feet, made a desperate grab for the flying head-covering, lost her balance, and pitched head first into the water. She was lost to sight in an instant, a big wave breaking over her head as she went down.

At the scream of the maid, Frank, who had been standing on the little deck forward with one arm around the mast, turned just in time to see a flash of white disappearing beneath the surface.

"She is drowned! She is drowned!" screamed the maid, jumping to her feet and wringing her hands wildly. "Oh, she's drowned!" The other women in the boat began to scream and point to the place where the little girl had gone down.

With Frank, to think was to act. Without waiting to throw off any clothes, he made a flying leap for the spot where he had last seen the white dress; but so great had been the momentum of the boat, that when he struck the water he was some yards away from the spot. Hampered as he was with his clothes and hindered by the breaking waves, he swam desperately, using his most powerful strokes. Before he could cover the distance he saw a white sleeve and the top of a head appear above the surface for an instant and disappear immediately. Half a dozen strokes carried him to the place, but the drowning girl had gone down for the second time.

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For a few moments only, Frank paddled around waiting for the child to come to the surface. He had heard that a drowning person comes to the surface three times. "I won't risk it," he said to himself. "She may never come up again, and the water must be deep here." He stopped swimming, turned his back to the waves, took a deep breath, and dived straight for the bottom.

How cold and strange it felt, and how quiet after the tumult he had left above him! The impulse of his dive soon ended, and yet there was no bottom, so he began to swim straight downward. His eyes were open and he could see quite plainly within a radius of ten feet. Straining his eyes, he looked into the gloomy depths as he swam. What was that gleam of white far below him? It must be the girl's dress. How his head cracked with the pressure of the water, but on he went downward, ever downward. He was below the clear light, but the thought that he was nearing the drowning child gave him the power of a grown man. He swam on almost blindly, and with the strength of despair, because he knew it was the only chance to save a life. In the blackness of the depths he lost the gleam of white, then recovered it, lost it again, and after two or three strokes touched something which felt like seaweed. His hand closed instinctively, although he could see nothing now, and he realized with a great feeling of joy that it was the child's hair which had floated upward. He wound his hand securely in it, and struck madly for the surface with splitting head and bursting lungs.

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It could only have been a few seconds, but to Frank it seemed an eternity before his head bobbed into the clear sunlight and he was able to take a great gulping breath. He felt as weak as a baby, but he had strength enough to pull his burden to the surface and turn on his back.

"Good boy," said a voice behind him. "Let me take her. Look out for yourself." Frank turned his head and saw Jimmy at his elbow. He resigned the little girl, who showed no signs of life, to his friend, and lay panting on the surface, the water breaking over him every now and then. He had barely strength left to work his hands fin-like to keep afloat, while Captain Silas maneuvered the sloop back to the spot where the two boys were struggling in the water. Soon life buoys were thrown out to them, and a minute later the sloop, with her head to the wind and her mainsail snapping and cracking, lay close alongside.

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In a jiffy the unconscious girl, Frank, and Jimmy were pulled aboard the boat, where Frank lay gasping like a fish out of water. Well acquainted with and skilled in the methods of resuscitation, the old captain worked over the little girl, who lay as limp as a rag on the deck while the maid wept hysterically and several of the other women cried in sympathy.

"Ding bust it," cried the old man at last, "what ye crying about? She's not drowned, I tell ye. She's coming to." And the captain was right. First there was a little quiver of the eyelids, then a faint sigh from her lips, and finally a soft moan.



"Thank God!" said the captain. "The pore little girl will be all right in a few minutes. But I say, it was a narrow squeak. Frank Armstrong, you deserve the Carnegie medal for that same trick."

Frank was on his feet again, and, although white and a little sick, he was able to help Jimmy with the tiller, while the captain kept up his ministrations to the little girl, who opened her eyes at last and looked about her.

"You'll be sound as a dollar in half an hour," said the captain, as he finally turned her over to the maid, who had by this time quieted down. Captain Silas went aft and took the tiller from the boys.

"That was a good turn you did for old man Simpkins," he observed. "That's his little girl you saved from a watery death. Guess he'll feel different about that motor boat now," and the old captain smiled grimly.

Before the *Seagull* reached the dock the participators in what had nearly been a tragedy were rapidly recovering. Frank was still wobbly on his legs, but quickly recovered his spirits. "Thank you, old man," he said to Jimmy as they disembarked. "If it hadn't been for you, both of us would have gone down. I didn't have the strength to keep even myself up and I wouldn't have let her go down alone." The two friends gave a silent pressure of the hand.

"It was nothing," said Jimmy. "I went after you as quickly as I could. It seemed to me you were down fully five minutes, and I had about given you up when your head bobbed through the surface."

"Seemed to me I was down about an hour, and I guess I must have been fifteen or twenty feet under when I got her. But it's all over now, and I'm glad."

The gallant rescue was the talk of Seawall that night. Captain Silas sat at the end of the pier with a group around him, and Frank's daring deed lost nothing by the captain's telling. But Frank was silent on the matter himself and denied that he had done anything to talk about. From him, his father and mother could only get the bare facts that he had jumped overboard and pulled in a little girl who had had the bad luck to fall into the water.

## CHAPTER III.

### QUEEN'S TRANSPORTATION COMPANY.

The six o'clock train the next night brought with it the Codfish in all his glory. He was radiant in a natty gray flannel suit, and sported a lavender tie and socks to match, with a dash of the same color in his hat band.

"Welcome to our city, Codfish!" shouted Frank, who with Jimmy and Lewis had been at the station long before the train from the north was due.

"Gentlemen," returned that individual as he descended mincingly from the parlor car, while a porter dragged two great suit-cases stuffed to bursting after him, "I am charmed with this reception. But where's the band?"

"The only one I see," said Jimmy laughingly, "is the one on your hat, and it sounds like a flock of trombones. Don't you know you are liable to shock these sedate villagers with that raiment of yours? You might be arrested as a disturber of the peace."

"You see in me not a shocker," replied the visitor, "but the great animator. Business will pick up as soon as I am well established in your rural midst. Children cry for me and all that sort of thing. But what's this job you have for me?"

"Oh, I'm sorry to say it's all off. We were about to telegraph you again to stay where you were, when we had your message saying you were coming."

"All right, I'll take the next train back."

"You'll take nothing back for about three weeks. We'll tell you what we had up our sleeve. Here, Jones"—to the village expressman—"take

these miniature trunks down to my father's house," said Frank. "We'll walk, if you feel able to take so much exercise, Mr. Gleason."

"Not used to it, of course, but I'll make an exception this time. Now, fire away on this scheme of yours."

As they trudged along, Frank, aided by Jimmy and occasionally by Lewis, told of the conception and the smash of the scheme. "But never mind," he added, "we can find enough to do. We'll teach you to swim like a fish——"

"No, you won't. I'm not a fish in spite of my name. I will fight before I'll swim, and goodness knows I'd hate to fight, for it's most exhausting."

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The boys all laughed at the whimsical Codfish, for they all knew that he wasn't half so backward in athletic things as he tried to persuade them that he was.

"Hello," said Frank, giving a whistle of surprise as he approached the house. "We have company. By crickets, it is—it is Mr. Simpkins! Now, I wonder if his little girl hasn't got over her ducking yet."

"Principal people of the village here undoubtedly to welcome me," said the Codfish. "'Spose I'll have to make a speech and all that sort of thing. Beastly bore; you shouldn't have let them know I was coming."

By this time Frank had mounted the steps of the house. "This is my son Frank, Mr. Simpkins," said Mr. Armstrong.

Frank came forward and received a hearty handclasp from Mr. Simpkins. "My boy," said the latter, "when you were at my house this morning, I little thought that I'd have to thank you for saving my daughter's life. I do thank you from the bottom of my heart, and I want to ask your pardon for my seeming bluntness this morning."

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"Oh, that was all right, sir. I happened to be handy to-day and helped to pull the little girl out of the water. That was all. And as for the motor boat, it was a matter of business and we couldn't come to terms. No one's fault."

Mr. Simpkins smiled at the businesslike youngster who talked so clearly to the point. "Well, I appreciate your quality more now than I did this morning, and I've come up not only to thank you, but to tell you that the motor boat you want is yours."

"Oh, I couldn't think of taking it! I did nothing to earn it," said Frank, much embarrassed by the kindly tone and offer.

"Now I insist," said the visitor. "The boat is doing me no good whatsoever, and you might as well have it. It belonged to a son of mine who is gone, and I haven't had the heart to let it be used or even to sell it. In view of the obligation you have placed me under, my boy, I can square things with you partially, at least, by giving you the boat. It has not been used much and I'm sure it is in good condition. If it is not in good condition, I'll put it that way, so you can begin your transportation, as you call it, at once."

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"I'm awfully much obliged," said Frank, "but it's too much of a gift for what I did. Won't you let us buy it from you?" There was a sound of muffled protest from the boys at the other end of the veranda where they had withdrawn, although still within earshot of the conversation that was going on.

"The boy is right, Mr. Simpkins, it is too much of a gift," said Mr. Armstrong. "I think his argument is good."

"Well, then," said Mr. Simpkins, turning again to Frank, "make me an offer. I'm willing to sell to you and in some way discharge some of my debt. You are willing to buy, I think you said this morning."

"Yes, sir, but I'm afraid it would cost too much for us."

"I don't know," said the old gentleman; "the boat's not doing me any good. Let's see; I'd sell her for a hundred dollars and put her in running shape. How's that? And you can pay me half of that amount at the end of this summer and the other half a year later. Will you take her?"

There was a murmur of approval at the other end of the veranda, and Frank, as soon as he could find his voice, exclaimed: "You bet we'll take her! I mean—thank you, sir; we will take her on those conditions." Mr. Simpkins smiled slyly at Mr. Armstrong, who, being later appealed to by his son, readily gave his consent to the deal, adding, "And I'll back Frank and his chums in this venture."

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"I can already see that I'm dealing with a young man who will make good his word," said Mr. Simpkins. "And now I must be going. I'll have a

man look over the boat to-morrow morning, and if everything is all right with the engine you can take possession at once. I'll have my man show you how to run her, but I imagine it won't take you long to learn. Good night, all."

You can readily imagine the jubilee that took place when Mr. Simpkins was out of hearing. The four boys grabbed each other and danced a wild Highland fling. Mr. and Mrs. Armstrong looked on laughing as the boys thumped each other on the back and shouted.

"Boys, boys, you won't leave a board in the veranda, and the neighbors will think you've taken leave of your senses," admonished Mrs. Armstrong. "And, anyway, it's time for supper, and Mr. Gleason must be hungry after his long ride."

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"Dear old mum, you would dance, too, wouldn't you, if you had just bought a ship for a song, same as we have? Here, salute the captain of the new Transportation Company!" His mother slipped her arm over her son's shoulder and kissed him gravely on the cheek: "Thus I salute Captain Armstrong."

"That's the best salute ever, mother. Better than twenty-one guns in the navy."

"And where do we come in, in these salutes," said the Codfish. "Aren't we important members of the company?"

"I could kiss you all, to-day," said the motherly woman; "I'm so happy for your sakes. But there goes the bell. We'll have something more substantial than salutes."

There was great planning at that supper of passenger carrying, swimming, racing and the like, things that all energetic boys on a summer vacation would enjoy.

"If David were only here our party would be complete," said Jimmy.

"And where is he?" inquired Gleason.

"We hope he'll be in Seawall next month. He is in Europe now," returned Frank; "and we will keep our purchase a secret from him at present. When he gets back we will suddenly burst on his vision in all our glory."

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"Good old David," said Jimmy; "won't he be glad? We can take him along as member of the crew. He'd make a ripping coxswain."

"I don't know what a coxswain has to do, but he'd be all right for any job," said Lewis.

"And with all this crew you propose," said Mr. Armstrong, "where are you going to put your passengers?"

"Oh, don't worry about that, Dad; she's a big boat. Wait till you see her. Are you willing to advance us running expenses for gasoline and oil till we get our first money on fares?"

"Provided it isn't more than a hundred dollars a day," returned his father, laughing.

The next morning was spent down at the Simpkins wharf with the mechanic. There was little to do. The motor was one of the best types, but while it had been idle it had acquired some rust. The pistons stuck hard in the cylinders for a time, but they were soon freed and the engine turned over as smoothly as the day it left the shop. When the batteries were renewed, the carburetor adjusted and the gas and oil tanks filled, the mechanic gave the fly wheel a sharp turn. Instantly there was an explosion; another and another followed, and as the motor picked up speed under the careful manipulation of the mechanic, the explosions from the exhaust settled down into a steady purr.

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"That's a peach of an engine," said Frank to the mechanic. "How much speed do you think the boat has?"

"Dunno," replied the mechanic; "mebby twenty miles, mebby more. Don't think there's many around here that'll get away from her very much. Now we're ready to see how she goes."

The ropes which fastened the motor boat to the pier were thrown off and slowly the craft was backed from her berth.

"Take the wheel," said the mechanic, indicating Frank, "and I'll look after the motor. We'll see what she can do."

Frank sprang to the wheel and after a little maneuvering headed her down the bay. "She steers like a bicycle," he cried. "Gee whiz, isn't it great?"

As the speed increased, the boat lifted her nose clear out of the water under the push from the powerful motor, and a white-capped wave rolled away from either side. They passed several sailing boats that seemed almost motionless by contrast. Frank ranged up alongside another motor boat bound in the same direction and soon left it in the distance. Then, after a long, sweeping turn, he headed back to the wharf, where Mr. Simpkins stood.

"She's all right, I see," said that gentleman, "and evidently hasn't lost her speed."

"I should say she hadn't," said Frank. "We went like an express train. Are you sure you still want to hold to your bargain, Mr. Simpkins?"

"Oh, yes; I'm glad my old boat has fallen into such appreciative hands. Maybe I'll take a ride with you, when you have begun your ferry service. She isn't as handsome as she was before the weather got at her sides, but a lick of paint here and there will repair all the damage."

"If our profits are big enough, we can lay her up this winter and give her a new dress," suggested Jimmy; "but there's no time now."

"If you are satisfied that you can run her," continued Mr. Simpkins, "and she is ready, there's no reason you can't take her now. What do you say?"

"Say? Why, we say yes, if you don't mind. We can be getting used to her before we begin to make business runs. How about it, mates?" said Frank, turning to his crew.

Of course the crew were of one mind. The mechanic was landed on the pier, and under the hands of her new crew, the *Black Duck*, for that was the name of the craft, shot once more into the sparkling waters of the bay. This time Jimmy was at the wheel and Frank manipulated the motor.

Halfway to the Seawall pier the boys met the *Seagull*, with a party aboard. Jimmy swung in close and the crew of the motor boat gave such a yell as startled the old salt at the tiller of the *Seagull*.

"Well, I'll be swizzled," they heard him say as they flashed by, and turning, with his arm on the tiller, he waved a friendly hand as they dashed on.

Before the day was over the boys had familiarized themselves thoroughly with their new possession, and the farther they went the more wonderful did they consider their luck in having such a craft.

The next morning the town of Seawall was startled in its morning walk by notices posted conspicuously as follows:

QUEEN'S TRANSPORTATION COMPANY.

A marvellous opportunity  
to see the magnificent scenery  
of Seawall Bay by motor boat.

Roomy accommodations.

Courteous attendants.

Every convenience.

For the small sum

of 25 cents.

Start made from Seawall Pier every hour.

First trip 10 a. m. to-day.

Per order

BOARD OF DIRECTORS.

The notice was prepared by the ready pen of the Codfish, and it was given an added interest by a slap-dash drawing of a motor boat coasting down the side of a big wave, while little fishes and big fishes stood on their tails in astonishment. Of course, every one who read went down to the pier at the hour named, and the young navigators started out on their first trip with every seat taken. During the trip the Codfish acted as a kind of guide to the party and pointed out the "magnificent scenery," adding many fictitious details as the *Black Duck* plowed along. The passengers, when landed at the starting point after an hour's trip, voted it the best ride they had ever taken and made way for a new boatload.

It was a day of rushing business for the new company, and the profits before nightfall came to something over ten dollars.

## BURTON'S ARRIVAL.

This first day of business was the index of many days to come, and the money rolled in rapidly. "A little while more, fellows, and we will own half of her," said the captain, as they laid up to the pier one fine day waiting for passengers.

"Which half, Captain," inquired the Codfish; "bow or stern?"

"Never mind which," returned Frank. "You keep on with your superb management and we will have a property here worth while. Here comes another load for us. There's about two dollars in this for us. Hustle up, my hearties, and be ready to lend a hand, Fatty." This to Lewis, who never disturbed himself unless under orders. Lewis crawled laboriously over the gunwale onto the float.

"Well, well, well," said a young man of the party who had just come upon the float. "If my eyes do not deceive me, the captain of that ocean-going motor boat is none other than my old friend, Frank Armstrong!"

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Frank, who had been fussing with the motor, raised his head. "Mr. Burton!" he exclaimed. "Glad to see you! I didn't know you were around here."

"I can say the same to you. How long have you been a navigator?" he added, as the party of young folks climbed aboard. "And there's Jimmy and your little fat friend. My, this is quite a reunion. Arrived only a day or two ago."

The boys grinned their pleasure at the meeting.

"Do any swimming now?" said Burton as the boat got under way.

"Oh, yes, we take the mornings for that. We do a little in athletics up at Queen's School and we're kept in training, especially for football."

"Oh, yes, you are a Freshman up there."

"No, we are in our second year," said Jimmy proudly.

"I beg your pardon," said Burton, laughing; "it is hard to be taken for a Freshman when you've got away beyond that unhappy period. Now, it is fortunate, Frank, you've kept up your swimming, because I want you to come down to Turner's Point next week and show some of those fellows how we used to swim down in Florida. Can you come?"

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"Can't leave my transportation job very well," replied Frank.

"Oh, hang your transportation job! There will be no one to transport that day. Every one will be down to the carnival. You know what a crowd we had last year, and it's going to be a bigger affair than ever. There'll be lots of people to come down from Seawall. Why don't you run a special excursion, swim in the meet and take your crowd back home in the evening? There you are, business and pleasure combined."

"Sounds good to me," said Frank. "How about it for you, Jimmy, and you, Codfish and Lewis?"

"Oh, come along," said Burton. "I'll put you down, Frank, in the hundred-yard race or anything you want to go in for. They've made me master of ceremonies again. And you will be interested to know that your old rival, Peters, is back at the Point and swimming better than ever. He's been practicing, he told me, hoping for the chance to get back at you. Don't you want to take another fall out of him?"

Frank's eyes brightened. "I wouldn't mind," he added slowly. "I'm stronger than I was a year ago, but I don't know that I've improved the stroke you taught me."

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"I'm sure it's all right," said the buoyant Burton. "I'll come up tomorrow morning and see what you've been doing in the way of speed, and after looking you and Jimmy over I can tell the distance you can swim best. Is it a go?"

"It's a go for me," said Frank.

"Me, too," said Jimmy.

"Ditto," said Lewis.

"And how about Mr. Gleason?" said Burton.

"The Codfish, in spite of his name, hates the water except in the bathtub," said Jimmy. "But he'd be a fine scorer, eh, Codfish?"

"Anything the captain says is good enough for me," said the Codfish. "He's the boss. I'm on a salary and under orders."

"Well, you can be an ornament to the stake boat, or the float, or anywhere you want to be. It's settled that you are to come?" said Burton.

The boys nodded. Burton went back to his party and the boys gave their attention wholly to navigation to the end of the trip.

"Don't forget, now; I'm going to be up your way in the morning. Be all ready in your suits," Burton called back over his shoulder, as with his friends he left the Seawall pier.

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Next morning the boys met early at the old swimming place and were splashing about trying various strokes, when Burton's black head showed in the water a quarter of a mile off shore.

"By the great horn spoon," said Jimmy, "there he is, swimming up, and it's nearly a mile from the Point."

"He must be a wonder," said the Codfish; "I wouldn't take all that exercise if you were to give me the *Black Duck* and all her feathers. But there's no accounting for tastes. I'm overcome thinking how much energy he is wasting." The Codfish was perched on a dry bit of rock. His raiment was as immaculate as ever, but the tone of it was pink this morning.

"Hello, boys," shouted Burton as he approached. "Ready, I see. Now," as he pulled himself up on the rocks, "I want to see what you've accomplished since I saw you. In with you, Frank."

Frank plunged into the water and swam a little distance, using the crawl stroke to the best of his ability, while Burton observed him closely.

"Tisn't quite right. Look," and the coach dived off the rock and shot over to Frank. "You ought to bring your hand clear out of the water. Don't reach too far and don't let it go too deep; just like a paddle, you remember. Your leg kick is good. Get your arms right and there will be nothing to it."

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Frank tried to follow the instructions as well as he could, and his efforts pleased his instructor, who shouted from his perch on the rock to which he had returned: "Fine, fine, that's the way; now only one breath to half a dozen strokes; you waste too much time breathing."

"Same as me," commented the Codfish from his perch.

Frank finished his lesson, and Jimmy and Lewis were sent in for some instruction. Burton began to call for the crawl stroke, but both boys confessed they had never been able to learn it very well. They disliked burying their faces in the water, and so got along much better with the old overhand and breast strokes.

Burton tried to show them just how it was done, and was in the water and out of it half a dozen times coaching, but neither of the swimmers caught the idea.

"Well, never mind, let it go to-day and swim me a hundred yards, the three of you. Frank, you take the crawl, and let the other two use what they want to. Get ready, go!"

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The boys splashed into the water each in his different way, Frank easy and graceful, Jimmy determined but rather clumsy, and Lewis like a walrus.

"See how Frank pulls away from them," said Burton, now left alone with the Codfish. "That boy is a wonder in the water. Why, they're not any match for him at all, and only last year both of them could beat him. That's what comes of sticking to a thing. Frank was determined to learn that stroke and he got it. The others thought there was nothing in it and didn't try hard."

The swimmers reached the other side of the little rocky inlet and were heading back towards the starting point, with Frank well in the lead, but he slowed up and finished easily, while the others pulled themselves up on the rocks almost exhausted.

"We're no match for Frank at all," said Jimmy, puffing. "He has a motor attached to him somewhere."

"It is the motor of perseverance, my son," said Burton. "You would do better in a long race, I think. Did you ever swim an eighth of a mile—the 220 yards?"

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"Yes, but not in a race," answered Jimmy.

"You'll be as good as any of the rest of them at the distance, so I'll put

you down for the 220 race. And Lewis, we'll put him in for the plunge."

"What's that?" said Lewis.

"Just like this," and suiting the action to the word Burton sprang from his rock, put his hands before him as he flew through the air, struck the water cleanly as a knife, and after disappearing a moment from view came to the top floating. His body traveled rapidly forward in a straight line, arms and legs held rigidly extended and the face buried. Fifty feet from the rock, when his momentum had about ended, he turned over on his back and raced back to the starting point. "That's the way you do it," he said, as he climbed up, shaking the water out of his hair. "Let's see you try it, Lewis."

"It's easy," said Lewis, and took the dive. He landed flat as a pancake, nearly knocking all the breath out of his body, stretched out his arms and legs, as he had seen Burton do, but didn't move five feet from the point where he struck the water. After lying on his face and imagining himself traveling forward, he looked up, disgusted, to note what little progress he had made, only to see his companions howling with laughter.

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"Isn't so easy as it looks, is it?" said Burton. "But keep at it." He illustrated again, and Lewis, after one or two attempts, readily caught the idea. As there was no work to the job of plunging, he took a fancy to it, and before the morning's coaching was over was doing pretty well.

"There," said Burton finally, jumping up, "that's all the time I can give you this morning. All of you work every morning, but don't do too much. You have a week before the meet comes off. See you later."

"Can't we come a little way with you?" said Frank.

"Sure, glad to have you," and Frank and Jimmy took the water with Burton. They headed out clear of the rocks and turned down the shore at a distance of perhaps a hundred yards from land. Lewis and the Codfish walked leisurely down the sand, watching the three heads as they bobbed along in the waves.

"You ought to take every chance you can get," said Burton, as the three swam easily side by side, "to swim longer distances. There's no telling how handy it might come in, supposing you were pitched off a boat some day. The way to do, is to take it easy like we are now and use all your strokes. When you get tired with one, take another. That change rests you almost as much as stopping. Use one arm over first, and then another," illustrating as he went along, "and if you get very tired, turn over on your back and float a while with your hands well over your head like this." Again he illustrated.

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The three swam on for two or three hundred yards, the boys drinking in the instruction of the expert and trying to put into practice all that he was telling them. Little did they think that they would need all and more than they were able to show in the way of strength and endurance in a short time.

"Well, good-by, boys; I've got to make time now," shouted Burton. "Maybe I'll see you before the meet, but if I don't, remember it is Thursday week at four o'clock. Be sure to come," and he was gone in a cloud of spray kicked up by his arms and legs as he started on his long swim down the shore.

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"Good-by," echoed both boys, and with quickened pace they drew toward the shore and soon joined Lewis and the Codfish.

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## CHAPTER V.

### THE WATER CARNIVAL.

Business still held good, and less than two weeks after the Queen's Ferry began its traffic there was money enough in the treasury to pay all running expenses and leave enough for the first installment of fifty dollars for Mr. Simpkins.

"It isn't due until the end of the summer," said Frank, "but we might as well pay it, and there's five dollars over for Captain Silas. That's for the idea."

"And please, sir, where does the crew come in?" inquired the Codfish.

The boys were all seated on the veranda of the Armstrong home. After dinner, with paper and pencil they had gone over their daily earnings, with the result that the decision to pay up had been made. All voted unanimously.

"Oh, you will get your reward by and by. Isn't it enough to have such company as ours without pay?" queried Lewis.

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"Say, Codfish," said Jimmy, "that poster of yours was a dandy." He referred to the one that the Codfish had spent the greater part of the day before preparing, and it was the announcement of the special excursion to Turner's Point on Thursday. The Codfish had put his best efforts on the work, and, like the others that had preceded it, it was embellished with drawings illustrating the coming carnival.

"Codfish is a genius and no mistake," laughed Frank. "This outfit wouldn't be anywhere without him, and when the season is over we will vote him double pay."

"I was brought here under false pretenses," said that individual in what he tried to make an aggrieved tone. "Your telegram said: 'No work, big pay,' and since I arrived I've done nothing but work and haven't seen a red cent."

"Just a telegraph operator's mistake, I guess," said Frank. "Perhaps we wired you 'Big work, no pay'—wasn't that it, Jimmy?"

"Sure it was—something like that. But the Codfish enjoys working for love. He has too much money already; he said so himself."

"What time does your excursion start to-morrow?" inquired Mrs. Armstrong.

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"Three o'clock, sharp," was Frank's answer. "We take a holiday to-morrow so as to be ready for the big meet."

"Do you suppose you could take mother and me along if we pay regular fare?" inquired Mr. Armstrong, stepping up behind them.

"Pay nothing," said Jimmy and the boys in a breath. "We'll take you as a super-cargo."

"I'm afraid of your speedy boat," said Mrs. Armstrong. "John, we will ride down on the trolley car."

"Do come with us, mum; we will take care of you, and it will be more fun than a trolley. It's nearly a mile down there, and besides you will have a great place to watch from the boat. Come along," Frank pleaded.

The result was that Mr. and Mrs. Armstrong agreed to go down to the Point in the *Black Duck*. That night all turned in early, but Frank's slumbers were broken by dreams of the black head of a swimmer that he could not quite overtake bobbing along in front of him. The head looked singularly like that of his old rival Peters.

At three o'clock next day Frank had the great honor of assisting his mother and father to their places in the *Black Duck*. Captain Silas had already started off with his boat loaded to the gunwale with people from Seawall whose destination was the water carnival at Turner's Point, and, thanks to the wonderful and enticing posters that the Codfish had prepared, there were twice as many people on the dock to go down in the motor boat as could be accommodated.

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"Show your business instincts, Frank; give up the swim this afternoon and make a double trip to the Point. I hate to see the Queen's Ferry lose so many good dollars. Peters will lick you, anyway," said the Codfish.

"He will, like a duck," retorted Jimmy, who for once thought that the Codfish was in earnest.

"No," said Frank, "this is a holiday. We made our first payment this morning and there are other days to work in. This is an outing."

When the *Black Duck* arrived at Turner's Point the whole place was alive with color and movement. Scores of rowboats were drawn up alongside the hundred-yard course that had been laid out by Burton, between two floats. Sailboats with their mainsails down and jibs stowed, lay at anchor a little farther away. Crowds of the people of the Point were on the water front and all was expectancy. Frank edged his boat in toward the public float and discharged his passengers.

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"Mother, there are so many boats here that I think you and father better come and sit in the stand, where you can have a better view. We will make fast the *Black Duck* here."

"It would be better," said Mr. Armstrong. So the party threaded their



way to the stand, which was built on the long pier, and took places there.

"Now, since you are all comfy," said Frank, "I'll be off and see when my race comes. I may not be back again. Don't get excited and fall off, mother," he warned. And he darted away. "Good luck to you, son," his father called after him. He turned and waved his hand, and hurried along to the dressing room.

Like all water carnivals, the first events were of minor character. A sack race in which the swimmers were encased in a bag up to the waist caused endless mirth as, hampered by the bag which did not allow them the use of their legs, they floundered along, struggling and splashing. Then came an obstacle race in which the swimmers had to climb over obstacles placed in the course. Some did not try to climb, but dived underneath, and were declared out of the race for fouling. Others attempted to climb and fell back into the water with a splash.

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Then came the first real trial of skill, the preliminaries of the hundred-yard race. There were so many entries that three heats had to be run off, four in a heat, the first two to qualify. Peters was drawn for the first trial, Frank noticed. He watched his rival keenly as the first four took the water, and saw with a little sinking of the heart that the tall, slender Peters was far and away better than his competitors. He swam a powerful trudgeon stroke, which carried him rapidly and easily. Peters did not spurt. He did not have to, but finished easily in the lead of his nearest competitor by ten feet; and, instead of getting upon the float at the far end of the course, just to show that he was not exhausted he swung around and came back at even a faster clip than he had held in the race. As he pulled himself up on the float, he gave Frank a glance from under his heavy brows, but did not show that he recognized him.

"That's the lad for my money," observed a bystander. "Did you see how easy he won that trial?"

"He's the best here, I guess," said a companion. "There's a fellow here called Armstrong, but I don't think he has any business with Peters. That fellow's a cracker-jack," and they both gazed after the lad with admiration. Frank heard, but said nothing. His friends were with him, Jimmy in a natty bathing suit, Lewis still in his regular street clothes, for the plunge did not come till later, and the Codfish in immaculate flannels with flowing blue tie and socks to match.

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In a minute the next four were sent off in a nip-and-tuck race, at the end of which the announcer bawled out:

"Second trial goes to Hatch, with Burley second!" Hatch also swam back to the float, as had Peters, and was helped out by the latter, who complimented him on his winning the trial. Frank noticed that the two swimmers, as they walked to the dressing room, cast a glance in his direction. They were speaking in low tones.

"They're great pals, those two," said one of the nearby spectators.

"And they're hatching up something for you, Frank," said Jimmy in a whisper. "I don't like the looks of either of them."

"Guess not," returned Frank. "Here we go," he added as the third trial was called.

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"Take it easy," admonished Burton, as Frank balanced on the edge of the float and waited for the signal to go.

"Bang!" went the pistol. Frank was rather slow in getting off, while his three competitors were almost ahead of the pistol. One of them did indeed beat the pistol, but as he dropped back before the first fifty yards had been covered, no attention was paid to the incident by the referee. Swimming easily, Frank was within touching distance of the leading man twenty-five yards from the finish line. But he did not exert himself very much. He let the leader work hard, being satisfied with second place, which was just as good as first, for both first and second qualified to enter the finals.

When it was announced that Bates had won the heat with Armstrong second, there was a great commotion among the members of the Armstrong family on the stand. "Oh, dear, wasn't it too bad that Frank couldn't win?" said Mrs. Armstrong, disappointment on every line of her face.

Her husband chuckled. "Don't be worried, Sarah, that's only a preliminary. Second place gives him a chance to swim in the final trial." Mrs. Armstrong was comforted. "He was saving himself, I think," said the father.

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Frank swam the few yards to the shore and walked slowly down the beach. He was met by Codfish and Lewis, who excitedly inquired why he didn't take first place. Frank only smiled. "What did you want me to do," he said; "tire myself out?"

"He did exactly right," said the astute Codfish. "His real race is coming with Peters a little later."

Meantime the exhibition of high diving had begun from a tower built on the outer edge of the pier, with platforms jutting out every ten feet up to the height of forty-five feet, the lowest one being five feet above the water. From these varying platforms an expert gave a series of dazzling evolutions—somersaults, back dives, swan dives, and finally a double somersault from the very top platform, which made the ladies scream with apprehension. But the diver struck the water like an arrow and bobbed up instantly, waving a joyful hand to the crowd.

As soon as the diving was over the 220 race was called, with six entries, among them Jimmy. At the outset he lagged behind and seemed to be hopelessly out of the race, but, urged on by the cries of his Seawall friends, he got his second wind when half the distance was over and began to pull up on the leaders. One by one he overtook and passed them until only one was left ahead of him. For the last twenty yards it was a scramble between these two, but Jimmy's hand shot out and touched the float a fraction of a second ahead.

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During the excitement that followed on the float, a boat was rowed rapidly over from the side of the course, containing among others a stout lady, who wore an enormous picture hat. Even at a distance it could be seen that she was rather clumsy looking. Her hands were covered by coarse cotton gloves and her face was concealed by a white veil. Evidently it was the intention of the rowers to land her on the swimmers' float. In a moment the rowboat drew alongside the float.

Every one was watching the strange maneuvers of the boat and laughing at its queer occupant as it drew up to the float. There was much wondering as to what the lady could want. As the boat touched the edge of the float she stood up awkwardly and put one foot on the float, pushing with the other one in the boat to help herself up. Of course, you all know what happened. The boat, instead of giving her the support she desired, shot away with her vigorous push. The queer woman lost her balance, toppled over backward, fell with a resounding crash into the water and sank, cotton gloves and all.

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Immediately there was a cry from the spectators, and Lewis, who happened to be standing nearest, without thought of his clothes, went over after her like a hero. Almost immediately he appeared clutching something desperately. It was the skirt of the drowning woman. How he pulled to save her from a watery grave! But he pulled too savagely, for the skirt was left in his hands, and the woman sank like a stone. Then the feather on that gorgeous picture hat came into view. Lewis grabbed at the hat. That, too, came away in his hand, and he threw it on the float, debating with himself whether or not he would go to the bottom after her, as Frank had dived a few days before for the drowning girl. He thought it strange that no one of all those swimmers came to help him, but he had been trying so desperately to do his duty that he had not looked up. A roar of laughter now caused him to look, and to his amazement every one on the float was convulsed, holding their sides and swaying back and forth.

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Just then, right alongside him, bobbed up the round and smiling face of Bunny Taylor, the fattest boy of the Point. A bedraggled wig of long hair floated out behind him and one cotton-gloved hand grabbed the side of the float. Then the truth dawned on Lewis. He had been the victim of a hoax. It wasn't a woman at all who had fallen overboard. He climbed out of the water and dashed for the dressing room while the crowd laughed and shouted.

"Poor old Lewis," said Frank, chasing after him. "It was too bad you were so near. That is one of the regular tricks at a water carnival. Some one made up as a woman falls overboard, and sometimes an innocent and unsuspecting bystander, not on the inside, jumps in and rescues the drowning 'lady.' It's hard luck that it was you."

Lewis was almost in tears. "I certainly must have looked like a goat, jumping in after that galoot."

"You were a hero," said the Codfish, who had followed, "a real out-and-out first-class hero. If she hadn't been the most elusive woman in the world, you would have saved her for sure. But it's always safer to grab

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them by the neck than by the skirt; always remember that, Lewis."

"Oh, shut up," said Lewis, still ruffled. "I only wish it had been you, you walking advertisement for a gents' furnishing store!"

"I tell you what you can do to even up with this crowd—go out and win the plunge," said Frank, comforting him. "You can do it, and then they won't have the laugh on you. Hurry up, there's the first call for the event."

Lewis got out of his wet street clothes, put on his water costume and walked rather sheepishly out on the float. There he was greeted with such a storm of cheers and hand-clapping that he forgot his chagrin and fell into a better humor—so good a humor, indeed, that he went determinedly at the work in hand and won the event by a clean five feet from the best plunger that Turner's Point could offer.

"Bully boy," said Burton, as Lewis passed him on the float, headed for the dressing room. "You turned the tables on them." Whereat Lewis grinned more broadly than ever.

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## CHAPTER VI.

### AN OLD RIVAL'S STRATAGEM.

The great event of the day, the finals of the hundred yards' swim, was reserved for the last. All the other events were over and every one was looking eagerly forward to the trial of speed between Frank Armstrong and Peters, for every one who had watched the early heats in this event knew that it lay between these two for first place. It was Seawall against the Point, or even more than that, for Peters was one of the best swimmers at the school he attended in New York City. It was then Seawall against the country! No wonder excitement ran high.

"All ready for the finals in the hundred yards' swim," shouted the referee through his megaphone. Out of their dressing rooms ran the six swimmers and lined up on the edge of the float. There was much craning of necks in the stand and everywhere to get a good look at the contestants.

"My money on Peters," said the individual who had proclaimed himself earlier in the day. "He'll show your Seawall champion the way."

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"He'll show him the way to lose, maybe," said the Codfish. "They can't beat that boy Armstrong." Every one was taking sides as to the outcome, while the referee was stationing the six young athletes on the float edge. Little time was lost in preliminaries.

"Are you ready?" queried the high-pitched voice of the referee.

"Get set!"

"Crack!" went the pistol, and as if shot from a cannon the six hit the water together. Peters with a longer spring immediately shot out in front of the bunch, his arms flying like flails and his long legs beating the water rhythmically.

"Hurrah, see Peters go! He'll win easily," cried the friends of the New Yorker.

"Wait a minute; the race is just beginning," said another. "Wait till Armstrong strikes his gait. There, see him go up!"

Frank was indeed gaining. In none of his races was he ever able to get under way fast at first, but he could always quicken up when he had been going for a few seconds. This was what happened now. Slowly but surely he drew up on Peters and Bates, the friend of Peters, who had won the heat from Frank. At the half distance, he had shaken off three competitors and was closing on the fourth. Slowly he gained, when suddenly Bates, just ahead of him, swerved from his course. Frank looked up just in time to prevent running into him, but he was obliged to change his direction a trifle in order to pass. The swerve lost him ground, for Peters at this moment seemed to put on a fresh burst of speed.

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Over the last twenty yards the race was a terrific one, the partisans of both sides yelling like mad for their favorites. On the boys came like

whirlwinds. The water churned up into spray as they smashed through it. Thirty feet from the float Frank took his last look and his last gulp of air for that race, then, burying his head, he put every pound of strength he had left into driving himself forward. He was now so close to Peters that he could feel the eddy of water from his hand as it swept backward. Ten feet from the float, he fairly threw himself out of the water. He was alongside the leader now, and next thing he knew he crashed full tilt into the float. He raised his head to hear the shout:

"Peters wins! Peters wins!"

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It was true Frank had touched only a fraction of a second too late. It was Peter's race. Frank dropped off the float and swam back slowly, all but exhausted.

Jimmy was at the starting float, and as he lent the tired racer a hand to mount to the planks, his face was white with rage.

"Wasn't good enough, was I?" gasped Frank.

"Good enough!" yelled Jimmy; "of course you were. That chump who was swimming behind Peters got in your way. I saw him cut across and block you."

"I don't think so," said Frank; "he was all in and didn't do it on purpose."

"I know better than that, and I'd swear it was a put-up job. You can beat Peters any day from ten yards to a million miles," said the indignant Jimmy. "I kicked to the referee about it, but he wouldn't allow a foul because Bates didn't touch you. Did he?"

"No," said Frank; "I had to shift a little for him and it put me out a bit. I don't think it made any difference in the race. Peters was too fast for me."

"Get out," said Jimmy, still hot and angry; "you know he isn't. I'd bet my boots you could beat him any day, and if I were you, I'd challenge him for a race with no one around to get in your way."

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"I've had enough for to-day," said Frank. "We ought to get dressed and headed for home as soon as we can. There are some black clouds coming up over there in the west."

It was as Frank said. The day had been a warm one and thunder heads were now showing in the west. Down toward the horizon the clouds were piled thick and black, and every now and then the denser masses were edged by a little ribbon of fire. The lightning was beginning to play. The top of the pile was still white, for the lowering sun was shining full upon it; but soon this white top, climbing rapidly, shut off the sun.

The wind had just begun to pick up in puffs and eddies and the sailboats were scudding about like anxious swallows, when Mr. Armstrong hurried up to the dressing room where Frank was getting into his clothes. "Mother and I have a chance to go back on the trolley. Hurry up, son," he said. "It looks so bad over there to the west," jerking his thumb over his shoulder in the direction of the towering thunder-heads, "that I think you had better wait till the storm is over. Mother is nervous about your going to Seawall in the *Black Duck*."

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"Oh, I guess we could get home all right," said Frank. "It isn't going to be very heavy, is it?"

For answer there came a blinding flash, and almost on its heels a roar of thunder that made the bathing houses dance on their foundations. The wind was running before the storm with almost hurricane force, lashing the sea into whitecaps.

"Gee whiz!" exclaimed Jimmy, "that must have hit somewhere nearby. See the old *Black Duck* jumping."

The *Black Duck* was indeed jumping, even though she was bound securely and lay partly in the lee of the dock. The wind and the rain came together, scattering the stragglers on the walks to places of shelter. In a few minutes the sea was beaten white and high waves sprang up like magic, their tops white-capped by the fierce drive of the gale.

"It is so heavy it can't last," said the Codfish, gingerly side-stepping a rivulet of water that broke through the shelter of the boys. "Just like a chap who goes too hard at the first of his race—can't stick it out," he added sagely.

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But this particular storm did stick it out for some time. After an hour,

however, the wind dropped almost as suddenly as it had sprung up, the thunder muttered itself out, and the sea began to go down. Lacking the pressure of the gale behind it, the whitecaps soon disappeared, but in their place ran a long swell, down which the little sailboats at anchor coasted and rose again to the next, like some kind of a seabird.

"We will have a tippy time of it going home," observed the Codfish, as in the last few sprinkling drops the boys sought the wharf.

"Yes, and we aren't going to have much company, I guess," said Frank.

"Their pedal extremities have congealed, evidently," observed the Codfish. "Here comes your father to say, 'No, thank you, Frank, we will go up on the trolley to-night; we don't care for coasting.'" The boys laughed. For that was just about what Mr. Armstrong had come to repeat. "And I guess the others of your excursion are going back the same way," he added. "I saw the Slocums light out for Seawall in an automobile five minutes ago."

"I'll wait a little while," said Frank, "for my party, and then if they don't come I'll dig out for home, too."

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"I wouldn't wait too long," was his father's parting observation as he turned to go. "Mother says she wishes you would leave the boat down here to-night and come for it in the morning. How about it?"

"Oh, there's no danger. We'll be home in a jiffy. The tide is low and I'll have to go outside of Pumpkin Island to avoid the reef. Don't worry about us. The four of us could take her to New York to-night. Couldn't we, Jimmy?"

"Sure thing," said that individual, who rather enjoyed the prospects of the trip up. Lewis and the Codfish were not so hopeful, but they said they would stand by the ship. Mr. Armstrong turned again and left the boys with a last warning word.

"Where did the Human Fish, Peters, go to?" inquired the Codfish, as Jimmy fussed with the motor and Frank sponged off the seats. Very little water had entered the boat, most of it having been shed by the very efficient awning which covered her from bow to stern.

"Don't know," said Frank. "I wasn't interested in him after I saw that he hit the float first."

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"Oh," said Lewis, "I saw him jump into his motor boat with that chap who got in your way, just as soon as the race was over, and light out. Guess they were trying to get down to the Peters' dock before the storm came on so hard."

"He had good nerve, starting then," said Jimmy.

"Or bad judgment," said the Codfish. "Sometimes the one looks like the other."

"Here, stop getting sarcastic and help with these ropes," growled Frank. "They are all in hard knots. What Indian tied them like this?"

Soon they freed themselves and the motor, under slow speed, began to revolve. They backed slowly out from the dock. Nothing was left of the gay scene of an hour or two before.

"Funny what a little water will do," observed the Codfish, turning to look at the deserted stand, pier and floats.

"Yes, and it's funny what a little wind will do to water," commented Frank as the *Black Duck* got under way. He was driving her over the waves at a little angle and she pitched and rolled tremendously.

The Codfish didn't like it at all, and Lewis, after five minutes of this kind of going, began to look white in the failing light.

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Frank headed his craft well out beyond the Pumpkin to avoid the treacherous rock teeth that showed white in a long broken line. He had a great respect for their destroying abilities. The tide, too, was on the turn, and he dreaded getting caught in the suck of it. Many boats had met disaster there. So he headed her straight out into the bay, so straight indeed that the Codfish finally cried out:

"Where in thunder are you heading for—France, or is it Spain?"

"Don't be impatient," said the captain, "we'll turn in a minute."

He had hardly spoken the words when the motor began to miss fire. Instead of the steady hum of the exhaust, it was now an irregular chattering. The boat checked materially as the pistons choked in the dead cylinders. Frank threw on more gas and for a minute or two the

engine picked up and resumed its regularity. Then it missed, sputtered, choked, gave one or two expiring explosions and died completely.

"Well, this is a nice mess you've got us into, isn't it?" whimpered Lewis. There was a note of grave anxiety in his voice. "I didn't want to come, but I thought you knew all about your old boat."

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"What's the matter, Old Mother Goose?" cried the Codfish whimsically. "We're not dead yet. Keep your lip stiff. Frank will have it fixed in a minute."

Frank was working over the batteries with a face on which worry showed in spite of himself. He gave the battery box a shake, tightened up the connections and cranked the motor. There were half a dozen explosions and silence fell again, broken only by the lapping of the running tide against the *Black Duck's* sides. Hastily he disconnected the wires and tried for a spark on the individual batteries. Then he connected the batteries in series, and tried again. There was a faint flash, very different from the long, hot spark from full batteries.

Frank dropped the terminals and looked up into the faces of the three boys, who were intently watching him.

"What's the matter?" inquired Jimmy. "Batteries?"

"Just that and nothing else. There isn't enough juice in the whole lot of them to light a grain of powder."

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"Nice pickle we're in," grumbled Lewis. "Isn't it up to the captain to have his batteries all right?"

"Oh, shut up," commanded Jimmy. "It isn't Frank's fault that the old batteries are in trouble."

"No," said Frank; "I renewed them, you remember, only day before yesterday—six brand new ones, at twenty-five cents per. The rain must have got in somehow and short-circuited them. The shaking by the motor gave them life enough to carry us out here and then they died. See, there isn't a bit left." He tried again, rubbing the ends of the terminals together, but for all the result in the way of ignition they might as well have been made of wood.

"Well, never mind," said Jimmy, "we're drifting the right way. Look at us go! That's Seawall over there, and while we are going sideways, like a crab, we may fetch up all right."

"Sure thing," said Frank, "we are going sideways and fast, too. The tide here runs like a mill-race, but night is coming faster than we are going, and it's going to be as black as your shoes in ten minutes."

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"That's an encouraging sign," said the Codfish, "for my shoes are yellow, and I don't mind yellow nights in the least." The Codfish was always cheerful under difficulties.

Not so Lewis. He grumbled and growled and blamed everybody for the plight in which they found themselves. "If I don't turn up by dark, mother will have a fit," he added.

"Well, I guess all our mothers will have fits," observed Frank quietly, "but that isn't going to help us out of this trouble."

"Do you know how the drift of this tide goes?" inquired the Codfish. "It might sweep us in shore far enough so that one of you fish-men could jump overboard and swim ashore for help."

"Yes, that's a good scheme. Owing to the curve of the Seawall shore we are now about a mile out. The current splits on Flat Rock, which ought to be showing pretty soon if we have light enough. If we have luck to swing over to the shore side of the rock we will drift pretty close, but if we go on the outside of it we are likely to go on up the coast or out to sea."

"Fine mess we're in," growled Lewis, who grew more nervous as the night drew down over the waters.

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"Oh, say something new," snapped the Codfish sharply. "We've heard that for a long time. Can't you think up an original remark?" Lewis glowered in silence, muttering to himself. Jimmy sat down on the bottom of the boat and began to tinker with the batteries, while Frank and the Codfish stood up and peered into the gathering darkness.

"Listen, what was that?" whispered Frank. "Didn't you hear some one calling?"

The four huddled together close. Jimmy left his tinkering and Lewis forgot his hard luck for the moment.

## CHAPTER VII.

### COALS OF FIRE.

The four boys stood in the waist of the boat straining their ears for a repetition of the sound that had floated out over the black waters.

"There it is again," whispered Frank. "It seems to be dead ahead." Again they held their breaths and listened.

"Help, help," came a faint voice. There was no mistaking it this time.

"Some one in trouble, and worse off than we are," said the Codfish.

"There it is, louder."

"Hello! Hello! Help! Help!" came floating to their ears.

"Some one drowning out there," said Lewis, shivering.

Again rose the cry, this time shriller and stronger.

"I believe it is some one on Flat Rock," said Frank. "I can't see, but the rock ought to be just ahead of us. What can any one be doing there? Flat Rock is all under water at high tide. That would be a bad fix, for certain sure."

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"Let's give a call," added Frank. The boys, uniting their voices, shouted: "What's the matter? Who is it?"

Quite near now came the hail: "We are wrecked on a big rock here. Come and help us. The tide's coming up and we'll be washed off. Please hurry!" The voice dwindled off into nothing as if the speaker was in deadly fear and had no breath to state his troubles further.

"Jiminy crickets!" said Jimmy. "We are not in much of a way to help any one, but we've got to do something for that fellow. Give me the painter. I can see the outline of the rock. Let me take the rope and I'll jump overboard and tow her. You handle the rudder, Frank."

Frank was about to object to this arrangement, preferring to take the cold bath himself, when Jimmy grabbed the rope's end and dived overboard. He struck out for the rock, which was outlined by a line of white where the running tide fringed its edge.

The boys on the boat watched anxiously as he ploughed along. It was a small pull at best that he could give the *Black Duck*, but as both were going with the current, the pull that he did give was sufficient to guide the craft in the direction of the dark mass just ahead.

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"Look out, Frank, I'm touching," shouted Jimmy over his shoulder. "Pull your rudder sharp over to starboard."

Frank did as he was bid and the nose of the *Black Duck* barely grazed a big black boulder just awash.

"There, keep her steady," Jimmy commanded. "Let the tide carry her up and I'll pull her around into this little cove."

"She'll bump, won't she?" queried Frank anxiously.

"No, it looks like deep water there just behind that rock you missed, and the pull of the tide won't bother much. I'll hitch this painter here."

Jimmy finished his work and straightened up, peering into the darkness, from which came a plaintive voice:

"Please hurry up! The tide's coming in and we'll be washed off. Please come quick."

"How many are there of you?" Frank sang out.

"Two of us. We were knocked up here by the thunder storm and the boat is stove in. Hurry, hurry, won't you? The tide is rising."

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"Why doesn't he come down to us, whoever he is?" said the Codfish.

"There's a channel of water between this rock we are on," said Jimmy, who was in a little better position to see, "and the place where those fellows are wrecked, and it's running like mad. Can't you hear it boil?"

It was as he said. The rock seemed to be in two sections, separated by a channel perhaps fifty feet wide, which looked black and threatening in the half gloom. Jimmy began climbing over the slippery footing in the

direction of the channel.

"Hold on there," shouted Frank, "I'm going with you. You mustn't go there alone."

"Oh, don't leave us here," wailed Lewis.

"What, with me to protect you?" cried the Codfish scornfully.

"Nothing will happen to you, you big baby," said Frank, as he began to strip off his clothes. "I'm not going to let Jimmy tackle that job alone. Wait for me, Jimmy; I'll be with you in a minute." He was stripped in a minute and lowered himself carefully over the side. With the water up to his waist, he found footing on the rock and edged his way carefully out to where Jimmy stood.

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Meantime the pleading voice on the other side of the channel kept calling for the rescuers to make haste. It was filled with a deadly anxiety, as well it might be, for the tide was pouring in from the sea with full power, gushing and eddying among the nooks and crannies of the big rock which obstructed its path. It sounded strangely like a low hum of voices and had a sinister and threatening tone, like the tone of a mob.

"I don't like the look of this channel a little bit," said Jimmy as he and Frank worked their careful way across the slimy rock, occasionally slipping and grabbing each other for support. Now they reached the edge of the swiftly running channel.

"Nothing to do but try it," said Frank. "If these shipwrecked people can't swim, we will be as badly off as ever. Come on, here goes."

Frank waded out to his waist in the swift current. The water tugged and pulled at him as if bent on destroying him. Suddenly he found himself beyond his depth and began to swim. Jimmy was at his elbow. The water caught them with its full force and whirled them along. But in spite of the current they made progress across it, and puffing and panting they pulled up on a shelving part of the main body of the rock, and staggered to their feet.

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The shipwrecked boys, seeing their rescuers at hand, rushed down to them shouting for joy, but the leader of the two staggered back as he came face to face with Frank.

"Frank Armstrong!" he gasped.

"Peters!" cried Frank and Jimmy in a breath. "Great Scott!" said the former, "we didn't know it was you."

"Please don't go away and leave me," whined Peters. "We're in an awful fix."

"We don't intend to go and leave you, but we are in a bad fix ourselves."

"Please take us off here," continued Peters. There were tears in his voice.

"We have a boat," said Jimmy, "on the other side of that channel, but our motor is dead. The only thing we can do is to take you aboard her and wait till morning, or till some search party comes out for us."

At this Peters sank down on the rock and covered his face with his hand. "I can't swim that channel," he cried. "I don't dare try it. It serves me right. I put up a game to beat you this afternoon and was so ashamed of it afterward that I didn't stay a minute, but jumped into my boat and put out for home——"

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"And were caught in the storm?" interrupted Frank.

"Yes. The wind kicked up such a sea that I couldn't cross it and had to run ahead of it. I tried to get around in the lee of this rock, but the wind drove me onto a ledge out there and knocked a hole in the bottom of the boat, and she sank."

"And you swam here?"

"Yes, we were barely able to make it. We crawled up here and laid down till the storm went over. We've been here yelling ever since."

"The storm drove every one in, so there wasn't much chance of your being heard. The wind, blowing in the direction it did, carried your voices out to sea. We barely heard you, although we were quite near," said Frank.

"You were awfully good to come to us. I'm sorry I played such a dirty trick on you. Will you forgive me?" and Peters held out his hand.

"That's all right, Peters," said Frank, grasping the outstretched hand.

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"Forget about it. You could probably have beaten me, anyway."

"No, I couldn't," said the repentant Peters. "I hated you for winning last year and I wanted to make sure you wouldn't this year. Oh, I'm ashamed of myself," and Peters hung his head. "I don't want the prize for that race, and I won't take it."

"Come, never mind, we'll race again some day on even terms," said Frank, "but the main business now is to get over to the other side of this channel and get into the boat. We have no power, but we have a bottom under us, and it won't do us any harm to sleep out for one night, I guess."

"It will be a kind of a lark," said Jimmy, but his voice didn't have much enthusiasm in it.

"The only thing that is bothering me," said Frank, "is what mother and father will think, and your mother and father, and Lewis's. They will be crazy thinking that some trouble has come to us."

"Say," said Peters, who, now that he had confessed his sins, took on a brighter mind, "isn't there something in your boat we might pull out and set afire as a kind of a signal? I've no doubt that there are people watching over there on the shore. Couldn't we try it?"

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"That's a good idea, Peters," exclaimed Jimmy. "We could yank out some of the boards from the cabin, put a little gasoline on them and have a bonfire here. That would show them on shore where we are and some one could pick us up in a jiffy."

"Good!" said Frank. "We'll do it. It will save a lot of worry for our people if they know we are not drowned. Let's get back and try it." So saying, he turned and made his way down to the edge of the channel which separated them from the boat. The three boys followed him cautiously. It was almost pitch dark now, and the water looked more forbidding than ever.

"I'll lead off," said Frank, "and you fellows follow me. Keep as close in line as you can and look out for the sunken rocks."

Peters was shivering, partly with the cold and partly with terror. It had been a night of peril for him, and he did not have the animal courage of either Frank or Jimmy, or even of Bates, who had scarcely said a word, but followed sullenly behind.

Frank was in the water to his waist now, but suddenly hailed the boat: "Hey, Codfish!"

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"Hello," sang out the Codfish.

"We've found them and we're coming back," yelled Frank at the top of his voice, for the wind was beginning to breeze up with the incoming tide. "Have an eye out for us; we'll be with you in five minutes. Come on," he said, turning to the boys behind him, "it's now or never! This channel is getting wider and there's nothing to be gained by waiting." He took another step and began to swim.

The others followed silently. Soon they were gripped by the current and began their fight to the other side. The current was more savage, if anything, than when Jimmy and Frank had crossed it a few minutes before. Desperately they battled with it for their lives.

"I can't make it," groaned Peters from behind. "I can't make it. Help me!"

"Don't give up," shouted Frank encouragingly. "Keep at it, old fellow," and Frank stopped swimming for a moment till Peters drew alongside him. Elbow to elbow the two boys swam, as they had swum but a few hours before in the race, but now it was a battle for life. Frank's encouraging words buoyed up the New Yorker's drooping spirits.

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"Only a few strokes more," he kept repeating. "Stick it out."

Bates swam doggedly behind without a word.

"I'm touching," yelled Jimmy. "I'm touching. We're safe, we're safe!"

The shout put heart into Peters, who drove ahead with all his remaining strength, and soon the four lay panting on a little shelf of rock with more bare rock just in front of them. They were indeed over the worst part of it.

But just as they struggled to safety, there came a tremendous yelling from the direction of the boat.

"Come quick, come quick, we're adrift!" It was the voice of the Codfish. Now Lewis joined in: "Quick, quick, we are adrift!"

Frank and Jimmy sprang to the higher rocks and made for the boat, slipping, stumbling and rolling. They could not in the darkness see where they were going, and in the scramble they bruised their knees and tore their hands. The barnacles cut Frank's bare feet, but he dashed on in the direction of the cries. Jimmy was close on his heels and the others straggled behind, vaguely aware that some new trouble had come to crown their misfortunes of the night.

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What they worst feared from the shouts of the boys on the boat was only too true. In some manner the tugging at the boat of wind and tide had loosened the knot Jimmy had put in the painter, and the *Black Duck* was moving swiftly away from the rock with the two boys aboard, borne on the bosom of the tide. When Frank reached the place where they had left the boat moored, only the dim outline of the *Black Duck* was visible, and in a moment even that was lost to view. For a few minutes the shouts of the Codfish and Lewis could be heard, but soon those, too, died out, except when brought faintly in the lulls of the rising wind.

"There goes our hope of safety," said Frank. "Now we *are* in a pretty fix, and no mistake."

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## CHAPTER VIII.

### A SWIM FOR LIFE.

"We're in for it now!" said Jimmy in a voice which trembled in spite of himself. And indeed it looked bad for the four boys, trapped on a barren rock soon to be covered by the swiftly rising tide. "It's all my fault," he continued. "I thought I tied her fast. I'm going to be the means of drowning all of us. Oh, dear! Oh, dear!"

Peters was in a state of collapse. He had sunk down on a boulder too indifferent to notice that his feet were in the water. What did it matter now? They had no chance for their lives. "Let's call for help," he cried, as none of the boys had moved, and raising his voice he shrieked: "Help! Help!"

Out there the wind which was blowing in from the sea, bearing with it little wisps of night fog, carried his words away. There was not even a cheering echo. Apparently the others were too much discouraged at the outlook even to cry for help. In the silence that followed each of the boys could hear his heart beat above the lapping of the waters.

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Peters turned suddenly and savagely on Frank: "Well, what are you going to do, stand there like a statue and see us all drown? Oh, do something!" he wailed.

Frank was standing as rigidly as a statue, indeed. He was looking out over the dark stretch of tossing water. His face was toward the shore. He had hardly heard Peters' last cry for help, so intently was he gazing and deliberating.

"There's only one way," he said at last, turning to Jimmy.

"And what's that?" was the query.

"Swim it," replied Frank steadily.

Even Jimmy started back appalled, and Peters, who was stepping nervously around, sank again on the rocks, weak at the very suggestion.

"It must be a mile," said Jimmy.

"Yes," said Frank, measuring the distance to the lights, which twinkled along shore like far-off stars, "it is more than that. The bay curves well in off Seawall."

"It is a chance," said Jimmy, "but a slim one."

"Oh, I can't do it," shrieked Peters. "We might as well stay here and drown. It would be better than drowning out there in the dark."

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"Some one might pick us up," suggested Jimmy, "or perhaps the *Black Duck* will be sighted and give the alarm." The offering was not a very hopeful one, and Jimmy's tone was not even as hopeful as the offering.

Frank shook his head. "It's a slim chance, as you said," he replied slowly, "and meantime the water is creeping up here very fast. Look, that

big boulder is out of sight now under the tide. No, there's nothing but swim for it."

Peters jumped up in a frenzy. "I tell you I won't do it. I'll stay here and drown. I won't try to swim it. If you had had any sense you would have tied that boat securely. You'll be the cause of my death." Peters was wild with fear.

"Would you have been any better off if we hadn't come?" said Frank, turning sharply on his companion. "Anyway, I didn't mean to ask you to swim ashore," he added in a milder tone; "I meant I would swim it myself."

"And leave us here to drown?" whined Peters.

"No, I'll try it to save you. I'll go for help."

"You mustn't, Frank," exclaimed Jimmy, coming up to him and taking hold of his shoulder. "It would be sure death."

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"Well, it's sure death to stay here, isn't it?" said Frank. "The tide is coming in like a racehorse and even as we are talking about it the water is creeping up. I'll go now."

"We'll go together," said Jimmy determinedly. "I will not let you go alone."

"What, and leave us here?" cried Peters.

"For goodness sake, what do you expect? You won't swim and you don't want us to swim. Don't you see, you coward, that it's the only chance we have?" Jimmy was all out of patience with this boy for whose safety they had placed themselves in such a plight. "Keep a stiff upper lip and we'll have some one back here in a jiffy."

Peters seemed not to hear. He sat down again plainly sobbing. "*You'll* stay with me, Bates," he blurted out. "Don't you leave me."

"I couldn't if I wanted to," said that silent boy. "I couldn't make half the distance. I never swam a mile in my life."

"All right, then," said Jimmy. "You two go onto the highest point of this rock, and every now and then make all the noise you can on the chance that some one might hear you," and he began stripping off what few clothes he had on.

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"Hold on," said Frank. "This is my job, Jimmy. There's no use of both of us trying to swim it. You stay here——" He got no further.

"What do you take me for?" burst out Jimmy indignantly. "I'm going with you and that settles it. We might be able to help each other. I can't do anything waiting here, and I might be of some help to you. Let's not spend any more time arguing about it. I'm ready."

He was, as he said, ready. And be it known that Frank, while he was willing to undertake the peril of the trip alone, felt better that his friend and tried companion would be with him through the terrors of the water. He did not argue any more about it, but stretched out his hand in the darkness, and the two boys clasped hands in a long, firm grasp.

"All right, here we go!" said Frank. "Good-by, Peters; keep your courage up and stick to the highest part of the rock."

Peters merely whimpered and Bates said not a word.

It was a strange sight to see there in the gloom, that of our two heroes stripped to the skin, their bodies showing white in contrast to the black rock and the still blacker water. Free of all hampering clothing, they were ready for the trial of strength against the threatening monster—the sea.

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Quickly they waded out on the shelving rock, gasping as the cold water struck them with its chill. Another step and they were in deep water and struck out bravely for the far-distant shore.

"Let's keep close together," said Frank, as they were caught by the full force of the tide and whipped away from the rock. "If we get separated we will never get together again."

Jimmy, at this, swam up close to Frank, and elbow to elbow the boys drove ahead. The waves were running high but were not white-capped, which was a most fortunate thing for the swimmers, for the tide and the wind were traveling in the same direction. Side by side they swam, climbing up the long black slopes and slipping down easily into the trough between the waves, but making good progress. Their white arms swung rhythmically above the water.

"It's like coasting," said Jimmy, "only it's more exciting."

"Yes, it's great fun," said Frank, but it was not the heartiest response in the world. "Seems like when we go down in the hollows that we'd never come up again. And it seems as if we were going backwards. Do you feel that way?"

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"Yes," said Jimmy; "there's nothing to gauge yourself by, but," casting an eye over his shoulder, "there's nothing to be seen of the island. I guess we are going ahead all right."

Nothing further was said for a time, the boys saving their breath for more important work. With every ounce of strength in their sturdy young bodies they forged ahead, now down "in the hollows," as Frank had called them, with the water towering above them and not a light visible but the light of the stars over their heads; now up on the crest of a wave where for an instant they caught the twinkle of the shore lights and steered for them, heartened by the sight.

"Look, Jimmy," said Frank, "that big light over there to the left must be on Seawall Pier. Take a look at it when you come up on the next wave. Isn't it?" as Jimmy slid up the slope to the top.

"I guess it is," sputtered the latter who, in the endeavor to see, had been met with the slap of a little wavelet which filled his nose and eyes with salt water. "It ought to be about there if our bearings are right."

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"Well, we'll make for it," said Frank, "and we must keep to the left all the time, for the pull of the tide will take us away up the coast if we don't look out. What's the matter?"

Frank had heard a splash and a gurgle from Jimmy, and then a succession of rapid strokes on the water. "What's wrong?" he shouted, as he got no answer.

Frank stopped swimming and began to tread water. His heart was in his throat. Something had happened.

"What's the matter?" he cried out again, and his voice rang with a strange appeal over that waste of water.

"Gee whiz!" said Jimmy, "that was awful. It nearly scared me to death."

"What nearly scared you to death?" queried Frank, relieved to hear his companion's natural tone in spite of the shake in it. "Something bite you?"

"No," replied Jimmy, after he recovered his breath, "but I ran my arm right through a big jelly fish that was probably lying just under the surface of the water."

"Horrors!" said Frank, who hated the cold, slimy, slippery things even in daylight. How much worse it would be, he thought, to run into one in the pitch darkness of night!

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Jimmy now swam up. "I'm all right again, but for a minute I thought I was going to die. I was swimming the overhand when, as I drove my under-hand ahead, I stuck it right through the body of this nasty, slimy thing. It slipped right up to my shoulder and stuck there. I thought sure something had me by the arm, and I stopped swimming and sank." Jimmy, at the memory of it, raised his arms and smote them upon the water, throwing up a shower of spray. The action relieved his nerves.

"Don't do it again, please," said Frank. "Look ahead there, just to the right of the Pier light! I think that's a light in our window! I wonder if mother set it there for me. We don't seem any nearer, do we?"

"Maybe we're being carried out to sea," said Jimmy, but he was sorry the next minute that he had said it. Frank made no answer. He was thinking of the comfortable sitting room at Seawall, and wondering if his father and mother were hovering anxiously around there, or on the veranda looking seaward. Perhaps they might be even now down at the end of the Pier. Yes, they would be down at the Pier waiting. Or perhaps they were getting searchers to scour the bay for them. But would they find them, or would the sea next morning toss up on the shore two white bodies limp and bedraggled?

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"I'm doing the best I can, mother," Frank whispered to himself, as on the wave crest he caught a fleeting glimpse of the lights, and the water in his eyes was not all from the wave top that at that moment went over him. He wondered about the two boys who had been left behind. How far had the water gained on their little island of rock? If he and Jimmy got to land and gave the warning, was there still time to get back and save

them from the sea that must be even now creeping up on their feet? He shuddered in spite of himself. It was bad enough to be out here struggling with the sea, but it was something to do. It would be a hundred times worse back there waiting, waiting, watching the tide creep nearer and nearer to the last refuge on the highest point of the rock. He struck out more determinedly with the thought of the lone watchers in his mind. He must save them.

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## CHAPTER IX.

### SAVED.

Suddenly from the shore there shot up into the air a long, curving streak of fire. Then came a dull, booming explosion, and the dark sea was lit up for a moment. The darkness which followed seemed even more black than before.

"A rocket!" shouted Frank. "They're giving us a signal."

"Gee," said Jimmy, after a moment, "it feels good to know they're thinking of us, but it doesn't help much."

"There goes another one!" Rocket after rocket now split the air, marking distinctly the place for which they were heading. The boys redoubled their efforts, swimming side by side with a steady over-arm stroke. Something of the horror of the darkness and the mystery of the rolling waters was taken away by the thought that the people on shore knew of their distress and were trying to help. But little could those on shore know how really bad their plight was. The rockets were being sent up as a guide to a disabled boat. They could not know that the long, brilliant sweep of light was being watched by two boys struggling for their very lives on the surface of the water itself.

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"We must be halfway there, don't you think?" said Jimmy, in a labored breath.

"We've come a long distance, for the lights look brighter. Can't you see lights moving on the shore?" returned Frank. "Let's stop and look."

The boys stopped, trod water and raised themselves high as they reached the crest of a wave. Frank was right. The lights they saw were the lights of many lanterns, for the whole town of Seawall had turned out. Boats were being manned and people ran hither and thither on the shore peering out to sea.

"Come on now," shouted Frank, who felt heartened by what he had seen, "let's break the record for the rest of the distance," and, putting down his head, he tore ahead, followed by Jimmy more slowly, but just as determined. They had been plugging away for perhaps five minutes when Frank heard a cry behind him. He stopped instantly and listened.

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"Jimmy," he called shrilly, "Jimmy!"

There was no answer. Frank, with a sweep of his hand, turned face about and dashed back over the course he had come. A dozen strokes brought him to his companion, whose white face on the surface was his only guide. "What is it, Jimmy, old fellow?" he cried, as he drew alongside.

"Cramp," said Jimmy feebly. "It came suddenly in my side. I couldn't swim and I couldn't take breath enough to yell out. It just doubled me up."

"Here," said Frank, "rest on me and try to straighten out," for Jimmy was still doubled up. Jimmy lay back and rubbed his side vigorously, while Frank slipped an arm under his head and with the other kept afloat. "It was my fault," he said encouragingly, as Jimmy rubbed the kink out of his side. "That rocket made me crazy to get to shore."

"No, it wasn't your fault, at all," replied Jimmy, in a stronger tone. "It was the cold water. I felt it a while back and thought I could fight it off by working hard, but it got me at last, struck suddenly just like a knife. I'm all right now; come on," and, turning over on his face again, he struck out weakly. Frank was at his elbow watching for any weakness, but as Jimmy continued going smoothly he lengthened out his own stroke and soon they were back at the old swing. The halt, however, although

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only for a few minutes, had lost them ground, for during the time that they were not swimming the tide had carried them steadily ahead—but not shoreward. They were still far from safety.

Now they changed their course a little more to the left so as to cut across the current, and bore steadily for the lights which seemed to increase in size. They wasted no more words except occasionally one would say: "You there?"

The answer would come back from the other: "O. K." or "All right." They had no extra breath to spare. The distance was surely lessening, but so was the strength of these two heroic lads. How heavily swung their arms! Every few minutes they changed the stroke. Sometimes it was one arm over, sometimes the other, and again it was the trudgeon or the breast stroke, whichever offered a little rest. Both were nearly exhausted, but with the courage of despair they swam on, neither admitting to the other that he was almost done for. They did not dare to float, for that meant being carried beyond their haven of safety. If they passed the little indentation where Seawall lay it was good-by to everything, for they would be carried into the wide waters of the outer bay and must miserably perish. This knowledge spun their failing strength out to the last slim thread.

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Away ahead the lights danced merrily. It seemed to Frank as if there were millions of them jumping up and down and swinging sideways. How friendly they looked, but how utterly useless to help! How deadly heavy his arm felt! There was no force left in him. How nice it would be to lie still and rest! He stopped swimming and sank. The cold under-current chilled him and awakened him to the fact that he was giving up. "I won't give up! I won't give up!" he said between his clenched teeth, and he struck out stronger than before. Jimmy was splashing feebly behind.

"We're nearly there, old fellow," gasped Jimmy.

"Nearly," returned Frank. "Keep it up. Let's shout." They stopped and shouted, but it was scarcely more than a croak and could not have been heard fifty yards. "Let's swim," said Jimmy, "shouting is no good out here." His voice was scarcely more than a whisper. Again they resumed their weary drive ahead.

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Suddenly out of the darkness between them and the shore came a hail:

"Ha-yo, ha-yo, ha-yo!"

Instantly the boys stopped swimming and turned their faces in the direction of the sound.

"Ha-yo, ha-yo, ha-yo!" came the call again, this time nearer. They tried to answer the heartening hail but had not strength enough to send their voices far. They stood in the water close together and with straining eyes tried to pierce the darkness. Then in the momentary lull of rushing waters they heard a drumming.

"A motor boat!" cried Frank joyously. "And I see a light. It's coming this way. Oh, it is going to pass us! Let's yell!"

Together the two raised as loud a shout as they could.

In a moment the drumming stopped.

Again the two lads in the water shouted: "Here! here! here!"

The drumming began and the light at the bow, which showed plainly now, although the boat itself was still hidden, swung and lurched as the motor boat swept around in a curve. With rescue in sight the boys threw their last energy into a fusillade of shouts and soon, "Ha-yo, where are you?" came a hail from the boat.

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"Look out, look out, you'll run us down," yelled the boys.

A bell rang; the motor stopped and cut silently through the waves only a few yards away.

"Here, here!" shouted Frank.

"Great Cæsar!" said a voice from the boat, "it is some one in the water. Stop her quick," as the boat was driving past the boys with her momentum. "Back her! Back her!" yelled the voice now in great excitement. "We've found them. They're in the water."

In a less time than it takes to tell it the captain had maneuvered the boat to within reaching distance of the two in the water. Strong hands reached over the sides and quickly pulled them to safety. Neither could stand. They sank down into the bottom of the boat. Frank looked up and saw his father standing over him.

"Back to Flat Rock, quick," gasped Frank. "Quick, there are two boys out there!"

"Why, Flat Rock is under water at this time of the tide," said the man at the helm wheel.

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"Not yet. Oh, not yet! We left two boys there, and they will be washed off in a few minutes if you do not hurry."

Instantly the captain ordered full power ahead, and away the boat shot in the direction of the lonely rock. The two lying in the bottom of the boat were made as comfortable as possible, and between them they told the story of what had happened since they put out from Turner's Point on that eventful night.

As the boat neared the rock the men aboard raised a great shout and were surprised to hear a feeble cry from what seemed to be the surface of the water. Maneuvering carefully, guided by the calls from the water, the boat crept nearer and nearer to the sounds. No sign of a rock was visible, but the strong light at the bow showed two lads standing, their hands clasped together, knee-deep in water. They were on the very highest point of the rock. Quickly they were pulled into the boat, chilled almost to death by the long exposure. Like Frank and Jimmy, however, both Peters and Bates were soon wrapped in the coats of the men aboard, and made as warm as possible.

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"Now," said Frank, "the only thing to be done is to find the *Black Duck*."

"We'll land you boys first," said the captain, and he drove his boat for Seawall, while the steady purr of the motor deepened into a roar. The waves shot away from her bows in a shower of foam as she raced ahead.

What a yell went up from the Seawall people as the boat neared the Pier, and the glad news was shouted over the water that the boys were safe and sound! The rescued quartette were quickly put ashore. As they touched the float, queer figures that they were, all bundled up in the coats of the men, shouting was heard from the water. "We've found them!" called a voice.

And even as they waited, in spite of the urgings to hasten to the house and dry clothes, a motor boat slipped into the circle of light thrown by the big lamp on the end of the Pier, and behind it came the *Black Duck* on the end of a tow line! And in the boat sat Lewis and Codfish quite calm and collected. They had been picked up by one of the searching parties.

You can imagine what a reunion took place that night in the Armstrong house! Even Peters, the cause of some of the trouble, was welcome; but that individual was none too comfortable, and was only too glad when his father's automobile drew up at the door to carry him to his own home. It was a night of jubilation, and the whole of Seawall joined to make a celebration of the wonderful feat of the two swimmers.

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## CHAPTER X.

### PROFITS OF QUEEN'S FERRY.

For a week after the wreck on Flat Rock, and the swim and rescue which followed, the Queen's Transportation Company did a rushing business. People came from far and near to take a look at the boys who were the central figures in the adventure, and incidentally they took a trip on the *Black Duck* itself. The boat was none the worse for its jaunt with a dead engine up the bay on that eventful night, but thereafter Frank carried an extra set of batteries for any similar emergency that might arise.

Peters and his chum, Bates, had the *Nautilus*—Peters' boat—raised and repaired. The injury done the boat in the storm was not great, as it happened that she had been driven into a bight in the rocks where, after she had sunk, the pounding of the waves did not reach her. Both boys disappeared from Turner's Point. Later it was learned that they had gone to another shore resort, and they were seen no more around the Point that summer. The whole incident was closed when Frank was awarded the medal for the hundred-yard swim, the presentation being made by

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Burton himself. But it was a long time before the memory of that night swim left Frank and Jimmy. They could laugh about Jimmy's experience with the jelly fish now.

"But it was no laughing matter when it happened," was Jimmy's only comment.

About two weeks after the night in question the boys were seated around the big table in the Armstrong sitting room and Frank was figuring.

"And there's the total for our summer's work," he said, pushing a sheet covered with figures over to his father.

Mr. Armstrong laid aside his magazine, took the sheet and ran his eyes over the figures. "Pretty good," he said, smiling. "This means that you have about paid for your boat."

"That's just about what it does," said Frank proudly. "Look, there are our earnings—\$132.00. Gasoline has cost us \$17.25, oil \$6.20, batteries \$4.50, and we gave the old captain \$5.00, and that leaves us .95 shy."

"Figures all right, does it?" said his father. "Sure your totals are correct?"

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"Sure as shooting," said Jimmy. "We've been over them three times."

"Nothing outstanding, no rides on the *Black Duck* unpaid for?"

"You bet they're not," said the Codfish. "I saw to it, as manager of this concern, that no one sneaked aboard without first surrendering his cash for our coffers."

"Good, then," chuckled Mr. Armstrong. "I was about to give you a dollar for that trip to Turner's Point, but I'll keep it."

The boys looked at each other. "It's a fact," said Frank. "Dad got past you, Codfish," and they all laughed. "Pay up, Dad, but that was only fifty cents. Our fare was twenty-five cents."

"Well," said Mr. Armstrong, laughing, "I'll pay you twenty-five cents each for mother and me, and fifty cents for the trip we didn't get. Here's your cash," and he laid down a new dollar bill.

"Hurrah!" cried the Codfish, "that balances our account and five cents to the good! This concern stands free of all debts and has five cents in the treasury. Captain Frank Webfoot Armstrong, we salute you," and suiting the action to the word the boys all rose to their feet and bowed gravely to the captain, who acknowledged the salute with a joyful wave of the hand.

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"And to-morrow at about nine," said Frank, "we will pay our last installment to Mr. Simpkins and the boat is ours. What say?"

"Agreed," said the others.

"And," added the Codfish, "let's take a vacation. I'm all worked to a frazzle with the responsibility of secretary, treasurer, manager, press agent, artist and general goat of this Transportation Company."

"Poor old Codfish!" said Jimmy. "He speaks well."

"He has the wisdom of a Solomon," cried Frank; "and besides, Jimmy, we ought to get in some work on football before we go back to Queen's. What would you fellows say if we were to tie the *Black Duck* up to the dock to-morrow and try a little drop kicking?"

"Great," said Jimmy, "but where's the ball?"

"You don't think I'd come down here without one, do you?" said Frank contemptuously. "I brought a nice new one along with me and all we need is a pump to blow it up with."

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"Oh, I've got a bike pump," said Lewis.

"Just the thing," remarked Frank. "Shoot up and get it and we will put the ball in condition to-night."

Lewis hurried off as fast as he could go and Frank dragged forth the football. The lacings were eased up, and when Lewis got back a little later with his pump, the four of them set to work to inflate the interior rubber bag. It was quite a job, as any one knows who has tried it, but after much puffing and much struggling with the lacings, and much sage and useless advice from the Codfish, the rubber bag was blown up tight and tied, and the ball was ready for use. And the boys were also about ready for bed.

It was with very deep pride that Frank, escorted by his three



companions, rang the doorbell in the Simpkins house the next morning, and laid the last installment, a few minutes later, on the desk of the old gentleman himself, who sat there smiling pleasantly at the boys.

"I admire your pluck, boys," he said. "Here's a receipt in full. Thank you for your promptness. If you do all your work in the world as well as you have begun, you will surely succeed. I am glad to have made your acquaintance and I shall always feel under a great indebtedness to you, Master Armstrong."

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When they were outside, Jimmy said:

"And I thought he was an old skinflint the first day we saw him about the motor boat!"

"You can't always tell how sweet an orange is by its skin," remarked the Codfish. "Now look at me——"

"Yes, look at you," said Frank.

"Drown him! drown him!" cried the boys, rushing at the Codfish. They were in high fettle this morning.

With the receipt in full in his pocket, it was with a sense of complete ownership that Frank stepped into the *Black Duck* and took the wheel.

"I want to thank you, fellows, for helping me," he said, turning to the three. "We are part owners in this old craft."

"Thank nothing," said Jimmy, who was as glad as Frank that the debt had been lifted. "Haven't we had all the good rides? She belongs to you. We are only the able-bodied seamen."

"Frank's right," said the Codfish, "we are part owners. I consider that my services entitle me at least to the paint on her."

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"And much there is of it," said Frank, laughing. "But no matter what you say, she's as much yours as mine. And now for Seawall and football practice."

"I wasn't much at *this* game," said Lewis, "but football is where I shine."

"Shine like a bucket of mud," said the Codfish.

Laughing and jollyng each other in the highest spirits, they headed the *Black Duck* for Seawall. She shot ahead through the water like a veritable duck.

"Guess she knows who owns her this morning," observed Jimmy, grinning, as Frank laid her alongside the dock with a nicety of calculation as to speed and distance.

The *Black Duck* was tied up securely and the boys, after getting the ball, made for the little playground which had been established by some of the public-spirited citizens of Seawall several years before our story opens.

"Where are your goal posts, kids?" inquired the Codfish, as they hurried along. "You can't kick goals without something to kick at, sonny." This was directed at Frank.

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"Tut, tut," said that individual, "I've heard of people kicking goals without a ball. But I'm going to see whether I can kick the ball first or not."

"Do you know anything about it?"

"Not a thing. Horton showed me something about it one day last fall, and I've watched him coaching a lot. You just take the ball on a long pass from the center——"

"And I'm the center," broke in Lewis.

"Yes, you're the center, all right," said Frank. "Lewis passes the ball. I catch it——"

"You mean you catch it if you can," interrupted the Codfish.

"Don't interrupt your superior officer, or I'll fire you," said Frank. "As I was saying, I catch the ball, turn it around so that the lacing is up, and then drop it——"

"The way Lewis used to drop it——"

"Not quite, but I drop it end first on the ground, and give it a wallop with my toe as it is rising."

"Sounds very pretty," said the Codfish.

"And what does Jimmy do?"

"Oh, he lies on his stomach when we kick from placement and holds the ball for me."

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"No work at all to that. I'd do that much any day," commented the Codfish. "But here we are. Now I'll take this very comfortable rustic chair here in the shade, and see how you put these theories into practice. If I get warm I'll ask some of you to come over here and fan me," and he strolled over and dropped with a sigh of comfort into a park bench. "Now let the fun begin."

The fun began at once. On the first pass, Lewis threw the ball away over Frank's head, and the next time dribbled it along the ground, but after half a dozen tries he finally got it to Frank, who made a fair attempt at a drop kick. It wouldn't have filled Coach Horton with glee, but he managed to boot the ball a little distance.

"Wonderful kick!" shouted the Codfish from his place in the shade of the tree. "Keep it up; you'll win the game in a minute. Wake me up when you do."

Frank paid no attention, but continued to work steadily. Gradually he began to get the right angle on the ball as he dropped it from his hands. The kicks rose higher and truer as he went on. Jimmy watched and criticised his friend, for although Jimmy knew very little about kicking the ball he was a natural football player. He kicked clumsily, but still he knew how it should be done, although he could not do it well himself.

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By the end of the practice the boys were covered with perspiration, for the day, although in the latter part of August, was hot in spite of the sea breeze; and like everything that Frank entered into, he had played with a tremendous zeal and concentration. Nothing was half-hearted with him, and when other boys were with him in any of his enterprises, they caught his spirit.

"All over for to-day, boys," cried the Codfish, coming forward, stretching, but assuming the tone of a coach. "That's enough, kids. Report at four to-morrow. Very rotten practice," he added, "at least, as much as I saw of it, for I'm free to confess that the humming of the bees and the song of the football put me to sleep."

Together the four ambled back to the Armstrong cottage, where the three heated boys exchanged their perspiration-soaked clothes for bathing suits, took a dip in the sea and swam a half dozen impromptu races. They raced back and forth like so many dolphins, diving, swimming under water, splashing and shouting, then ran up the beach, rolled in the sand and dashed back into the water. After an hour of this they were ready to don regular clothes again.

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The first day of football practice was the index of many others like it. The remaining mornings of vacation were given to the motor boat and the afternoons to drop-kicking practice, swimming and running. As time progressed both Jimmy and Frank gained perceptibly in physical condition and even fat Lewis seemed less flabby. Finally came the day of the Codfish's departure. He had long overstayed his visit as it had been first planned.

"I've got to get back home and lay in a new supply of duds," he said, "but I'll meet you at Queen's before another moon has waxed and waned."

He got a great send-off at the Seawall station as you may well suppose, for in spite of his rather odd ways and sarcastic tongue he was a most likable boy.

"He sees the funny side of everything," said Frank, as the Codfish, waving his handkerchief from the end of the fast-disappearing train, faded from view, "but he is true-blue all the way through."

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"Which is a rhyme, Mr. Armstrong," said Jimmy; "and while we are fond of athletes, we can't stand any more poets. We have one here with us, you know—Lewis."

Lewis swelled up at this.

For ten days more the three, now left alone, kept up their daily work. September was ushered in by a few days of quite cold weather, and this gave them the chance to do more rugged football work. Frank and Jimmy practiced falling on the ball, Lewis acting the part of the coach, who rolled the ball in their direction. Then they practiced picking the ball up at full gallop, and after that they worked at grabbing it on the bound.

"Never could see the sense in falling on the ball, anyway," said Frank, after he returned from a race down the field, having snatched a

bounding ball and tucked it securely under his arm, "particularly if you have a clear field ahead of you."

"Right-oh," returned Jimmy, "but you've got to be sure the field is clear. The old game used to be 'play it safe,' but in the new one it is all right to take a chance. But make it sure when you go after it."

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"All right, Mr. Coach," said Frank. "I'm not such a shark at this game as you, but I'll do my best. My game is baseball. I don't think I'll ever be heavy enough for the gridiron. Do you think I will?"

"Sure thing," said Coach Jimmy Turner. "I bet you'll make the team before you get through Queen's, and all the quicker when they find out that you're a drop kicker."

"I'd like to make it," said Frank wistfully, "but I think I'd better stick to baseball. I know a little about that game."

Finally came the last day on the *Black Duck*, and they made it a long cruise. They went down as far as the Point, circled Flat Rock, measuring the distance with narrowed eyes that they had covered in the long night swim, and finally, the tide being right, even penetrated up the river as far as Tub Island, and then back through the tumbling water under the railroad bridge.

The next day the *Black Duck* was laid up for the winter in Berry's boat house, and the boys, after a parting swim and run on the beach, said good-by to Seawall and turned their faces toward Queen's School.

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## CHAPTER XI.

### THE HAZERS' WATERLOO.

It was the second day after Queen's opened for the fall term. The students, separated for the summer months, had met like brothers and clasped hands. Everywhere were heard greetings.

"Glad to see you again, old pard. What were you doing all summer?"

That was the favorite form of address, and when a group met they all talked together as fast as their tongues could rattle. The boys had been scattered at mountain, seashore, lake and forest. Some had had the great trip across the ocean to foreign countries. Others had been at their dull little homes on the farms, but they all had something to tell. Some of the faces were missing. A few boys had dropped out. Two had been drowned in a boating accident on one of the mountain lakes; but all of our old friends put in their appearance. There was Wee Willie Patterson, as diminutive as ever; Tommy Brown, long and skinny, but brown as a berry from tramping in the hills; David Powers, fresh from the big ocean liner; and last, but by no means least in this story, Chip Dixon and his own particular crowd.

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These first days and nights were not prolific of deep study. Experiences had to be recounted and books were in the background. Our friends changed their headquarters to the more pretentious Honeywell Hall, but fortune did not bring them all in one entry. Jimmy and Lewis had rooms in the third entry on the second floor. Frank, David and the Codfish, were roommates the same as before. It would have been difficult indeed to have separated Frank and David, and under no circumstances would the Codfish have allowed himself to be detached from this company.

Bit by bit David got the whole story of the doings at Seawall during the summer. "I wish I had been with you instead of at the other side of the world," he said. "I was lonesome a good deal of the time, thinking what a ripping time you fellows were having around the old shore."

"And we were lonesome for you, too," said Frank. "We missed you. It would have been complete if you had been an officer in the Queen's Transportation Company. But there's another year coming."

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By degrees the boys slipped back into their school work habits. Seawall was forgotten for a time at least. All thought was centered on the great fall sport of football, or at least all thought outside of the classroom and study periods, and I'm afraid some of it even there. Our friends trod the paths of Queen's with a new sense of ownership. Were

they not now in their second year and lords of their particular realm—Honeywell Hall? Last year they had been at school only on sufferance of the second class boys—so it had appeared to them—but the year had moved them along to a new and quite wonderful superiority.

"Have you noticed," said the Codfish one night, "what a very small fry this bunch is, that has so recently entered our sacred Halls of Learning?" The speaker put the question to the full court that sat in Frank's room one night after supper.

"You mean the Freshmen, I suppose," said Jimmy.

"You're the rightest chap I know," said the flowery Codfish.

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"Yes," said Frank, "they are a year younger than we uns, but I noticed some pretty husky fellows there in the yard to-day."

"Most of them look as if they had just come from mamma's lap just the same, and I think it's a sin for these Second year guys to be hazing the dear little mites," said the Codfish, with a great show of disapprobation.

"Who's hazing them?" inquired Frank.

"Future tense, Webfoot, future tense," cried the Codfish. "I guess they've escaped so far."

"Well, what's all your virtuous indignation about, old chappie?" said Jimmy.

"The stick is in pickle for them, for I overheard a little conversation to-day that made me think as I think."

"You have long ears. Where did you hear it?" queried David.

"Coming around the corner of Warren Hall to-night I interrupted a little conference. Some one said 'cheese it,' and then the bunch began to talk very loud about the prospects for the football team."

"Was that a suspicious circumstance?" asked Jimmy.

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"Something in the cut of their jib, as Captain Silas might say, made me think they were not so much interested in the football team at that moment as they pretended to be. My instincts as a detective got the better of my natural modesty—ahem, ahem—and after walking along a little ways, I sneaked back like the thug in the play and dodged behind that little jog in the wall."

"Go on, Sherlock."

"And what happened then?"

"Were they planning to kidnap Old Pop-Eye?"

These questions were fired at the Codfish in rapid succession.

"No, gentlemen of the Court of Inquiry," replied the Codfish, planting his gorgeously attired feet on the table end and leaning back against the window seat, "they were planning an attack on two poor, little mamma boys who have our old rooms at No. 18."

"The brutes!"

"The scoundrels! The worse than kidnappers!" howled Jimmy, making a great ado about it. "And what did you do—walk in and clean out the gang?"

"Do I look like a fellow who would get mixed up in the common bruising business? Look at me and answer me that! No, I leave such brutal tactics to you, Turner and Armstrong, and to such rough fellows as David Powers and Lewis Carroll."

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"Hear, hear!" cried the chorus. "Go on, and what happened then?"

"Well, I came up here and now tell my tale to unsympathetic ears. If you had a spark of human kindness in you, one little chunk of the milk of humanity in you, you'd sally forth and save these children from the ruthless grasp of this marauding bunch of baby destroyers. But as you do not seem to be interested, I'll go and tip these innocent lambs off to the fact that they are going to be seared, and bid them dust out."

"Who were the gents you heard plotting, Sherlock?" inquired Frank.

"Oh, I couldn't make them all out," returned the Codfish, "but I'm sure of Bronson and Whitlock and Colson. Two or three of the others had their backs to me. It was too dark to recognize them, and they didn't speak loud enough."

"Three chumps, if ever there were chumps," said Jimmy indignantly. "They ought to be in better business. Wouldn't it be a joke to give them some of their own medicine?"

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"There speaks a hero, a real Carnegie medal hero!" cried the Codfish.

"I've an idea," said Frank.

"Hurrah, Frank has an idea!" shouted the Codfish. "Shut the door and bar the windows for fear it escapes," and he ran to close the door and slam down the window. "Out with it, Master Drop Kicker. It can't get away now."

"Sit down, you lunatic," said Frank, laughing at the antics of his roommate. "My idea is just this," and they put their heads together and talked in such low whispers that it was impossible to hear just what plan was being laid. It is sufficient to know that about a quarter of an hour before the time that the Codfish had said the date for the attempted hazing had been set, Jimmy and Frank stole quietly up the well-known stairway to No. 18 Warren Hall. The remainder of the party stayed on the far side of the yard as a kind of reinforcement in case of need.

The two new boys were in the study and were startled at the knock on the door. But they let our friends in, and stood with inquiring attitudes. Apparently they were ignorant of the hazing traditions of Queen's.

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"What's your name?" asked Frank, addressing himself to the larger of the two.

"Mine's Hopkins," said the boy addressed.

"And mine's Hewlett," said the other eagerly.

"And where do you both come from?"

"Milton."

"Glad to see you," said Frank, extending a hand first to one and then the other, while Jimmy followed suit. "And that's a reason why we are going to do as we are going to do, eh, Jimmy?" inquired Frank.

"You bet it is. Can't let Milton be thrown down."

"Did you boys ever hear of hazing?" said Frank.

"Oh, yes," said one of the boys, "but they don't do any such things as that at Queen's, do they?" and there was a note of alarm in his voice. "You are not hazers, are you?"

"Well, not if we can help it," said Jimmy. "But it happens that we are going to have a little party in your room to-night. We used to live here ourselves once and we like to come back."

"Yes," said Frank, "we are to have some callers here in a few minutes and we want to give them a warm reception. If you don't mind, we'd like to occupy your bedroom for about five minutes."

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The occupants of No. 18 looked puzzled and dazed at the presumption of the intruders, so Frank took them into his confidence, and in a few words told them what was about to take place. "Oh, oh," gasped the new boys, "thank you so much for telling us!"

"No trouble at all," laughed Jimmy; "it's a chance of a lifetime. I've been aching to use my muscles for the last three days."

"Now all you boys have to do is to get into that clothes closet and keep still as mice. Don't even peep, or the cat's out of the bag."

The boys were only too glad to do as they were told and made for the clothes closet with alacrity. They were not the adventurous kind that enjoy roughing it. A chance to escape a mauling was accepted instantaneously.

"Hurry up, Jimmy, it's nearly eight o'clock. The pirates will be here in a minute if they live up to schedule." He had hardly finished speaking when the Chapel clock boomed out the hour of eight.

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Both boys dived for the inner room, stripped off their coats, pulled down the blinds and, jumping into the little cot beds, pulled the coverlets up to their chins. They lay there and shook with laughter.

"What if the gang should send up a dozen kidnappers and carry us both out and duck us?" said Frank, in a whisper.

"'Tisn't likely they'll send more than two or three," was Jimmy's answer. "They would be afraid of attracting attention. They'll figure that two's enough for these little candy kids. I don't think—"

What Jimmy didn't think will never be known to history, for he was interrupted by a ringing knock on the study door.

"There they are; cover up," whispered Frank. "Keep the coverlet up to your chin or they'll recognize you."

"Not a chance of it in here, unless they have a light, and they wouldn't chance that unless they are masked."

The knock was repeated, and there still being no answer some one kicked the door. "Open up, Freshmen," said a gruff voice.

"That's Bronson, sure," said Jimmy.

"What's wanted?" shouted Frank, in a weak sort of voice. "We're in bed."

"Oh, you are, are you?" said another voice. "Well, we'll come in and sing you a lullaby, eh, boys?"

"There's a bunch of them," whispered Jimmy, "we're in for it."

"Let 'em come," whispered Frank, in answer. "We'll show 'em a thing or two."

The door of the study was pushed violently open now and footsteps sounded outside the bedroom door.

"Where are you runts?" said the gruff voice, the one that had first been heard. They could hear the owner of the voice bumping around among the furniture. "You ought to have lights for the convenience of your visitors. Oh, there you are in your downy little couches for the night," said the voice again, and a hand grabbed the portières between the study and the bedroom and jammed them back.

"What do you want?" said Jimmy, in a plaintive voice, into which he tried to put as much fear as possible.

"Just want to see two cunning little things in their nighties. Have you said your prayers?" There was a laugh at this, and both boys on their backs in bed concluded that there were three of their enemies.

"Yes," said Frank, "we always do that. Please, sir, what do you want?"

"We want you, angel face," said the foremost of the trio, and striding into the room he reached for the bed clothes.

Just what happened that leader of the hazing gang never quite knew. But as he reached out, something struck him hard right in the stomach. It was Jimmy's head. That individual had been curled up in bed waiting for what was about to happen, and as Bronson bent over, Jimmy uncoiled himself. With his head boring into Bronson's big body, he surged forward with all the force of his sturdy frame. Reënforced by Frank, who sprang instantly at Jimmy's attack, the two forced Bronson backward through the doorway and into the faces of the other two waiting there.

Into Bronson's companions they crashed and the whole crowd went smashing to the floor with Frank and Jimmy on top. Bronson fought and kicked and hit blindly in the dark, all the while making desperate efforts to reach the door; but Frank and Jimmy, whose eyes had become accustomed to the dark while they lay waiting, could see fairly well, and directed their blows with telling effect. Jimmy landed a stinging thump on Bronson's nose, and when he took his hand away he felt something warm and sticky on his knuckles. It was blood.

Bronson, thrashing around on the floor with Frank and Jimmy on top of him, was begging for mercy. His two companions had gathered themselves up in the dark and beat a hasty retreat down the stairs, with only the thought of getting away with their lives. Frank, a straddle of the big bully's neck, and Jimmy on his stomach, plugged him right and left; and when they had punished him to their heart's content, and had him almost in tears, they grabbed him by the legs, dragged him to the door and into the entry and then, springing nimbly back into the room, slammed the door and locked it.

In spite of his hammering, Bronson picked himself up with astonishing alacrity and tore down the steps of Warren Hall as if the fiend himself were after him, while Frank and Jimmy rolled around on the floor in a paroxysm of laughter.

Pale and trembling, the two rightful occupants of No. 18 came from the closet and lit the gas. Their eyes met a scene of destruction. Scarcely anything was left standing in the corner of the room where the hurricane of fighting had taken place. But the destruction was nothing in comparison with what they had been saved from, and they thanked their rescuers almost with tears in their eyes.

Frank and Jimmy slipped on their coats, helped Hopkins and Hewlett to straighten up the furniture and departed.

"They will let you alone in the future, or I make a mistake," said Frank, laughing as he went out. He had lost some skin from his nose in

the scuffle, but otherwise he was none the worse.

"I'll bet Bronson will think you two are worse than a den of wildcats!" said Jimmy, and his grin stretched from ear to ear.

Bronson and his companions did not learn of the trick that had been played upon them till some time afterward, but when they did know they laid plans for vengeance of which you will hear later.

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## CHAPTER XII.

### CLASS NINES.

"Have any of you fellows seen the football schedule?" inquired Jimmy one night after Queen's had been open about a week.

"Our rising young journalist, David Powers, ought to know all about it," said the Codfish. "Only thing I know is that it contains the same old lot, with Warwick on the end of it. How about it, David?"

"The schedule was published in the *Mirror* last spring after Dr. Hobart approved it, and it isn't the same old thing by a good deal. Dixon took on some pretty strong schools. Don't you remember how you sneered at it, saying that it was big enough for the York freshmen, and that Queen's would be a second rater long before the big game came on?"

"You don't expect me to remember what I said three or four months ago?" retorted the Codfish. "It's bad enough to have to remember a week. Why don't you publish the old thing again?"

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"Being live editors, we did that very thing, and if you hadn't been asleep you would have seen it. Here's the paper," returned David.

"Oh, very well, boy, you may bring it to me," said the Codfish lazily.

Frank picked up the latest copy of the *Mirror* and launched it at the Codfish's head. "Thank you very, very much," said that individual; "I always like polite little boys. Yes, here she is, third page. Some schedule, that—" he announced, as he read; "listen:

"October 5th—Hillside Academy at Queen's.

"October 12th—Burrows at Queen's.

"October 19th—Milton High School at Milton.

"October 26th—Taylor Hall at Oakland.

"November 2d—Porter School at Queen's.

"November 9th—Warwick at Warwick."

"What's going to be left of this Queen's School eleven when that's over?" inquired the Codfish. "Why, I wouldn't give a plugged nickel for Queen's chances."

"You're a pessimist!" said Jimmy. "Have you been down to see us work?"

"Have I been down? Oh, Master Turner, what a question! Of course I've been down, and that's the reason I'm pessimistic."

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"Oh, we're not so bad," said Jimmy, laying aside his book to argue a little. "We might get away with one or two of them, even if we did lose most of our good players."

"Most of your good players? Why, you lost *all* of them, didn't you?"

"Where does Jimmy come in?" inquired Frank mildly.

"And where does Frank come in?" questioned Jimmy quietly.

"Mutual admiration societies never affected my judgment," said the Codfish. "Jimmy can't play all the game behind the line, and Frank the Drop Kicker hasn't grown up yet into the husky giant that you are, Turner. Anyway, Dixon wouldn't have Frank on the team if he could help it. You forget that Chip owns the School, don't you?"

"Not a bit of it, and Frank might get his chance sooner than you think, Mr. Critic," said Jimmy. "Did you notice what a shine Horton took to him to-day?"

"Don't be sarcastic, now," said Frank. "Horton had some of us kicking down on the field to-day, and he said that my style was all wrong and I'd never be any good until I changed it. But I'm not to be considered at all. I'm going out for the fall baseball."

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"Sensible boy," said the Codfish. "You are wasting your glad young days down on that football field, for as long as Dixon runs the captain you will have a pretty slim show. Maybe when he gets through here and into a wider field for his politics, you may be allowed to do something, unless he hands his curse down to his successor."

The talk of the boys uncovered the situation down on the football field. Dixon, in spite of his excellent knowledge of the game, was so thoroughly bound up with the Society of Gamma Tau that, even at the risk of weakening the team, he played his favorites. Frank and Jimmy had come out at the first call for candidates on the eleven. Jimmy, with his natural ability to play the game, could not very well be kept off, society or no society, because the back field was weak without him; Frank, with less knowledge of the game and with Chip's secret grudge still against him, stood little chance. Horton had given Frank an opportunity once or twice on the second team, but as Frank was green, he was soon replaced.

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"He's too light," Dixon said to his coach one night after practice, "and doesn't seem to have much football sense. It's no use in bothering with him." And, although Horton was a good coach, such little remarks as these, frequently repeated, had their effect on the older man's judgment. He overlooked Frank when substitutions were to be made in the progress of practice, and finally forgot about him—remembering only, perhaps, that he appeared to have a knack of kicking, albeit in very bad form.

Horton, however, was one of the old school of coaches who had not much use for a kicker. It was his particular hobby that the eleven should be strong enough to carry the ball. And, it might as well be set down now as later, he lost a good many games by having no adequate punter or drop kicker. Finally the blow fell, and in the second cut of the candidates, Frank read his name among those "who need not report for football practice again."

Frank was not particularly sorry, because he recognized his shortcomings in the game of football. He secretly longed to be at the game which came most naturally to him—namely, baseball.

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But his friends up in Honeywell Hall raised their voices in protest. "I think it's a shame," said the Codfish indignantly, "but do you remember I told you so?"

"Don't you care, boys," said Frank. "Don't worry about me. I'm going to have a little baseball now and, Mr. Codfish, I want you to help me with my call for candidates. Most of the School nine fellows are playing on the eleven, so we can have the whole place to ourselves."

"What would you say to an organization of class baseball," suggested the Codfish, "same as they do at the colleges? Here's a fine golden fall going to waste. I've been thinking of it for some time, but we had no leader. But now that our thousand-dollar beauty, Frank Armstrong, has been kicked off the eleven, the gap is filled. With the leader at hand, all we want is a press agent."

"Hear, hear!"

"And we have one right ready to our hand—Mr. David Powers, journalist! What's the use of having these cards to play if you don't play them? sez I."

"What's that you're saying about me?" inquired David, looking up from an essay that he was composing for next day's English literature lesson.

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"I was saying," said the Codfish glibly, "that we had a scoop for you—a red hot story that will make the readers on the *Mirror* sit up and shout hallelujah! They always do that when they see an interesting article in the *Mirror*, eh, David?" continued the Codfish. "Now, as Mark Anthony said: 'Lend me thine ears.' It's like this. Can't you cook up, dish up, or write, if you prefer ordinary grammatical terms to culinary ones, an article which will go into the next issue of the *Mirror*, suggesting an inter-class baseball series which shall begin now and last as long as the weather holds good, then sleep like the ground-hog through the winter, and continue in the spring? What says our aspiring literary genius?"

"Good idea," said David.



"Wonderful!" said Jimmy. "I'll resign from the football eleven."

"Where am I to play?" inquired Lewis, "short-stop or second base?"

"You'll be the boy who carries the bats and brushes off the homeplate," said the Codfish, "and maybe if you're very good we may let you bring the water."

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"Thank you for nothing," retorted Lewis.

"And as the *Mirror*, thanks to our progressive friend and erstwhile rope-climber, David, has changed its shirt and appears nice and clean once a week instead of twice a month, it ought to make its appearance about Thursday of this week. There's no time to lose. Bring on your pens and paper and let's get that article ready."

The boys entered into the spirit of the thing, and before they turned in for the night had produced in brief form a plan for inter-class baseball. Each class, including the Freshmen, was to organize a nine, and there was to be a series of games between these nines, the two having the highest percentage to meet for a final match.

"It's up to you, Codfish, to figure out the schedule and the percentages," said Frank. "We'll call you the unofficial scorer."

"At what salary, please?"

"We'll give you a cheer after it's all over."

"O. K. Then I'll accept. Let the cheer be a long one and a strong one."

The announcement in the *Mirror* which came out a few days after the talk in Honeywell, had a surprisingly quick recognition. Leaders in each class got to work and organized, and before the end of the week the diamonds were covered with boys working with might and main to win a place on the nine of their particular class. Frank, of course, was quickly chosen as the leader of his class team, and after a day or two gathered together the best of a dozen boys who had put in an appearance for his particular nine. But Frank missed the services of his old backstop, Jimmy, who, in spite of his statement that he would resign from the football team, still held his place in the back field of the School eleven. His allegiance to the eleven was made the subject of one of the nightly discussions in Honeywell Hall.

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"I thought you were going to be with us, Half-back Turner," said the Codfish, one night. "You are throwing your energies away, down there on the gridiron with Horton and Chip and the rest. Come up and have a little fun with the real sports."

"I'd like to, I tell you," said Jimmy wistfully. "It's no fun getting banged about two hours a day, but I've got to stick to the ship even if there are rats in it. When I said I'd resign I was only joking."

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"Nice way to crawl out of it," growled the Codfish. "We need your services. Frank has to pitch to that fellow Button who lives upstairs, and he can't hold the ball. It needs a real red-head like you to hold our young Matthewson."

"That's right, Jimmy, stick to your guns," said Frank. "While it's not the best eleven that ever was, it is still the School eleven and I wish I could help it. I'd chuck this baseball series."

"Oh, you traitor!" shouted the Codfish. "Jimmy, we're going to have our first clash of the season, as the newspapers say, next Thursday afternoon; can't you come over and see us wallop that bunch of third-year pill tossers?"

"If you don't start it too early I might get over," said Jimmy, "but as long as the practice is on I've got to stick there. And I kind of like the uphill fight."

"Don't you let him bother you, Jimmy," said Frank. "He's an A number one josh. Since you are good enough to play for the school, it's your job to stay there and do your best."

"What do you call your nine?" said Jimmy.

"Oh," murmured the Codfish, "it's a pretty, pretty name—the Piratical Pippins. I selected it from a hundred names, more or less. It was the worst I could think of."

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"It sure is bad enough. And what are your opponents called?"

"The Hilarious Hitters—so-called because they can't hit anything—and the Rough Rowdies of the upper class. These are all alliterative names, you see," explained the Codfish, "and each has a significance which would not easily penetrate your cranium."

"Have the Freshmen a nine?"

"Sure, and a good one, too. We call them the Toy Toddlers."

"And which of these aggregations do you play Thursday?" inquired Jimmy.

"Let's see, where's my schedule?" lisped the Codfish, as he fumbled in his coat pocket. "Here we are—'Pippins versus the Hilarious Hitters, game called at 4 p. m. Umpire, Snooks'—and he's that fellow with the lopsided eye, but he makes a great umpire."

Jimmy laughed. "I'll be over to see you if I can. Now I've got to go and lay in a deep store of knowledge for to-morrow. I'm away. Good night."

"Good night," echoed the boys, and Jimmy trotted downstairs whistling.

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You can imagine that Gamma Tau did not view the baseball series with pleasure. The eleven, loaded with favorites as it was, did not at any time hold the attention of the School, and now that there was a rival attraction, still fewer of the fellows went down to watch the practice. Dixon and Captain Wheeler, well knowing the state of mind of the School, still fretted about the matter, and things were not improved when practically the whole school turned out for the first of the class series, in which the Pippins crossed bats with the Hitters. Frank captained the Pippins and pitched, and he pitched so well that his nine won, seven runs to two. The Hitters, true to their name, got only four hits off his delivery.

"This Armstrong is getting too popular altogether," said Dixon the night after the game, as he and Captain Wheeler with several others of the Gamma boys got together in Dixon's room.

"Well, what are you going to do about it?" grumbled Wheeler. "He has a right to do something, hasn't he? Since he's no good on the eleven, we can't keep him from playing baseball."

"I'm afraid he'll make trouble for us, with that redheaded friend of his, Turner. They've got a pretty strong combination there, and not one of them is in the Society. There's Powers, who is going to be a force on the *Mirror* some of these days. He's the best man on it now, with the exception of the chairman, Miller."

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"Well, what are we going to do about it, I'd like to know?"

"We can pull his teeth by getting him into Gamma," returned Chip.

"Your first attempt wasn't very successful," returned Wheeler.

"No," said Chip, making a wry face. "But we'll try it again. I think if we got him and several of his pals into Gamma, we could bring so much influence to bear on them that we could sew them up."

"I don't know about that," said Wheeler, "he's just the kind of a fellow that's hard to sew up, and he is making himself stronger every day."

"What would you say to my asking him again? The second elections come off two weeks from to-night. We might land him, and then we'd be in clover."

"Well, maybe. We might go over and try some night," ventured Wheeler.

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"We might bust up his baseball work by calling him over to the School football squad again. He looked to me as if he might make a kicker, and Horton was saying only this afternoon that we've got to develop some one, since you get worse every day."

"Thank you for the compliment!" growled Wheeler.

"And if we can't spoil some of this popularity wave, I've got another scheme. The blamed little fool could have anything he wants if he only came over to us."

"Unfortunately he doesn't see it that way," said Wheeler, "but if you think best we'll send our Committee over to see him Monday night."

"Agreed," said Chip, and the conference closed.

The determination to bring Frank and Turner over into the camp of Gamma Tau was strengthened by the disastrous defeat of the Queen's School on the following Saturday by two touchdowns to nothing.

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## CHAPTER XIII.

### FRANK'S FOOTBALL EDUCATION.

It is needless to say that the attempt of the society of Gamma Tau to gather Frank and Jimmy into its fold in order to put a curb upon their growing popularity, failed, in spite of the fact that it had been advanced with the greatest care. The most persuasive members of the Campaign Committee, as it was called, had been sent to the two rooms in Honeywell Hall, and the glib-tongued committee men, after clearing out all but the intended candidates, used every argument.

"What possible objection can you have to taking an election to Gamma?" said the chief of the Gamma expedition to Frank. "Gamma is the oldest and most powerful society in the School, and runs about everything here," he added. It was an unfortunate slip of the tongue and gave Frank his chance.

"That's just the trouble with Gamma. As you say it runs everything, and as far as I can judge, it doesn't run anything very well."

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"That's a rather bold thing for a Second-year boy to say," suggested one of the trio. "Most of your class would be mighty glad to get a chance to come into it."

"I can't help it," returned Frank. "I mean what I say. I am only a Second-year boy as you have told me, but I've been here long enough to know my way around. I can see very plainly that Gamma is not helping the School, but hurting it, and I always supposed that the main business of a Society was to help the School and not the members of the Society."

"But all the big fellows are with us," said Hastings, a boy who had been elected because his roommate played on the eleven, but who himself was not an important part of the school life.

"They may be big on the athletic teams, but I don't see that they are doing much else. Why don't you take in some one besides the athletic fellows? There's my roommate, David Powers, or Gleason, they both have more brains than I have."

"No, we want you to come first. They will come later, if you come."

"Oh, so that's it, is it? Well, gentlemen," said Frank, with so much determination that the committee men gave him up as a bad job, "I appreciate the honor you offer me, but I think I can do more for the School by staying outside. Some day I hope to see the Gamma recognize the boys for what they are worth, and not for the distance they can punt a football or throw a baseball. It used to be that way, and if I can help in my little way to putting it back that way, I'll do so."

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"This is your last chance, you know," said Hastings. "If you turn us down this time you can never wear the Gamma pin."

"Well, I guess I can never wear it, then, for I wouldn't agree with Gamma about most things. It is better for all of us."

"All right, it's settled," said Hastings, "but you're going to be a sorry kid some day."

"I doubt it," said Frank shortly.

And that ended the interview. Nearly the same thing was repeated in Turner's room, for Jimmy and Frank were one in their determination not to be drawn into the society, as they knew that once in it they would have to be governed by it, and that didn't suit their fancy at all.

Dixon and Wheeler were furious when it was reported to them that both boys had again turned down the invitation. "They'll regret that to the day of their death!" Chip stormed. "The impudent little upstarts! The Gamma will smash them, see if it don't." Wheeler said nothing, but the scowl on his face boded no good for our friends in Honeywell Hall.

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Two days after the interview in Frank's room, and when the class baseball series was in full swing, Frank was sent for by Boston Wheeler and told to report on the football squad the next afternoon.

The Codfish was wild. "It's as plain as the nose on your face," he said to Lewis, "what they're after; they're going to bury him on that football squad, hold him there and finally give him no chance at all."

The subject of the discussion appeared at that moment, and the Codfish whipped around on him. "Are you going down on the gridiron?"

"No help for it," said Frank gloomily. "Wheeler came over himself to-

night and told me to come down. Itold him I was no good, but he insisted that they needed a punter. Horton, also, has suddenly discovered that I'm a kicker."

"I'd refuse," snorted the Codfish.

"And get the School down on me? No, I can't do that. If they really want me I'll be glad to help. And if I can't, I've got to take my medicine and have neither the fun of our baseball series nor the glory of football. I'm going to try hard to develop myself especially for drop kicking. Gamma or no Gamma, it is the Queen's School eleven and not the Gamma eleven. I'd be a pig not to do what I can to help, little as it may be."

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"Well, maybe you're right," reluctantly admitted the Codfish, "but I haven't your forgiving nature. Hey," he called to David, who had just come into the room, "Frank's going to shyster the baseball end of it and go down to the gridiron just because Wheeler wants him. What do you think about it?"

"Just one thing. He can't do anything else."

"All right, then, down goes the house of baseball, because there's not another pitcher on the staff of the Piratical Pippins to make a dent in a pound of butter at six feet."

It was indeed with great reluctance that the captains of the baseball nines heard of the break that had been made in their ranks. Practice fell off materially in the following few days, and before the end of the week the nines had disbanded, at sight of which the leaders of Gamma grinned to themselves. So far their plan was working well. Frank's opportunity had been smashed, and they promised themselves that he would not have another one if they could help it.

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Frank, although called over to the football squad, was lost in the ruck. He had missed nearly two weeks of practice, which in so short a season as football is a serious matter. Once he was sent in at end on the Second team but did not distinguish himself. In the punting and drop kicking, which was taken before regular practice, he showed an aptitude. Horton began to take more notice of him, and on several occasions took him aside and coached him on the proper step and swing of his leg in meeting the ball. Dixon did not relish these attentions to Frank, and did all in his power to keep him out of the practice.

At night in the room Jimmy labored with Frank and endeavored to teach him what he knew of the play of a half-back. Jimmy was considered the best back on the Queen's eleven. Thick-set, stocky, short, strong of leg and thick of neck, and with a trick of running low, he was hard to stop. He was fast, too, because he never took any roundabout way for the hole that was opened for him, and when the hole wasn't open for him he often made it himself by sheer strength. On defense he was a regular demon. Wherever the ball was, there might be found Jimmy's flaming top-knot. Never for a moment was he deceived by any tricks that the opponents might play. His eye was glued to that ball, and he was always in front of it.

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So, with this knowledge, Jimmy proved a good and patient teacher, and always after supper the center of the study was cleared of tables and chairs, and Frank and Jimmy worked for half an hour or so with a ball before taking up the regular lessons. Frank learned quickly and, when he had a chance, put his knowledge into operation. In this, what might be called secret practice, Frank learned to handle the ball quickly without fumbling it, to shift it rapidly from hand to arm-pit, and to take just the right position on his feet. It was surprising how much skill he was able to acquire in the narrow space of a room.

Once Jimmy, in illustrating how the offensive half-back could help his tackle, pressed Lewis and the Codfish and David into service.

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"Now, Lewis, you are the opposing guard. Stand here," commanded Jimmy.

Lewis was dragged into position, protesting, and assumed the attitude of a crouching guard with his hands on his knees.

"And you now, Cuddy, you stand here at his right. You're the defensive tackle."

"Good!" said the defensive tackle. "It's a pleasant job, how much do I get?"

"You'll get all that's coming to you in a minute."

"It won't rumple up my hair, will it?"

"No, don't stand too far out there. That's it, keep your place and look pleasant. Now, Frank, you're the right half-back and you've got to carry the ball. Here, David, you snap it back; you don't need to get down, just face Frank and toss it to him. That's it, right there where you are. Now I'll give the signal. Remember, Frank, you cross over behind me. I'm going to help the offensive tackle to block off his opponent. You see I haven't any offensive tackle or guard here, but it will do to illustrate. Now, ready all!"

Jimmy yelled this last as if he were outside on the football field, so earnest was he in his work. David snapped or tossed the ball to Frank, who dashed across behind Jimmy. Jimmy threw himself against the unresisting opposing "tackle" and "guard." Over they went like nine pins, Lewis fetching up in the fireplace and the Codfish under the window seat!

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There was a howl of laughter from Frank, David and Jimmy, but it wasn't echoed by the defensive "tackle" and "guard." Instead they picked themselves up very carefully and felt of themselves.

"Where's the automobile that hit me?" said the Codfish, in a rueful tone, feeling his shins tenderly.

"Some one get a shovel, please," groaned Lewis, "and dig these ashes out of my left ear." He was a sight.

"All right!" yelled Jimmy, "line up quick, and I'll show you how the cross-buck ought to be played!"

"Oh, no you don't," said the Codfish, edging away. "You can't show me a cross-buck or a tame-buck or a golden-buck or any other kind of a buck this evening. I've had all I want of football instructions. If you and Frank want to continue your jolly little game, go and borrow a few saw-horses."

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"Why, what's the matter?" inquired Jimmy innocently, while Frank stood holding the ball and grinning.

"I have nothing to say about Lewis, but if you imagine I'm a chopping block," grumbled the Codfish, whose hair had been seriously rumped and his immaculate clothes mussed up, which he didn't relish a bit, "you have six more guesses and you'll never get one of them right."

"Oh, I say," said Jimmy, "this is in the interests of science, you know. We've got to teach Frank football, somehow."

"You can teach him anyhow," said the Codfish, "but you can't make a Roman holiday out of me again. Science is all right, but it can't be allowed to flourish at the expense of my dignity. Look at our poor friend, Lewis Carroll." The sight was so comical that even the Codfish got over his grouch and laughed.

"That's what we get every day," said Jimmy. "I wonder if the School knows how many hard knocks its football players get. You've got to take what's coming to you without a whimper. If a fellow is tender he better keep out of football."

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"Or out of the fireplace, eh, Lewis?" cried the Codfish.

"Or from under the window seat," retorted Lewis, who by this time had made himself again presentable by a liberal supply of soap and water.

There was no more football practice that evening; and thereafter when the floor space was cleared away for Jimmy's illustration of the tactics of the back field, the Codfish and Lewis always found it convenient to be absent on important business.

The fall drew on with rapid pace. Sometimes the football eleven of Queen's seemed to be getting together, but it was only seeming; for, lacking the right spirit, the eleven had no fight in it. Captain Wheeler often chafed at the interference of his quarter-back, Chip Dixon, whose bitter feeling toward Frank he could not understand.

Dixon had forgotten Frank's generous attitude the night of the supposed drowning of Tommy Brown in the Gamma initiation, and remembered only that Frank had beaten him out in several of his ambitions. It seemed to be forever in his mind that Frank had beaten Warwick with the Freshman nine, and he lost no opportunity to hurt him in the eyes of the coach and the rest of the players.

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But, in spite of his disadvantages and of the scant attention he got on the field, Frank continued to improve. Under the loving coaching of Jimmy at night and much observation and practice on the field, he forged ahead in the knowledge of the game; and once, called in by Horton to

replace the full-back when the School eleven held the Second on its five-yard line, he kicked a neat goal from the field.

"Good boy!" said Horton that night, as the teams trudged off to the gymnasium. "You are getting the knack of it. I'd give good money if you were twenty pounds heavier. But you'll grow. Keep at it, and you'll surely get a chance at the eleven next year."

This praise from the coach, heard by Dixon, rankled in the latter's heart. He set to work planning for an overthrow of Frank's hope, the results of which will be seen later on. Dixon was so busy working off his grudge or trying to do it, that he played poor ball, much to the exasperation of Coach Horton. The next day after Frank's drop kick, Chip was warned for a rough and ugly piece of work in the practice, and after some words with the Coach, was sent to the side lines in disgrace. Walker, the little quarter on the Second team, was pulled over to the position at quarter on the first team, and to the astonishment of every one, the coach, after running his eye over the possible candidates to fill the quarter's position on the Second eleven, ordered Frank to take his place. "He handles the ball like a flash," said Horton, in defense of what he had done, when the Captain protested; "he's as fast as lightning and, if my dope isn't wrong, he'll make a dandy quarter. He's too light to play anywhere else. We'll give him a trial."

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Horton's change proved to be a stroke of genius, for Frank, although not well acquainted with the signals or accustomed to the place, proved to have a natural aptitude for the position, and it was only a few days till he began to find himself. His punting, although not great in distance, was accurate, and so quick were his movements that he put a life and ginger in the Second team which brought about a vastly different condition on the field. Dixon was finally recalled to his old position on the School eleven, but Frank had improved so much that Walker came back to the Second as Frank's substitute.

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Jimmy was overjoyed at the turn affairs had taken, and every minute that he had to spare from lessons he coached Frank on tricks of the back-field play. For hours together the two worked on the handling of the ball from center, Jimmy playing center, of course. Frank improved with wonderful rapidity. His baseball playing helped him in handling the ball, and as the season advanced he began to rival, except in experience, the resourceful Dixon himself. He had even an advantage of the latter, for he could punt and drop kick as well.

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## CHAPTER XIV.

### THE TELEGRAPH COMPANY.

"What's that you have?" said Frank, coming in one night after supper and finding the Codfish handling a kind of an instrument composed of bright polished brass set on a wooden base. Gleason was examining it closely.

"That, my inquisitive young sir, is nothing more nor less than a telegraph instrument."

"Where did you get it? Make it, buy it or pinch it?" inquired Frank.

"I bought it, kind sir. I was down at the Queen's station to-night getting off some of my important business by telegraph, and his nibbs down there, the telegraph operator, recognizing in me a man of excellent perceptions, invited me in."

"And you got away with some of the tools. Does he know it?"

"Oh, yes, sir, he knows it. I sat there and watched him tapping away. He told me it was New York on the other end of the wire, after he had called up. I didn't believe him, and he told me if I didn't believe, I could prove it for myself by simply touching two little posts that he pointed out."

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"And you touched?"

"Yes, if you must know the details, I touched it, and incidentally I jumped about six feet in the air. It gave me a shock, you see."

"And then you realized that it really was New York on the other end of

the wire?" queried Frank, who knew something about telegraphy because he had studied it in a series of articles in the Boys' Magazine.

"Sure, I realized at once that it was New York, for I've heard that New York is a shocking city. Now, then, will you be good?"

"Put him out! Put him out!" said David, looking up.

"Electrocute him, I should say," cried Jimmy. "He ought to be given two thousand volts in the neck for that."

"Well, if you will draw down these things on your heads, keep on interrupting my story. I asked the gent if it took much brains to learn it, and he had the nerve to tell me it didn't take much of any, and added that he thought I could just about accomplish it. If I had been a fighter like Redhead here, I'd have been insulted, but as it was I kept a dignified silence."

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"Well, when did you make away with the instrument?"

"All in good time, kind friends. He showed me how easy it was to wiggle the little key, and I tried it myself. If I had stayed another half hour, I would have been an accomplished operator."

"And how about the instrument?"

"Well, finally, I got so much interested in the little clicker that he said he would sell me something that I could learn on, and he brought forth this attractive affair and agreed to sell it to me for twenty-five dollars."

"Oh, oh, and you bit, did you?"

"I said he agreed to sell it, note my words carefully. I made him a counter offer of three dollars and a half for it, and he said 'It's yours.' And, generous soul that he was, he gave me an instruction book which I also have, if I haven't lost it," and the Codfish began to search hastily through his pockets.

"There it is," he said, holding it up—"How to Learn Telegraphy—A Complete Analysis of the Entire System of the Morse Alphabet—With the Complete Code for all Letters, Figures and Punctuation Marks. There's a bargain at three-fifty. Eh, what?"

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"Cheap at half the money," said Frank. "Hand it over."

He turned the pages over thoughtfully. "Say, this gives me an idea. Why wouldn't it be a good scheme to have a little telegraph line of our own?"

"Where to—New York? I insist it shall not be connected with New York. I had enough of New York to-night. It's too shocking."

"Quit your fooling. If you get off that New York joke again I'll punch your head. No, I really mean it. We could have a lot of fun with a telegraph line. We might have an instrument here and one in Jimmy's room. We might even connect up with Wee Willie Patterson who seems to have deserted us this fall."

"I say," said Jimmy, "it would be a great stunt. We could use it as a kind of alarm clock. When I sleep over, the Codfish can rattle a little on it and I'll be awake in a jiffy."

"Thank you," said the Codfish. "I vote against it, if I'm to be the alarming fellow."

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"And," continued Frank, "we might run a wire down to Queen's station and get the night operator to send to us for practice."

"Yes, I imagine he'd love to do it," quoth the Codfish. "He seems so much like a generous fellow, particularly when you show him money."

"Well, let's show him money, if he won't do it without it."

David agreed with Frank that it would be a good scheme to have a telegraph line; and the long and the short of it was that the next night a descent was made on Murphy, the night operator at the station who, after much haggling about the price, agreed to run a private wire from the station to Queen's School and equip it with two sets—because only two sets were available. Murphy also agreed that for this sum he would furnish enough "juice" from the station batteries to make a sending current on the wire, and moreover he would "send" for fifteen minutes every night when the boys desired.

The boys went back to Queen's and scraped together enough money between them to pay ten dollars down, and Murphy, as good as his word, commenced stringing the wire the next day. As the line was to be kept a secret, it took a somewhat crooked path, dodging this way and that way

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to avoid conspicuous places. It cut across the river from the station, was bracketed on a tree, then took half a dozen leaps among the trees across the roof of an old house long unoccupied, and finally climbed the slope to Queen's School, well hidden among the trees.

Perhaps the most difficult part of the work was getting the wire on Honeywell Hall itself so as not to attract the attention of the caretakers, who would undoubtedly have made short work of it. The heavier wire was ended on a bracket on a great elm that swayed over the roof of Honeywell. From this bracket a very fine copper wire was stretched to the room of Jimmy and Lewis, which was fortunately on the rear of the Hall. From there it was an easy matter to bring it across and down a rain spout to the sill of Frank's window. When the whole job was completed, much of it under cover of darkness, so well had it been done that unless you had been looking for such a wire you might have looked over a hundred times and seen nothing unusual.

When the circuit was complete, Murphy attached the instruments and returned to the station. "I go on duty to-night at seven o'clock," he said, "and I'll cut the wire in and see how she works."

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The boys were in high spirits about the successful completion of the job, and waited with eagerness to hear the signals Murphy was to send them.

"Wouldn't it be a joke," said the Codfish, as the hour for the opening of the great telegraph line came and went, "if it didn't work?"

"We'd be out ten dollars," remarked David. "But look at the fun we've had!"

"There speaks a true sporting proposition, gents," said the Codfish.

But the line was not to be a failure. Suddenly, while the boys were discussing their probable bad bargain, the little brass-armed sounder jumped into life and began to dance like mad.

"How well he talks!" said the Codfish, who couldn't read a letter. "I think it's about the most intelligent language I ever listened to. Don't sit there, Frank, pretending you know all about it," for Frank had his ear glued on the sounder and was trying hard to make out what was coming.





"IT'S CHOCTAW!" CRIED THE CODFISH. "WHO CAN READ CHOCTAW?"—[Page 179](#).

"No, I can't make it out, it's too fast for me; I can read a little if I haven't forgotten. I wish he'd send slower."

By degrees the sounder stopped its mad dancing and began to work slowly.

"Listen," said Frank, and he seized a pencil, "it's something he wants us to hear. I'll write it down."

Frank began scratching as the sounder clicked on. And this is what he got:

*"Do ntfo rgett hat youow eme fi vedol lars."*

"It's Choctaw!" cried the Codfish, who had been leaning over Frank's shoulder as the message came in. "Who can read Choctaw? David, don't speak up too quick. And Frank thinks he's an operator! Shades of my grandmother, what a message!"

Frank had been staring at the page. Finally he burst out laughing.

"Oh, it's a joke, is it? It looks funny enough to be a joke. Explain it, please."

"The only trouble is, that I didn't get the spaces right between the words. See, when you space it right the Choctaw becomes the following: '*Don't forget that you owe me five dollars*'."

"What an insulting thing to send over our own wire first crack out of the box!" said the Codfish. "Of course we owe him five dollars, and if he were a gentleman he wouldn't remind us of it, particularly when we haven't got it in our clothes."

Frank's unexpected display of the ability to read the telegraph by sound, was a great incentive to the others of our quintet of boys, and they worked with might and main. Pasted in each room was a large white card ornamented in the Codfish's best style with the Morse alphabet and figures spread boldly thereon, and this is what they studied morning, noon and night, and sometimes in between:

A—dot dash.	N—dash dot.
B—dash and three dots.	O—dot space dot.
C—two dots space dot.	P—five dots.
D—dash two dots.	Q—two dots dash dot.
E—one dot.	R—dot space two dots.
F—dot dash dot.	S—three dots.
G—two dashes dot.	T—one short dash.
H—four dots.	U—two dots dash.
I—two dots.	W—dot two dashes.
J—dash dot dash dot.	X—dot dash two dots.
K—dash dot dash.	Y—two dots space two dots.
L—one long dash.	Z—three dots space dot.
M—two dashes.	

1—dot dash dash dot.	6—six dots.
2—two dots dash two dots.	7—two dashes two dots.
3—three dots dash dot.	8—dash four dots.
4—four dots dash.	9—dash two dots dash.
5—three dashes.	0—one long dash (longer than letter L).

"And Murphy says that's all a fellow needs to know, to do almost any kind of telegraphing. Sounds easy, doesn't it?" said Frank, one day. "And it is easy to remember the signals themselves, but when they come flying over the wire it's a different story."

"How are you getting on with the telegraph?" inquired David, one night of Lewis, who was listening to the measured ticking of the instrument.

"Great," said Lewis, "I guess I'll be able to take a job on the railroad pretty soon."

"Get out," said Jimmy scornfully. "Lewis makes a great fuss about it because he can tell such little things as *e* and *i* and *h* and things like that. I can do better than that myself. I have a speaking acquaintance with the big, forbidding fellows like *q* and *x* and all the high dignitaries."

For a time the lessons suffered by the introduction of this new toy, but by and by it began to take its natural place in the day or night. They picked up the reading wonderfully quickly and, as the days went on, Murphy was able to take a faster gait. Perhaps they didn't understand all of it, but it was a great joy to be able to pick out small words as the instrument rattled along. All of the boys were able to "send" pretty well, which as every one knows is the easy part of telegraphing. It is the receiving that is so difficult.

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Often Frank and Jimmy held labored conversations over the wire when Murphy had cut out and left them to themselves, and it generally happened that they were obliged to stick their heads out of the window to confirm by voice what had been said and to fill in the gaps which were not clear.

The Codfish frequently used the wire to play tricks. One night Jimmy was awakened by a desperate clatter on the instrument. The call of Jimmy's room was *JC*, and they were both hard letters for our friend, the Codfish. He was rattling away at this *JC, JC, JC*, as fast as he could go. Jimmy sprang up and answered. "*It's very cold down here*," clicked the instrument; "*come on down and put another blanket on me*." Jimmy was furious. "*I'll come down*," he wired back, "*and put a club on you*."

"*Ha, ha, ha, ha!*" laughed the Codfish on the wire.

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But they got a lot of fun out of it and some profit, for they were learning something which they might some day be able to turn to account. Little did any of them realize that it would, at no very distant date, play a prominent part in an important incident in their school life.

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## CHAPTER XV.

### FRANK TAKEN TO WARWICK.

While the advent of the telegraph line occupied the attention of our friends in the evenings, it must not be thought that they were any the less intent on the football doings in the afternoons. The end of the season was drawing rapidly to a close and only one game—that with Porter School on the Queen's grounds—remained on the schedule to be played, with the exception of the final match with Warwick. This latter game was to be played at Warwick, which was considered a disadvantage, as the Queen's eleven seemed to fight better on home grounds. It will be remembered that the Warwick game was played at Queen's the previous year. These matches always alternated—one year at Warwick and the next at Queen's, and so on.

After Frank had won his place on the Second eleven, there was a general brace by the School eleven. Dixon, seeing his position in danger of being invaded by Frank, put forth his best efforts, and he was so clever a quarter that when he did his best he was hard to beat. Horton was delighted with the change and attributed it in a considerable degree to the dashing play of Frank Armstrong, who had been, as he expressed it, "a regular find."

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Then came the Porter game. "This is our test," said Jimmy the Friday night before it was played. "If we get away with this one, there's a chance that we can pull off the Warwick game."

"A fighting chance, yes," said the clear-headed Codfish. "You may be able to hold them, but I don't see how you can score against their defense. Warwick is as good or better than last year. The only way you can beat a strong defense, under these rules that the football fathers have doped out, is to have a drop kicker."

"Well, we haven't got one, so we'll have to get off a forward pass or something tricky, and catch those big guys napping. It all depends on what we can do to-morrow."

The boys turned in early. Frank fell asleep with hopes of a chance at to-morrow's game in his head.

It was a glorious day, and every one far and near turned out to see the test of the School eleven against the strapping boys from Porter. Knowing well the erratic course that the Queen's eleven had been steering, the invaders, who came gayly decked as for a celebration, freely expressed themselves as to the size of the score. They would not consider for a moment that the score might be against them. Nearly all, excepting the most optimistic of the Queen's followers, were shaking in their shoes because a defeat to-day meant disaster a week later. A victory would hearten the team so much, that they might even triumph over the proud and confident eleven up the river.

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From the moment of the first clash of the lines the Porter boys showed their superiority. They took the ball and on straight rushes carried it far down the field, only to lose it when they seemed to be sure of scoring. Red-headed Jimmy was everywhere on defense. Half a dozen times the Porter runner with the ball was through the line, but was nailed with deadly precision by this half-back. Dixon also played magnificently. He was playing to hold his place, and although Frank, sitting on the side-lines wrapped up in a blanket, saw his opportunity for a trial disappearing through the brilliant play of Chip, he could not but admire it.

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Time after time the Porter School eleven carried the ball half the length of the field. Stone, their full-back, out-punted Wheeler, and their ends covered the long punts with deadly certainty. Porter played harder and harder and made ten yards of ground to one for Queen's, but they were met down around the 25-yard line with so fierce a resistance that they could go no further. Twice they made weak attempts to drop-kick a goal, but each time the trials failed. Once a Queen's end recovered the ball and carried it 70 yards down the field, where he was felled by the Porter tackle, who outran him.

This hammering game went on for three quarters, but, in the fourth quarter, Queen's seemed to gain strength. Twice they stopped the Porter rushes at midfield, and with unsuspected power carried the ball inside the 10-yard line, only to be stopped when success seemed certain. Quickly the minutes flew by. Dixon drove his men with increasing speed in spite of the fact that they were about ready to drop. They responded to the call splendidly. It was the best football they had shown the whole fall, but in spite of their best efforts Porter stood a barrier to the goal line, and the whistle blew with the game a tie, without scoring by either side.

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"I was praying that they'd call you in and give you a trial, Frank," said Jimmy that night, "when we were down on their goal line. But, after a conference, Dixon thought he could take it across and Wheeler thought so, too. And they failed. It would have been an easy drop—right in front of the posts. If I had been captain I'd have tried it every time I got inside the 15-yard line, but Horton doesn't think that way."

"Wait till you get to be captain," said the Codfish, "and you'll have them kicking goals all over the field, eh, old speed?"

"Well, I'd be a little freer with them than the Captain is. But it's his team and I'm not grouching. As the fellow in the poem says:

"Mine not to reason why,  
Mine but to do or die."

"And you died, I notice, and you'll die some more up at Warwick next Saturday," prophesied the cold-hearted Codfish.

Very little was done on the gridiron during the week preceding the Warwick game. The players were rested after the hard struggle they had gone through with the Porter School team. There was some secret practice and several trick plays were run over. The last work-out was on Wednesday afternoon.

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"Only light drill to-morrow," announced Horton, "and nothing at all on Friday."

"Do you know the signals of the First eleven?" inquired Horton of Frank when he was coming out of the shower bath that night.

"I've picked up most of them, yes, sir," said Frank.

"I thought so," said Horton, grinning, "by the way you played on defense. Here's a set of them. Get them well in your head. Perhaps we may need you to-morrow."

Frank's heart took a great leap in his breast. "Perhaps we will need you to-morrow," he kept repeating to himself. "But after all it is only 'perhaps.' Well, that's better than nothing." That night Horton's "perhaps" kept him awake half an hour longer than usual, and he went to sleep finally to dream of the clash of battle in which he had a part.

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Thursday was given to signal drill, short, sharp and snappy. The bleachers were well filled with boys who had come down in an organized mass to try out their new songs. As the players rolled and tumbled around on the ground, the sharp cheer rang out, and at its end was the name of a player.

"Come on, get into this, now," shouted the cheer leaders—

"'Rah, 'rah, 'rah, 'rah, 'rah, 'rah! Queen's!—*Wheeler!*"

The boys raised their voices with a will. Even the second and third substitutes came in for their share, and Frank felt a strange thrill run down his spine as he heard his own name, "*Armstrong*," snapped out by the bleachers. That it was well down toward the end of the list and not among the important members did not particularly matter. It meant that he was a possible candidate for the team and that was enough to fill him almost to bursting with happiness. And his joy was not lessened on seeing the bulletin near the gymnasium door, pasted there by Horton, after the practice. His name was among those who were to take the train for Warwick Saturday afternoon.

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It seemed to the boys that Saturday would never come, but come it did at last, a glorious day in early November. The exodus for Warwick began early. The Queen's boys went by train, by automobile, by team, and some of those given to pedestrianism even walked the five miles up the river. Every Queen's boy bore his banner or badge of blue and gold, the school colors. Some carried them modestly while others flaunted their flags to the breeze and made sure that the entire populace would know that they came from Queen's, and that they were sure of victory.

"Isn't it great," said Jimmy, as he and Frank hurried for the 12:30 train which was to take the team to Warwick, "to see this turn-out? It makes me feel as though I could play my head off when the whistle blows."

Boys who have not attended a preparatory school or college can hardly understand the intense feeling of loyalty which a body of students has for its teams. They may be good or they may be poor, but since they represent the school, if the school has any spirit in it at all, the boys are behind the teams. This intense loyalty often actually makes a team strong that would otherwise be indifferent or distinctly poor. And so it was with the Queen's School eleven that Saturday with which our story deals. The bad record of the season was forgotten for the time, and every player who wore the Blue and Gold felt himself nerved to do his best, or more than his best, because his schoolmates were with him heart and soul.

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"I've a hunch that we are going to win this game," said Jimmy as the train neared Warwick on its short run.

"Of course we are," said big Wheeler, overhearing the remark. "Don't believe anything but that and we'll show them who's who, and don't you forget it."

At the little Warwick railroad station a hundred boys who had preceded the team and all those on the train gathered around the team as it alighted from the car and, with hats off, gave it a ringing cheer. Then, as the players piled headlong into the 'bus that was to carry them to the Warwick grounds, the crowd fell into line four deep and followed along, occasionally sending up a cheer to vary the School marching song. And in this martial array Queen's invaded their rival's grounds.

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"Let them sing," said a Warwickicker who sat in a group of boys on the Library steps as the Queen's phalanx went swinging along, proud and haughty under the banners of Blue and Gold; "they will be quiet enough after the game is over."

The Warwick crowd were confident of victory, and the remark of the boy on the steps of the Library reflected the feeling of every one in the school. And they had good reason to feel confident. The Warwick eleven was a strong one, most of whose members had played together for two years. The team had won all its games by big scores, and what served to make assurance almost certain, was an easy victory over Porter two weeks before the day Queen's had played the same team to a tie. The Warwickickers would not even admit that Queen's had a chance to get within striking distance of the Warwick goal on straight offensive

strength. "Of course, there's always danger of a fumble or something," said those who liked to consider themselves fair to the other fellow, "but the chances are against that."

Warwick also made a brave showing with their school colors. Flags hung from the dormitory windows, and over the door of the gymnasium was draped an enormous Warwick flag. Down on the big flagstaff by the track house another flag—Maroon with a big white "W"—floated lazily in the breeze. Boys gathered in doorways and on the walks and discussed with eagerness the coming struggle.

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The game was scheduled for two o'clock and long before that hour the crowds were streaming across the playing fields in the direction of the football stands. Suddenly was heard the music of a band, and soon it swung into view from behind the Library where the Warwick procession had been formed; and after it came a long tail of boys, hands on each other's shoulders, skipping and dancing along in the peculiar zig-zag step. The crowds opened to make room for this procession, and some joined in the Warwick songs as the band thundered out the melody. But you may be sure that the Queen's boys refrained from taking part in the Warwick jollification. They did do their best, however, to make their own songs heard above the din.

Soon the crowds filed into the stands and were seated by the ushers, who were distinguished from their fellows by a big Maroon silk badge on their coat lapels. The ushers, in spite of their duties, managed to keep one eye on the field where the members of the two teams were running through the signals.

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Queen's had the west and Warwick the east stand, and during the preliminaries hurled defiance at each other across the brown gridiron. Warwick, with a greater body of supporters, kept up a steady yell, varied now and then by a song. The Queen's followers, gathered compactly into two or three sections of the stand, made their presence known by their snappy school yell. The cheer leaders worked incessantly, and whenever there was any evidence of lagging, heckled the sections through their megaphones: "Come on here, this isn't a whispering match! What did you come up here for?" and such like taunts.

Suddenly a hush fell on the crowds on both sides of the field. Wheeler, captain of Queen's, and Burns of Warwick, with the referee, met at midfield. They shook hands and held a little conference. After a minute or two the referee snapped a coin into the air. The crowds could not hear what was said, but as Burns turned away and waved his hand to the north end of the field, the Warwick cheer leaders interpreted the sign as meaning, and rightly, too, that Warwick had won the toss and had taken the north end of the field, which was favored by a little breeze.

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The information imparted to the Warwick stand by the megaphones, a cheer burst out spontaneously. The rattle of yelling went the length of the stand. In another instant Warwick's measured yell, beaten by the waving arms of half a dozen cheer leaders working in unison, rolled out on the crisp air as the teams trotted to their places. A moment later the whistle blew and the great game was on.

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## CHAPTER XVI.

### THE WARWICK GAME.

From the moment the whistle blew the two teams went at each other like tigers, Warwick endeavoring to overcome the lighter boys of Queen's by sheer force, a thing that was made possible by the superior weight of their team. Taking the ball from the kick-off, the Warwickers began a slashing attack which resulted in long gains. Biglow, the right half-back on Warwick, slipped through, time and time again, between the Queen's tackle and the end, and when the end drew in he went outside. Five minutes after the ball was put in play, Warwick was inside the Queen's 25-yard line. The latter was fighting desperately, but the forwards did not seem to be able to solve the play which was being sent at them, and the Queen's secondary defense had to take the punishment. Jimmy was at the bottom of every pile and repeatedly was the only player of Queen's who stood between Warwick and a touchdown.

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"Touchdown, touchdown, touchdown!" howled the Maroon stands. "You've got 'em going! No hope for Queen's!"

The Queen's followers cried valiantly and incessantly: "Hold them! hold them!" But even the most enthusiastic and hopeful of the boys who wore the Blue and Gold could not fail to see the impending disaster. Down on the side-line the substitutes crouched, gritting their teeth and thrusting an imaginary shoulder against the Warwick invaders as the two lines met.

"There they go again!" yelled a Queen's boy. "It's a touchdown—no, it isn't—Turner has him!" And Turner did indeed have him. Biglow had sliced in between the tackle and end and was getting up speed, when the fiery Jimmy set sail for him. Biglow, in his endeavor to elude him, cut across the field. Jimmy forced him farther and farther out, until, the side-line being near at hand, Biglow endeavored to side-step the tackler. He failed dismally, and the next moment Jimmy's arms encircled his legs and Jimmy's sturdy shoulder struck his thigh, carrying Biglow with the ball clear off his feet and backward toward his own goal. Biglow's head struck the ground with a resounding thump. The ball flew from his arms and bounced crazily around. Half a dozen forms shot for it, and instantly there was a pile which was quickly dug apart by the referee. Big Wheeler lay with the ball tucked securely under his body.

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You might have thought it a Queen's touchdown the way the followers of the Blue and Gold leaped into the air, shouted, danced and hugged each other.

"Turner, Turner, Turner!" shouted the crowd. "Oh, what a tackle!"

"Good boy, Turner! Good boy, Wheeler!" yelled Queen's; and then the leaders got to work and gave a regular cheer for each of the boys who had saved, for a time at least, the Queen's goal line. The Warwick stand was as still as death. A touchdown had been snatched away from them by the red-head!

Wheeler immediately kicked out of danger, sending the ball spinning far down the field, from which position Warwick again took up the march. The Queen's forwards did better this time. They had learned a little more about their opponent's attack and checked the advances a little, but could not stop them. More slowly but just as surely the ball went back. Biglow bored through and went around the end, making up the difficult yards that had been lost by his previous fumble. He ran low and hard and scarcely ever failed to make his distance. Once with five yards to go on the last down, the Warwick quarter worked a pretty forward pass and made the necessary distance.

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Across the center of the field came the Warwick football machine, irresistible and deadly. Chip shouted from the back field instructions to the line to get low and charge fast and hard. They tried to follow orders, but were bowled over by the fierce onslaught of the bigger line they were facing. Jimmy slapped the linemen on the back and encouraged them after each scrimmage, and endeavored with Wheeler to work the team up to desperate heights of defense. But all seemed useless. On came the Warwick team, and now they were at the 20-yard line.

With the necessity for a close guarding of the back field territory diminishing, the Queen's backs crept in closer and made the Warwick players work even harder for what they earned. But even then the big Maroon team made its distance, and, with a first down, the ball lay just inside the 10-yard line.

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Again Queen's was fighting hard to stave off a touchdown. The boys in the stand called almost despairingly to "hold them," while pandemonium reigned on the opposite side of the field. The Warwick players looked smiling and confident as they settled themselves for a scrimmage, while Queen's was tense and anxious.

"Put it over this time!" yelled Warwick. "Make it sure!"

The Warwick quarter stood up straight, looked over the backs of his crouching forwards, sized up the positions of the defensive backs and then gave his signal rapidly. The lines met with a crash! But there was a mistake in signals, and the back that was to take the pass from the quarter wasn't where he should have been. The quarter, borne off his feet by the fierce charge of the Queen's line, cried "Down!" from the bottom of a squirming mass. It was second down and 12 yards to gain, which somewhat dimmed the jubilation on the Warwick side.

"They'll try a forward pass now," said Frank to one of the other substitutes. Together they had been crawling down the side-lines on their hands and knees, watching with intense eagerness the great fight

their comrades had been making against heavy odds. "Why doesn't Jimmy move out a little? There he goes; he's on to it, I guess. No, he's going back again. What are they going to try?"—for the quarter had called his men together after giving part of the signal and was instructing them probably in the play that was to come off. Suddenly the team sprang back into position, crouching low with finger-tips on the ground.

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"Sixteen—sixty-two—forty," shrieked the Warwick quarter. The ball flew straight back to Biglow, who took half a dozen steps to the right to draw the defense in that direction. Then he stopped and shot it far out to the left in the direction of the Warwick end, who had edged out without apparently attracting any attention.

But while the ruse had fooled nearly every one, it had not fooled Jimmy or his Captain. They had guessed the play and even before Biglow had stopped, were already in motion toward the waiting Warwick end.

The ball flew straight, but just as it was about to settle into the arms of the Warwick end, big Wheeler made a leap into the air and succeeded in touching the ball with the tips of his fingers. It was enough to deflect it from its course, and Jimmy, racing behind, was under it like a flash before it touched the ground. He tucked it under his arm and was off down the field like lightning, while Wheeler, his speed unchecked by the leap, tore along at his side!

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As it happened, the pass had carried the ball well to the left side of the field, and most of the players of both teams were out of the possibility of either helping or hindering the runner. There were two of the Warwick players besides Biglow, the back who had thrown the ball—the left tackle and the outwitted end—who were within reaching distance, and they went after Jimmy full tilt. Wheeler turned aside and put the end, the most dangerous man for the moment, out of the play by slowing up suddenly in front of him. Then he threw himself headlong in front of Biglow, who went sprawling head first on the ground.

This left the tackle, a boy named Robinson, the only hope of Warwick to prevent a touchdown, for Jimmy had a clear field to the Warwick goal.

And what a race it was! Jimmy, short and stocky, ran as if his life depended on it. He fairly flew over the ground, but the long-legged Robinson gained on him. The stands forgot to cheer in watching that race. Despite Jimmy's best efforts, the tackle still gained on him. He had crossed the center of the field and was bearing directly for the goal posts, with every energy bent on reaching them.

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Forty-five, forty, thirty-five, thirty—the lines flew by, and still he kept ahead. At the 25-yard line Robinson was a stride behind, but a few yards farther Jimmy felt Robinson's hand touch his shoulder, as the tackle reached for him. The touch was like an electric shock and Jimmy fairly leaped away, but the big tackle was not shaken off. In two strides more he had again reached Jimmy, and he launched himself with all his might against the Queen's half-back, gripping his legs as he fell. Jimmy felt those steel-like fingers grappling him and gave a last despairing effort. He twisted out of the other's hold, spun completely around, and, staggering blindly, fell over the goal line with the ball gripped in both hands and with knees curled, drawn up to defend it from any attack! But there was no attack, for the two runners had outdistanced all the rest. Queen's had scored!

What a shriek split the air over the Queen's stands! The cheer leaders forgot their work entirely, and did nothing but jump up and down and toss their megaphones into the air, careless whether they landed on the ground, on their own heads or on the head of some one else. After perhaps two minutes of this din, the leaders suddenly remembered that they were supposed to get organized sounds out of the spectators, and for the space of several minutes, they worked their already tired throats to the limit of endurance in the short cheer—"now hip! hip!"—the long cheer, and a final rousing yell for "*Turner, Turner, Turner!*"

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The Warwick crowd, unable to believe their eyes, sat dumfounded. Every one was trying to explain to every one else just how it had happened—Burns had failed to have one of his backs on the lookout for just such an emergency; the pass had been too slow; the end had been too far out. These and a dozen other excuses the Warwick sympathizers had to offer, but meantime the scoreboard at the end of the field showed the indisputable fact that, explanations or no explanations, the score stood:

Queen's—5.

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Wheeler made a sorry exhibition of a kick-out and sent the ball over the head of the catcher. It hit the ground, and of course there was no chance for a try at the goal. What should have been an easy point for Queen's was thus lost to them.

"Come on now, fellows!" shouted the Warwick Captain. "We'll get that touchdown in five minutes!"

"We'll get it all back again and half a dozen more, too!" said Robinson tauntingly to Chip, as the two teams moved to their places for the next kick-off. But before half a dozen plays had been made, the whistle sounded to end the first quarter.

Excitement reigned in the stands during the intermission and when the teams faced each other for the second quarter, the interest was intense.

"Go for them, Warwick!" yelled a voice in the front row of the Warwick stand. "Eat 'em alive!"

And the Warwick team did its best to follow this cannibalistic advice. Taking up the former smashing game, Warwick quickly carried the ball far down the field, but just when Queen's was beginning to settle desperately to work, a fumble in the Warwick back field, which was recovered by Queen's, relieved the strain and Wheeler sent the sphere spinning back down the field.

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Warwick, nothing daunted, with the same old methods, came back as determinedly as ever. Queen's seemed unable to stop them anywhere excepting once inside their own 10-yard line at the urgings of the stands, when the line stood up to its work like heroes and threw the Warwick runner back on the last down for a loss and took the ball; and once again when an onside kick was partially blocked and the ball recovered by Jimmy Turner.

Warwick had played so desperately hard to overcome the Queen's lead, that they were tiring perceptibly as the minutes went on. They had carried the ball two or three times the length of the field if all their gains were counted, but just when distance counted most, down by the Queen's goal, something would go wrong. Not only the Warwick bodies but their spirits were lagging, and they were as glad as the players of Queen's when the whistle blew to end the half. The score had not been changed and the hopes of the Queen's followers, as well as those of the team itself, had risen wonderfully.

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The two teams trudged off rather slowly to their dressing rooms to be sponged off and talked to and rested during the fifteen minutes of intermission, leaving behind them a babel of talk on both sides of the field, interrupted every now and then by a school song or a series of cheers from one side or the other. It was all most friendly between the halves. Queen's boys and Warwick boys tumbled down from the stands and hobnobbed with each other. Queen's was jubilant, while in every Warwick boy's face one could read plainly: "Wait and see what we'll do in the second half."

The intermission passed rapidly. The appearance of the big Maroon players was the signal for a roar from the Warwick stands, broken into immediately by a like demonstration from Queen's when the blue-stockinged boys trotted onto the field from the opposite end, as spry-looking as if they had not gone through a hard half. Little time was lost in preliminaries. The Warwick captain, who had the kick-off, slapped his hands together and shouted confidently to his team-mates to "follow the ball hard." Down the field the Queen's players were scattered in defensive array, grim and defiant.

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"Ready, Captain Wheeler?" cried the referee. Wheeler waved his hand as a signal that he was.

"Ready, Captain Burns?" The stands were so quiet that Burns' answer—"All ready, sir!"—could be plainly heard. The whistle shrilled sharply, the ball flew in a long curve down the field, settling in Turner's arms, who, after covering ten yards, was slammed to the earth. The last half of that memorable battle was on.

During the intermission, the Codfish, Lewis and David had squeezed themselves onto the sacred benches of the substitutes as near as they could get to Frank, and the four boys, with muscles stiffening at each crash of the lines, watched the tide of battle swing up and down the gridiron.

Warwick played furiously at the beginning, and although, as in the first half, they lost valuable territory by fumbles and misplays, gradually Burns steadied his team. After a particularly disastrous fumble, taking the ball at their own 35-yard line, Burns' Maroon-stockinged warriors began a great advance. Four and five yards were reeled off at every clip, and once when there was danger of being held Burns worked a beautiful forward pass for twenty yards. Warwick was now on Queen's 23-yard line, and their football machine was working with deadly precision.

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"Now we have them!" yelled Burns jubilantly. "Squeeze that ball, you backs, and make it go!" The signal was snapped out, there was a crash of meeting bodies and Burns himself, with his head down, bored through the line like a drill until he met Wheeler and Jimmy; but when the pile which followed was pulled apart, the ball was five yards nearer the Queen's goal line.

"They can't hold them!" said the Codfish in a tense whisper, as the lines prepared again for the scrimmage. "Oh, if the line would only give our backs a little chance, we might stand them off yet! There they go! Oh, thunder, look at that!"

This exclamation was brought forth by a pretty double pass worked by the Warwick backs. The feint toward the Queen's left end threw the defense off their balance, and before they recovered Hudson, the fleet full-back of Warwick, who had been saved for just such an opportunity as had now arrived, was off like the wind. The Queen's end was bowled over neatly by Burns, and the way to the goal line was clear excepting for Dixon.

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Warwick had used so many straight plays into the line that the clever and quickly worked pass came as a great surprise to every one, and the Warwick stands, quiet for a moment, burst into a great yell as they saw a touchdown coming, or thought they saw it, at least. Dixon moved up to meet Hudson, crouching ready for the tackle. The boy with the ball fainted to the inside of Chip. Dixon lunged to meet him, but Hudson quickly side-stepped and with an extra speed slipped outside of him and was clear. Dixon dived after him, but missed and lay sprawling on the ground. The momentary check of Hudson gave Jimmy a chance at the runner, however. He started across, badly bothered by the Warwick tackle, but finally got clear and came over the field like a whirlwind.

Hudson saw him coming, and, fearing to be intercepted, began to edge off toward the side-line. Jimmy pressed him hard in spite of his superior speed, and when Hudson was only five yards from the goal line, Jimmy made a last effort and threw himself at the runner with all his strength. The blow knocked Hudson off his feet. He half turned in the air, struck on his shoulder and actually bounded over the goal line. It was a magnificent attempt on Jimmy's part, but it failed, and Warwick had crossed the Queen's line with points enough resulting to tie the score!

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It was now Warwick's turn to yell, and they did it with an energy which far surpassed their best previous efforts. Queen's by rights should have been silent, but they yelled almost as loudly as did their friends in the opposite stand, for Turner's wonderful try to get Hudson brought every one to his feet cheering.

"Five feet more," said Frank, "and Turner would have had him sure."

"Who'd have thought the old mule could run that way?" cried the Codfish. "I'll never call him slow any more."

"You can always figure on Jimmy doing his best and a little more," returned Frank. "Good old Jimmy! But what's the matter with Dixon?"

This, as Dixon got up and began twisting and turning his right wrist.

"The matter is," returned the Codfish, "that Chip is getting ready to give a good excuse for missing his tackle."

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The team gathered around Chip without paying any attention to the jubilation of the Warwick crowd, which extended even to the team itself. Horton ran out on the field to the little knot of Queen's players and after half a minute's examination of Chip's wrist came back to the side-lines, while the Warwick team prepared for a kick-out. The ball had crossed the line far over toward the side of the field, and it was not thought possible to kick a goal if the ball were brought straight out, because of the difficult angle.

## FRANK SAVES THE GAME.

"What's the matter with Dixon?" inquired the Codfish, as Horton sat down on the ground just in front of our friends.

"He says he hurt his wrist in the first half and again just now," replied the coach gloomily. "If he's hurt as bad as he acts, it's all over with us. There goes the ball," he added, glancing over his shoulder. "Good kick! Fine catch, too, even if it does beat us!"—for Hudson had caught Burns' kick-out right in front of the posts. "They can't miss it from there."

Nor did Warwick miss it. Burns took most deliberate aim, while the little quarter-back, lying flat on his stomach, tilted the ball this way and that. When it was just right, Burns moved forward and swung his foot. Every one watched the ball's flight with straining eyes.

"Goal!" shouted the referee, and the Warwick crowd, which had settled back on the stand, again sprang up, yelling like mad. The point just scored meant a victory, even if no more scoring was done. A great white figure 6 appeared in the blank space, which up to this time had decorated Warwick's place on the scoreboard. At the sight Warwick redoubled its yells.

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"One, two, three, four, five, six!" chanted the crowd, while the teams trotted back to their places on the field.

"Five minutes left in this quarter," called Burns to his team; "do that over again! Come on now, hard!"

And hard it was, for with the taste of a well-earned touchdown in their mouths, the Warwick team played like demons; and before the whistle blew Burns had crossed the line for another touchdown. But no goal was kicked, the angle being a hard one. The Queen's colors were drooping like their players, and the boys began to ask each other: "How much more is it going to be?"

"Looks bad, Frank," said the Codfish gloomily, "we can't hold 'em. I wish they'd let you get in."

"No chance, old fellow," returned Frank. "Chip seems to be all right, and I think he'd play till he died rather than let me on if he is really hurt."

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"Yes, he's a dog-in-the-manger, for sure."

Dixon did appear to be all right, and when the Queen's team lined up for the last quarter there were no substitutions.

"It's all over but the shouting, fellows," cried a big Warwick cheer leader. "Get into this cheer—hip, hip," and the Warwick cheer split the air.

"They are pretty confident, Frank," ventured David, who, though eager as the others, had taken very little part in the conversation on the side-lines.

"Yes, they certainly are," said Frank. His face was long. "Queen's has made a good fight out there, but they are not strong enough in the line. What a wonder Jimmy Turner is!" This as Jimmy piled the Warwick interference up so solidly that the runner with the ball could not get past it, and was easily nailed for a loss.

But Warwick still held the ball, and was driving through the Queen's line again and again to a first down. The Queen's supporters sat stupefied on the stand and only occasionally raised a half-hearted cheer. Wheeler seemed to be played out, and had missed tackle after tackle, and twice Jimmy had stood alone as a defensive back to stop everything that came his way. In the few times that Queen's was able to get possession of the ball, Chip ran the team badly and seemed to have forgotten all he knew about the game of football. When he had a chance, he did not make the best of it, and Horton actually tore his hair and dug his heels into the turf over on the side-line. Finally, losing all patience, he jumped up from his seat and ran down along the line of substitutes.

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"Armstrong! Where's Armstrong?" he shouted.

"Here, sir!" said Frank, jumping up, his heart thumping like a trip-hammer.

"Go out there and take Dixon's place, and for pity's sake get that team together. They are playing like the team from an Old Ladies' Home."

Frank pulled his sweater off with a jerk, tossed it to David—who had hardly time to shout out, "Good work!"—and raced onto the gridiron.

"Who's going in?" was the query that ran through the stands.

"Why, that's Armstrong, the kid who played on the Second team a while," said some one better informed than his neighbors. "He's going in at quarter in Dixon's place. Dixon is all in, I guess."

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"A long cheer for Armstrong!" howled the cheer leaders. But Frank never heard it. He dashed over to where Dixon was beginning his signal, for Queen's had recovered a fumbled ball on her own 30-yard line. Frank reported first to the referee and then stepped over and touched Dixon on the shoulder. "I'm to take your place," he said quietly.

"Get out!" said Dixon, and crouched behind the center ready to receive the pass. But the whistle shrilled and the referee ran up among the Queen's backs.

"Queen's has twelve men on the field, Mr. Wheeler. Who is going to play your quarter? Decide quickly."

"Armstrong, sir," returned Wheeler. "Dixon, go to the side-line."

Chip stood up and glared hard at Wheeler. Then he turned, dropped his head and walked slowly off the field, never once looking back. When he was off the playing surface, the whistle spoke again and the battle was on once more, this time with Armstrong in charge of the attack.

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The first play Frank gave was stopped without an inch of advance, and Warwick spectators howled with derision. "It's all the same to us!" cried one loud-mouthed boy in the front row, just opposite where the teams were lining up at that moment. "No hope for Queen's. Take the ball away from them! We want another touchdown."

Before Frank gave his signal on the second down, Wheeler called his players around him. With heads close together they had a little heart-to-heart talk, while Warwick shouted from the stands: "Come on, you kids, play ball! Don't delay the game."

The head-to-head group fell apart, settled to their crouching positions, and Frank snapped the signal out sharply. Back came the ball to Frank and, scarcely checking it a moment in its flight, he tossed it to Jimmy, who shot out to the right, which happened at that moment to be the long side of the line. Frank fell in behind him. The tackle dived at Jimmy as he sliced past, but missed. Burns was right there, however, having followed the runner with the ball out toward the center of the field, and now he reached Jimmy's waist with powerful arms. The defensive end came in full tilt, also, to help his captain to make sure of the tackle. But just as Jimmy felt himself falling from the impact of Burns, he squirmed half way around, and even as he pitched headlong to the ground with the deadly clasp of Burns on his hips and the none too loving embrace of the end's arms around his neck, he tossed the ball to Frank. Before either the half-back or the end could recover, Frank, continuing at full speed, had swept clear of the defense, turned in like lightning and was off down the field!

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Ahead of Frank loomed the quarter, the only player between him and the glory which lay in the form of a touchdown far down the field. Full at the quarter he charged, gaining speed with every step. He did not hear the wild cries of encouragement which went up from his schoolmates. There was only one thought in his mind—how to pass that player who stood waiting, eagerly crouching.

Frank's training on the track stood him in good stead now. He was fresh, too, and he was making the best of both circumstances. Directly at the quarter-back he raced, apparently to run him down, but when he was within ten feet of him, he suddenly swerved to the right and ran straight across the field toward the side-line. The quarter-back, fearing Frank's speed, followed him out with all the pace his tired limbs could muster. But just when he seemed to have Frank cut off there, the latter suddenly stopped, evaded the rushing tackle that was intended to lay him low, and went straight down the field. His stop, although but for an instant, brought the Warwick reserves up to him. One by one they tried to reach him, but eel-like he evaded them. It was one of the prettiest pieces of dodging running that had ever been seen on the Warwick field. But despite his wonderful luck and pluck he was finally caught from behind, and thrown with a crash to the ground at Warwick's 25-yard line. He had covered nearly fifty-five yards, the longest run of the day. And, excepting the help that Jimmy had unwittingly given him in tangling up the half and the opposing end, he had accomplished the run unaided, as his tired team-mates had not been able to follow the pace down the field and were outdistanced.

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With first down at the 25-yard line, Queen's took on a great determination, and in three tries—a quarter-back run and two dashes past tackle by Jimmy—the ball was finally within striking distance of the Warwick goal. But here the advance ended. The next play was thrown back a yard or two by the desperate Warwick team, and a short forward pass barely made up the lost ground. Then came a conference and Frank dropped back to the 27-yard line.

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"He's going to try for a field goal, by jiminy," cried the Codfish, who had nearly had a fit of apoplexy through joy at Frank's splendid run. "And he'll do it. Watch him!"

Warwick kept up a steady yell, probably with the intention of disturbing the young quarter-back, but if that was the idea, it had no effect on Frank whatsoever. The ball lay on the ground in the center's hand a little to the right of the center of the field, and the angle was not a bad one, although not an over-attractive one. In the storm of cat-calls from Warwick, Frank measured the distance carefully with his eye. The protection for the kicker formed quickly, and then came the signal. With as little hurry as if he had been practicing down at Seawall, Frank took the ball from the center's long pass, turned it over quickly but carefully, so that the seam lacing was away from him, dropped it to the ground, and as it rose again, swung his foot against it. The ball swept upward to its greatest height, described a long crescent downward, struck the cross-bar fairly in the middle, bounded into the air and fell—on the other side!

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The yell that the reawakened Queen's stand gave might have been heard as far as Queen's School itself, but the cause of it all trotted quietly back with his team to the center of the field without looking to right or left.

"What did I tell you!" shouted the Codfish, waltzing wildly around Lewis. "You can't beat that kid! There, that score looks better," as the scorer changed the Queen's figures to 8. "We'll beat them yet. Whoop!"

The score seemed to put new life into Queen's, and after the kick-off, which was made by Queen's to Warwick, the latter made little headway in the rushing game. In the very first attempt to kick, the Queen's right guard, by a great effort, got through the defense and blocked the ball squarely. A desperate scramble ensued, and despite the orders of the referee to "get up" and "let go," the pile which formed like magic where the ball had been had to be dug apart one by one. At the very bottom Jimmy was found with the ball under his chin and both arms wrapped around it, as if it were the dearest possession he had ever known. It was Queen's ball on the Warwick 21-yard line.

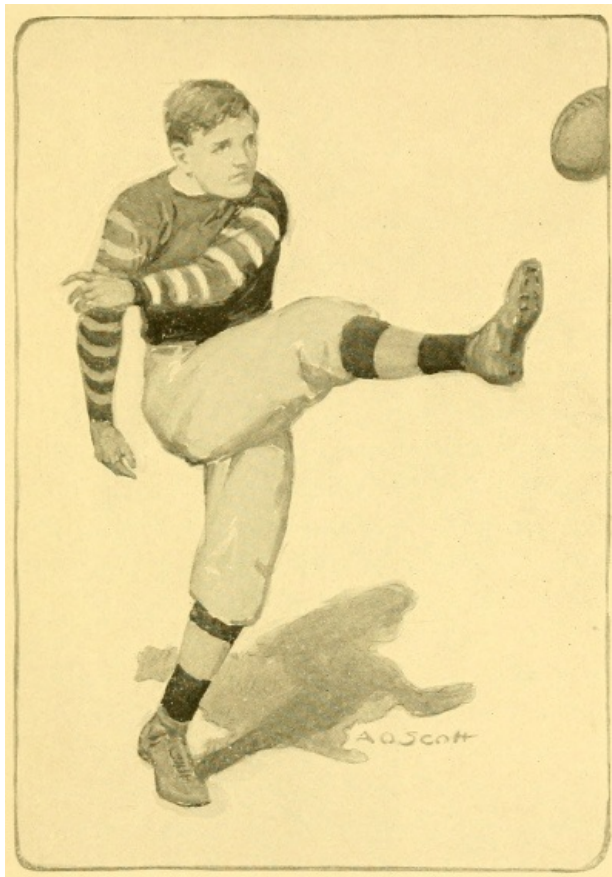
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Once, only, did Wheeler order a rush. Warwick stopped that with deadly determination, throwing back even the redoubtable Jimmy. Then again Frank dropped far behind the line. He stood exactly on the 33-yard line and again measured with the greatest care the distance to the goal posts.

"You can't do it, Armstrong; you can't do it!" sang out the first rows of the Warwick benches in a vain attempt to disturb the poise of the boy on whom all eyes were turned. But they might as well have tried to disturb a statue. One of Frank's gifts was concentration, and perhaps he never concentrated his mind on anything in his life more strongly than he did on that occasion. "I must! I must!" kept ringing in his brain.

Wheeler disposed his protection for the kicker with great care, for on the success of the play hung the issue of the day. Three points would tie the score. There were only a few minutes of time now remaining in the last quarter of the match. No wonder the players took their places with minute care. When all was ready Frank gave the signal. Back came the ball, as straight and true to his hands as a bullet. Down it went to the ground, rose and was sent spinning on its long flight from Frank's toe. But it rose none too soon, for big Robinson had beaten down the Queen's defense, leaped high into the air and in his slash for the ball missed it only by the fraction of an inch. But he had missed it, which was the important point, and it swept up as true as a compass needle to the pole. On, on it went, rising higher and higher, and revolving rapidly on its short axis. Would it carry? On that thought every mind was concentrated. Now the ball turned, dipped downward, fell almost straight—but cleared the far side of the bar by ten feet at least!

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DOWN IT WENT TO THE GROUND, ROSE AND WAS SENT  
SPINNING ON ITS LONG FLIGHT FROM FRANK'S TOE.—[Page](#)  
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The Queen's demonstration which broke loose at this entirely overshadowed anything that had ever been heard on that field, and it was still in progress when the teams lined up for the final minutes of the play. All the fire had gone out of Warwick's play. They could do no more than fight off the buoyant Queen's team till the whistle blew. And when it did blow, there was a wild flight of boys from the Queen's stand, which for a moment completely swallowed the tired but happy little knot of football warriors. And then they were heaved into sight on the shoulders of the admiring crowd and carried around the gridiron protesting. For half an hour Queen's assumed complete control of that football field, dancing wildly around in a long snaky dance while their songs and cheers rent the air. They did not forget in their joy, however, to stop in front of the center section of the Warwick stand and give a hearty cheer for the rival school. Gradually the crowds broke up and streamed off in the direction of the station. "One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, ELEVEN!" chanted the joyous Queen's School contingent.

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That night a bonfire at Queen's lit the sky with a yellow light which was seen for miles around, and caused the story that the whole of Queen's School had burned to the ground. Armstrong's name was on every tongue, for through his wonderful drop kicking Queen's had gone into history as having, with two field goals, tied a game in which at the outset they seemed not to have the slightest chance. Frank bore his honors modestly and said it was nothing but luck. But his particular friends didn't think it was "just luck," and took no pains to conceal their belief that he was the greatest drop kicker ever, past, present or future!

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## CHAPTER XVIII.

### MRS. BOWSER'S CAT.

"The question before this honorable board," began the Codfish, as he stretched himself out one night in Frank's Morris chair before Frank's comfortable blaze, thus displaying his characteristic hosiery of vivid color, "is, what has become of Mrs. Bowser's cat? Don't all speak at once."

It was a cold day in the middle of January. Football had been laid away on the shelf for two months. The ticklish period of examinations before the Christmas holidays was a thing of the past, and all examinations had been passed successfully by our friends, although Lewis had had a tight squeeze. Frank, Jimmy, the Codfish, Lewis and David were gathered around the blazing fire. Books had been tossed aside for the night, when the Codfish propounded his question.

"The poor thing couldn't stand that hymn in Chapel this morning," said Frank. "When you raised your voice she skipped to the tall timbers."

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"I don't blame her, do you, Frank?" inquired Jimmy. "The Codfish has a voice which would drive a biped crazy, to say nothing of a quadruped or even a centipede. He sings on both sides of the note and never hits it."

"What happened to the old cat, anyway?" broke in Lewis, as the Codfish was about to come back at Jimmy with hot shot.

"Ask the Codfish," returned Frank. "He was on the aisle where the whole thing happened. Maybe he was responsible for the presence of Tabby, and if he was, he has first-hand information of the greatest importance. Out with it, Codfish."

"Not guilty!" said the accused, stretching himself still further till his feet touched the fender. "I got tangled up with the Bowser family once, and once is enough. I stand before you guiltless of the dastardly deed."

"Who brought the cat in, anyway?"

"Give it up," said the Codfish. "Some one of those fresh young things on the east aisle. The proctors are looking for him, and if they find him and Mrs. Bowser gets her hand on him, there will be a funeral at some rural household, I'm thinking."

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"She certainly did set up a howl this morning," said Jimmy, "when  
—"

"Who, the cat or Mrs. Bowser?" inquired Frank.

"The cat, my smart young drop kicker; and then she—the cat, not Mrs. Bowser—flew out with her tail the size of a muff."

"And like the last lines of the story, she was never seen nor heard of again," added Jimmy dolefully.

"Poor Mrs. Bowser!" said Frank.

"Poor Tabby!" said the Codfish. "Mrs. Bowser still has her nice, warm, comfortable house, while poor pussy is probably out in the cold somewhere. Why doesn't the fool cat have sense enough to go home?" he continued. "I would."

"Probably the fear of hearing your voice is in her heart, and she would have to pass Honeywell Hall to get back home."

The incident that the boys were discussing was the appearance that morning at prayers of a sleek black cat. Evidently she had been picked up by some one of a mischievous turn of mind and smuggled into the Chapel. Prayers were just over. The boys were in the middle of the fine old tune of "America," and had reached the first line of the third verse, "Let music swell the breeze," when there was a piercing howl, and a furry bunch of animation, which proved to be a black cat, shot across the open space of the Chapel just below the platform and between that and the first row of seats. The volume of tone instantly diminished as heads were turned and necks craned to see what was happening. Pussy ran up the steps of the platform, took one wild look at Dr. Hobart and then tore down the aisle for the door. Hands shot out here and there to interrupt the meteor-like passage of the black cat, but she dodged them all and, uttering high-pitched yowls, reached the Chapel door and disappeared.

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From that moment no one had seen her. During the day the news had spread around that Mrs. Black Cat, who bore the euphonious name of "Pandora," had been kidnapped. A search was instituted. The Chapel building had been searched and the dormitories next to it, but neither hide nor hair of Pandora had come to light. Mrs. Bowser was distracted. The guilty boy or boys who smuggled the cat into the Chapel had gone undetected, although there had been much cross-questioning and some little detective work by the proctors.

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"Well, I'd like to find Pandora," said Frank. "I don't forget that Mrs. Bowser helped us out of a bad scrape last year, when Lewis got the tags mixed up on the ice-cream consignment and sent the poor lady the wrong box."

"Same here," said the Codfish. "I'd take a hand in the rescue myself, if it wasn't so blooming cold to-night."

"That's just it, it is so blooming cold that poor pussy is likely to freeze to death. If she's inside, she's all right."

"Of course she's inside, you blithering idiot," said the Codfish, yawning. "Any cat that knows enough to sing 'America' isn't likely to be so dumb as to stay out in zero weather, is she? Perhaps she wasn't kidnapped at all——"

"Cat-napped, you mean," corrected Jimmy.

"Well, cat-napped, then. Perhaps she's just a good religious cat and came in to prayers like any Freshman. Whatever her intention was, I can't help it. But there's one thing I do know," and the Codfish sat up and wagged his forefinger impressively.

"What?"

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"That I'm going to my downy couch, cat or no cat." He rose to his feet, gave a prodigious stretch and ambled off in the direction of the bed chamber.

"Well, I must be going, too," said Jimmy.

"I'll take a turn with you," said Frank. "Come on, David, a whiff of this sharp air will do you good."

"Can't," said David. "I've got to work on an editorial for the *Mirror*."

"All right, I'll go alone. I'll only be a minute."

Together the three boys, Jimmy, Lewis and Frank, clattered out of the dormitory and stepped rapidly up the walk.

"By Jove!" said Frank, "I'd like to walk about five miles. Isn't this air wonderful?" and he drew in a deep breath of the frosty air.

"About fifty feet is enough for me," grunted Lewis, and as they reached his entry, "I'll drop off this procession right here. Ta, ta. If you fellows are found frozen stiff as Lot's wife in the morning, I'll say I told



you so."

"Lot's wife wasn't frozen," said Jimmy; "she was petrified. Your Biblical education has been neglected."

"You fellows will be both petrified and frozen in about five minutes, if you hang around there correcting your betters on Biblical matters," retorted Lewis, and he dashed up the stairs. [Pg 234]

"Come on!" shouted Frank to Jimmy; "I'll race you to the other end of the yard and back—one, two, three, go!"

Away the two tore at breakneck speed down the walk. The Chapel lay at the far end of the walk on which the boys were having their little race, and it was to be the turning point. Frank reached the wall of the tower first, touched it and turned a step or two ahead of Jimmy. The latter trying to make a quick turn slipped and fell to the ground with a crash. Frank stopped and came back.

"Acknowledge you're licked," he said, helping Jimmy to his feet.

"I'm licked, all right, and I'm also skinned, all right," grumbled Jimmy. "Ouch! I've knocked more skin off my hip than I did all through the football season." He limped around rubbing the injured member.

"I've got a bottle of arnica at the room; come on back and I'll fix you up," laughed Frank. "Sorry, old man, but you can't run till you stretch your legs more. They're too short." [Pg 235]

"I don't want arnica; I want some nice tough skin. If you have any of that down there to spare, I'll go back with you. S-s-s-h—what was that?"

Jimmy's ear had caught a sound like a long-drawn-out cry. "Didn't you hear it, Frank?"

"You have a singing in your ears, Jimmy," said Frank. "Come along, I'll give you my arm."

"There it is again," said Jimmy in a whisper. "Listen!"

As they stood with their heads cocked, there came a long wail as of something in distress. It sounded half human, half animal, and was quite terrifying. It seemed to come out of the air above them.

"Great Peter, what is it?" said Jimmy, clutching Frank by the arm.

Frank began to laugh. "It does sound bad, certainly. She's trying to get the tune of 'America' just right, I guess. It's the cat, or I miss my guess."

"And for pity sake, where is she?" gasped Jimmy, turning his face skyward where the stars glittered in the frosty atmosphere.

"The mystery is explained," said Frank. "Mrs. Bowser's cat has somehow or other got into the tower. She doesn't like it a bit, and she wants to go home." [Pg 236]

"I guess that's the explanation," returned Jimmy. "But I don't see how she's going to get home to-night, unless we can get up there."

"And if we don't get up, she'll probably never go home," said Frank. "It must be terribly cold up there. It is all open up in the belfry, and it's dollars to doughnuts she'll be as stiff as Lewis said Lot's wife was, by morning." To emphasize his words, another wail floated out on the night air. It seemed more pitiful than before and weaker.

"Poor Pandora is getting discouraged," cried Jimmy. "We've got to get her somehow."

For answer, Frank strode to the big front door of the Chapel and tried the knob, with Jimmy at his heels. "Just as I thought," he said; "it is locked."

The boys stood and looked at each other. "Guess we'd better go and hunt up the janitor," said Jimmy. "He can bring her down. I don't want to take any more chances. I've lost all the skin I want to lose to-night."

"There's a little door around on the other side," said Frank, "which the janitor uses to go in and out of the building, but I suppose that's locked, too. Let's try it. If we can't get in, we'll have to report the whereabouts of Pandora. But just for the fun of the thing, I'd like to get that tabby cat and take her back to the lady who is worrying about her. It would square us a little for that bad job we did to the Travel Club last winter." He was already on his way to the little door at the back of the tower, and Jimmy tagged along behind, protesting. [Pg 237]

"No use, Frank," he said. "Old Bonesey"—the nickname applied to the

Chapel janitor by the boys because he was so lean and bony—"keeps that door locked as tight as a drum. Some one stole the clapper of the bell a few years ago and he is particular about that door. We'd better go and report that pussy is in the tower, and then skip for bed. It's getting late."

But Frank was not listening. Just about the time Jimmy reached the end of his protest, Frank reached the door, which was all in darkness, sunk as it was in the deep wall of the tower, which was at this point perhaps three feet thick.

"Here we are," he said as he grasped the handle. "And here's luck—it's open. Old Bonesey slipped a cog to-night. Come on." Frank stepped over the threshold. Jimmy followed cautiously. The hall was as dark as pitch, not even the faintest ray of light penetrating into the place to help them. Frank, leading, stumbled along and fell over something in the passageway, startling Jimmy half out of his wits.

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"Come back here, you chump," he cried in a subdued voice. "I don't like this."

"Come on!" whispered Frank, who had regained his feet and was advancing. "This passage brings us out into the vestibule of the Chapel, and once there we can get into the tower easily. There's a ladder or stairs or something from the back of the gallery."

"Yes, I know that," returned Jimmy in a half whisper, for the gloom of the place chilled him more than the biting air; "but how are we going to climb it in the dark?"

"Oh, it's easy," said Frank. "Come on, I'll lead and you can come behind. I'm going to make a try for that cat."

"All right," said Jimmy almost sulkily, "go on, but if you break your blooming neck you needn't blame me for it," and he shuffled after Frank.

Soon they came out of the passageway and, as Frank said, they were in the vestibule leading to the Chapel. From that vestibule the doors led into the various aisles of the Chapel, and at the farther end of the vestibule rose a circular flight of stairs which led to the gallery and on to the belfry, as the boys well knew. Toward this they made their way cautiously. A little light from the stars came in through the windows at the far end of the vestibule. Frank led on, feeling along the wall and stepping cautiously. They both felt a little queer to be alone in such a place and in such a manner in the dead of night, but, as Frank said afterward, they were on an errand of mercy, and having set out on the mission they would not turn back. Soon they struck the wall at the far end of the vestibule from which they had entered, and a little feeling around gave them the lower step of the winding stairway.

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"Here she is!" said Frank. "Take hold of the rail. Our troubles are half over."

"I think they are only beginning," grumbled Jimmy. "I'd much rather be in bed than here any day."

"Any night, you mean. Come on. This is easy." Jimmy didn't think so, but he would have followed Frank anywhere that Frank would lead. It was plain that he didn't like the errand, judging from sundry grunts that came from him as they edged up the stairs. Without mishap, the two rescuers climbed steadily on. At times their passage was lighted by a flicker of outside light which came through the narrow slits of windows, and at times they were in absolute blackness.

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At last they came to a landing, which Frank carefully felt over to make sure there were no holes through which they might tumble. The examination was satisfactory. "Now, there ought to be a short ladder from here up into the belfry where Pandora is probably freezing to death, for she hasn't howled since we started."

He had hardly spoken the words when a wail just above their heads showed them they were on the right track. "All right, pussy, we're on the way; keep a stiff upper lip! Here's the ladder, Jimmy. I knew it must be here somewhere. Be careful, it seems to be about straight up and down." Jimmy had just set his hand to the ladder and Frank was up in the darkness somewhere above him, when there was a tremendous crash just above their heads and the whole tower seemed to rock with the noise!

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# CHAPTER XIX.

## IN THE BELL TOWER.

"Jumping cats!" cried Jimmy; "what was that? Frank, are you there?"

"Certainly I'm here. What's the matter with you to-night? You're nervous, I guess. That was nothing but the clock striking the quarter hour. It's a quarter past nine. Sounds a bit startling up here in this narrow space."

"I thought the whole top of the tower had blown off," said Jimmy with a shiver. "It doesn't sound half so loud down in the yard."

"And good reason for that, for we are up here about forty feet, and it isn't cold or anything, either! Hello, I'm up against the roof! No, it's the trap door."

"Want any help?" said Jimmy just below Frank's heels.

"No; I'm pushing it up with my head. Wow! What was that?" as there came a scratching and clawing from just above him. "Oh, my, I do believe it was Pandora, herself. She must have been sitting on that trap door. Poor thing! She must have thought it was an earthquake. Come on, I'm through," said Frank in a whisper—although why he whispered he could not have told himself, for there was none to hear him in that high belfry excepting the cat and the bell. Jimmy struggled through the small hole in the floor and stood alongside Frank at last in the belfry. Just in front of them swung the big bell which tolled out the hours of the day and night. Through the slender open arches the boys could see, dimly outlined, the School buildings, with here and there a twinkling light in the dormitories, and farther off the lights in the houses of the village. It was bitter cold.

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"Well, here we are," said Jimmy, "at last."

"And where's our cat?" said Frank.

"It's a little like looking for the proverbial needle in the haystack to find a black cat in a blacker belfry. I hope you are satisfied now that it was a wild goose chase," grumbled Jimmy, when they had searched with foot and hand in all possible places of the narrow space.

"A wild cat chase, maybe," said Frank chuckling. "Pussy, pussy, poor old pussy, where are you? There she is, or I'm a flatfish," cried Frank. "Look—over your head!"

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Jimmy looked, and there, ten feet over his head, in the upper tower and above the beams which supported the bell mechanism, he saw two fiery eyes gleaming.

"It's awful to see those two balls of yellow fire and nothing else visible," said Jimmy. "It's uncanny. Now, what are we going to do?"

"Why, go for her," said Frank, reaching for a beam above his head and pulling himself up to it. "I only wish I had David's arms now. He could beat that old cat climbing any day. Come on."

"Well, I suppose I might as well," said Jimmy with a sigh of resignation. "Since I started out to hunt a wild cat with a boy who has lost his senses, I might as well go on," and he started to climb after Frank. Their climb now led them out of the little circle of half light which they had had in the belfry itself. Above their heads was the blackness of absolute night. Unlike the lower part of the tower, the upper portion was not pierced by either light or air holes. Just out of reach burned the yellow eyes of the cat, who had changed her position several times, each time mounting higher as the boys followed. She evidently had suspicions as to their intentions and was going to keep out of what she thought was harm's way.

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"Pussy, pussy, poor pussy!" said Frank coaxingly. "We're not going to hurt you, you idiotic cat." This, as the two gleaming spots of light disappeared for a moment and appeared higher up in the tower.

"I wonder what they call a cat 'poor pussy' for, anyway," said Jimmy wrathfully. "Of all the stupid asinine creatures, a cat is the most stupid, or this one is. Here we are in danger of breaking our necks and freezing to death to save her from freezing her toes, and she hasn't sense enough to help us."

"Stop abusing Pandora, you unfeeling kid," said Frank, "and give me a match if you have it. I'm stuck. Nothing more to reach."

"I don't think I have any, but if I'd known you were going to do a stunt

of this kind, I'd have had three boxes with me."

"And spoiled all this exciting climb! Go on, feel in your pockets. I have none."

Jimmy, thus adjured, stood on his beam, leaning against the stones of the tower, and went carefully through his pockets. "Here's one; no, that's the wrong end of it—here's about a quarter of a match, and, oh, joy! here's a whole one!"

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"Noble youth, you came well prepared," said Frank, laughing. "Light the quarter match."

"All ready," said Jimmy; "here goes!" He struck the match carefully against the beam just over his head and a pale gleam showed in the darkness, lighting the place where they stood faintly. It flickered a moment and went out, leaving them in a gloom that seemed the thicker because of the brief light.

"Good!" grunted Frank. "Poor pussy, Mrs. Bowser's angelic Pandora, is within reach, almost. The masons left these little beams here probably for poor pussies to climb up on, and I know where my next step is. Stay where you are, and I'll have her in a moment, and keep that last match ready for emergencies."

There was a sound in the darkness of Frank's feet scratching against the wall, prolonged grunting, and then Frank announced that he had pulled himself to the next beam. There followed a frightened protest from Pandora, but Frank's voice sounded triumphant. "I've got the rascal. There you are," soothingly, "you see we weren't going to kill you. All right, old man, I'm coming. Light your other match so I can get my toe on that brace."

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Frank had indeed captured Pandora, who, now that the chase was ended and she found only gentle hands upon her, snuggled down on the shoulder of her protector and began to purr. The trip back was even more difficult for Frank than the ascent, for he was hampered by the cat and did not have the free use of both arms. He swung from his perch at last with his feet dangling in the air, vainly trying to find with his toes a secure footing.

"Quick, Jimmy, light the match!" There was a scratch from Jimmy's direction, and in the light that flared up, Frank found his resting place and settled on it. "Whew, that was a hard one! Now we're all right. The rest is easier. Go on down first, and I'll follow, for I can do without you, now; and be careful, for I don't want to have to carry you back as well as the cat."

"Don't you worry about me. Bring your old cat and I'll take care of myself. Jimmy, I'm nearly frozen stiff, and if I ever get back to——"

Before he finished his sentence, a sound came up to their ears from the belfry just below them. The boys listened intently, while the cat purred softly on Frank's shoulder.

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"Some one coming into the belfry!" whispered Jimmy. There was an unmistakable murmur of voices and in a moment through the trap door in the belfry floor, which Frank and Jimmy had left open, there appeared an indistinct form. Another and still another appeared in the opening, one after the other.

"Four of them," whispered Jimmy, who being a little lower was able to get a better view of the belfry floor; "what on earth can they be doing up here at this time of night?"

The two boys, perched on their narrow beams, were not kept long in suspense, for one of the intruders began to speak. His voice was low, hardly more than a whisper, but it carried up clearly to the listeners overhead. "Have you got the rope there?" said the voice.

"Yes, here it is."

"All right, we'll tie up its tongue first. Gee, but it's cold here!"

"Will it freeze all right, do you think?" inquired another voice, evidently addressing the first speaker.

"Freeze, you galoot, of course it will; solid as a rock, and they won't get it out till spring." A low chuckle followed.

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"What in the name of time are they doing?" said Jimmy. "Taking the tongue out of something and freezing it! Can it be a cat?"

"Your mind runs to cats to-night," Frank whispered back. "Those chaps are going to do something to the bell."

"Drop the cat on them," said Jimmy. "They'd think it was the Old Boy himself."

"No," returned Frank, who had crouched down till his mouth was about level with Jimmy's ear. "Let's wait and see what they intend to do. Keep still as a mouse."

The boys below had already begun work on the big bell. "For the love of Mike, don't let that tongue hit. I can't get the thing out. It is held by some kind of a dingus that is riveted in. Some one will have to hold it, while the rest of us turn the bell up."

From below came the sound of puffing and grunting. "Easy," said some one, "for heaven's sake, hold that tongue so it doesn't hit, or we'll have the whole School on our necks. There," continued the same voice, "good work. Now, prop this beam under that side of her, and the job is done."

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"All but the water," said another voice.

"Fine business," said the first voice. "Now shoot it along quick and get a move on you." There were sounds of footsteps going down the ladder below the belfry, and when the last scratching sound had died away Jimmy spoke up: "Now, what in the great horn spoon are they at?"

"It's easy," returned Frank. "You heard about the water. That explains the whole business. You know when I fell in the lower corridor? What do you suppose I fell over?"

"I don't know; what was it?"

"A bucket of water. I slopped some of it over and my trouser leg is wet now and frozen."

"I don't see that that explains anything."

"Well, it does. Those chaps have turned the bell upside down and propped it there, and they mean to pour it full of water and let it freeze, as it certainly will in this weather. And, as one of them said, it will stay there till spring, unless old Bonesey digs it out with a pick."

"What a trick!" ejaculated Jimmy. "Let's go down and knock the prop out from under the bell!"

"Yes, and make an awful rumpus! No, let's wait and see. Some scheme may offer itself which will be better than that. S-s-s-s-h, here they come again."

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Struggling and puffing with their exertions, two of the four boys appeared with buckets of water and each deposited the contents of the buckets in the overturned bell. "About two more will do the trick," said one of the plotters, and away they went again. In five minutes' time the whole four reappeared, and between them they carried more water. "Douse her in!" said the leader, and there was a splashing sound as the bell filled up.

"Won't old Bonesey be savage when he finds this in the morning?" chuckled one of the youngsters.

"Bonesey won't be a circumstance to Dr. Hobart. What are you doing there?" This was directed to one of the boys, who appeared to be fussing at the bell.

"Want to see if this prop is all right. It isn't half caught. Give me a lift, and we'll shove the prop farther under. It's a wonder it didn't slip out."

The four boys gathered together. There was a shuffling noise as they got themselves set, and the leader said: "Now, altogether."

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Just how it happened will never be known. In their endeavor to make the overturned bell more secure in its position, in some manner they disturbed the prop. "Look out, she's giving way," yelled one of them, and the next instant the tower was filled with the noise of splashing water and the wild clangor of the bell as it swung on its big beam. Pandora trembled and sunk her claws into Frank's shoulder hard enough to make him yell out with pain. Jimmy uttered a shout and started to scramble down, but in the darkness he missed his footing and fell with a crash to the swimming floor of the belfry. In the midst of the alarm, Pandora, with a wild shriek, flew from Frank's shoulder, gained the belfry floor and whisked out of sight through the open trap door, through which came the noise of the retreating footsteps of the boys who were responsible for all the trouble.

The rumpus in the bell tower awoke the whole School to activity. Windows banged up in the dormitory and boys in scanty clothing stuck their heads out into the frosty night. From Warren and from Honeywell

came the howls of "Fire! Fire! Fire!" A high-pitched voice in one of the half-open windows added to the confusion with "Murder! Police!" Footsteps began to patter on the walks and lights flashed here and there below. It seemed hardly a minute before Butler, a proctor of the School, followed closely by two or three boys, appeared at the opening in the belfry floor. A strange sight met the gaze of the early arrivals on the scene. They saw Frank sitting in a pool of water working over Jimmy, who had struck his head a hard blow either on the floor or on a beam in his fall. He was only about half-conscious of what was taking place.

"What's going on here?" said Butler sternly. "What are you boys doing in this tower and how did you get here?"

"We came up here to get Mrs. Bowser's cat, which we heard crying in this belfry, but the main thing is to get Turner to his room. He fell and cut his head." Frank's hands were stained with blood which oozed out of the cut on his friend's forehead. "While we were up in the tower," pointing overhead, "some fellows came up and tried to fill the bell with water, so that it might freeze and stop it from ringing, I suppose."

"Oh, they did, did they?" inquired Butler with an icy smile. "Did you stop them?"

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"No, sir, we were planning to jump down and scare them, when something happened. The bell capsized and the fellows ran away. Turner jumped or fell trying to get down to see who it was."

"It's a pretty likely story," said Butler again. "You'll have a chance to tell that to Dr. Hobart in the morning, sir."

Frank was indignant at the tone of disbelief, but he said nothing and gave all his attention to Jimmy, who, by this time, was coming back to his senses and had staggered to his feet. With a good deal of difficulty they got him down the ladder to the broader stairs beneath.

The entrance of Frank and Jimmy to the former's room threw the Codfish and David into consternation, accompanied as they were by an irate proctor and old Bonesey, who had been aroused by this time and who had hurried to the Chapel to find the wildest excitement reigning.

"I'll report this to Dr. Hobart immediately, and you will have to face a very disagreeable charge, young man," said Butler, turning to go.

"All right, sir," said Frank calmly, "I'll answer all the charges that are made, and satisfactorily, I think."

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"I advise you to tell the truth about the whole thing," said Butler, giving Frank a searching glance; "it will be the best course."

"I'm not in the habit of telling anything but the truth," said Frank, and turned his attention to his roommates, who were impatient to hear what had happened.

Frank told the story quickly, but admitted, when he looked at it calmly, that it certainly had a very queer appearance.

"Butler is a regular old kill-joy, anyway," snorted the Codfish. "He's the fellow who had Potter fired last year for being off the School grounds after ten o'clock. He is a suspicious old spy and every one in the School hates him."

"But he stands sky-high with the Doctor," said David gravely. "Never mind, Frank, cheer up; all is not lost that's in danger. Your previous reputation is good, even if you did try to freeze up the Chapel bell!"

The boys discussed the possibility of trouble in the incident long after Jimmy left the room. David foresaw difficulty.

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## CHAPTER XX.

### A HEAVY PENALTY.

On the way out of Chapel the next morning Butler, the proctor, handed a note to Frank and another to Jimmy. Frank opened the envelope and read the curt message:

"FRANK ARMSTRONG.

"SIR: You will come to the office of Dr. Hobart at ten o'clock this morning and show reason why you should not be suspended from Queen's School for meddling with the Chapel bell last night.

"Very truly yours,  
"A. M. COOPER, *Secretary*."

"Very pretty note I have," said Frank. He pursed up his lips and gave a low whistle, at the same time handing the letter to Jimmy.

"Mine is sharp and to the point," said Jimmy, grinning feebly, and he handed the one that he had received to Frank as they walked slowly along. The notes were identical, with the exception that the names were different.

"How do you suppose that man Butler is so stupid as to think we did that little trick last night?" said Jimmy scornfully. "I'd like to punch his nose for him."

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"It does look stupid, that's sure, but when you consider it as I have done, you'll have to admit that we seem to be in the wrong."

"Oh, get out, we can prove we had nothing to do with it," said Jimmy hotly.

"How? It looks as if we had been caught with the goods on, unless some one saw the real perpetrators of the alleged joke."

Jimmy was finally obliged to admit that it didn't look so good as he had thought at first. There was an indignation meeting over in Honeywell, in which all our friends participated. All talked at once and Butler was threatened with destruction in every key. But in spite of the disgust of every one that Frank and Jimmy should be under suspicion, every one also recognized that appearances were against them. "The only hope for you," said David, who had been thinking hard over the subject, "is to find the real fellows and make them confess."

"They're likely to," snorted the Codfish. "They will save their own skins if they can."

At ten o'clock Frank, with Jimmy at his heels, knocked on the door of Dr. Hobart's room in Warren Hall, and a moment later they were in the presence of the Doctor himself. The latter did not look up for a time, but sat writing at his desk for several minutes while the boys shifted uneasily from foot to foot. Finally the Doctor laid aside his pen, swung about on his swivel chair and transfixed Frank with his piercing eye. The glass eye stared straight ahead stonily.

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"What were you young men doing in the tower of the Chapel last night?" The question was shot suddenly by Dr. Hobart, so suddenly that both boys almost jumped. "Wait, let us have Mr. Butler here." He turned and pressed a button which connected with a room near his own where Mr. Butler was waiting. The proctor came in. "Sit down, Mr. Butler," said Dr. Hobart. "What is the accusation against these young men, Mr. Armstrong and Mr. Turner? What did you find in the tower last night?"

Thus admonished, Mr. Butler told of his being disturbed in his room at about half-past nine. The bell began to clang wildly. He ran to the front door of the Chapel, and finding it locked, remembered that there was a door in the rear. That door he found open. As quickly as possible he got a light and climbed the tower to the floor of the belfry where he found "this young man," indicating Turner, lying on the floor in a pool of water, nearly unconscious, with Armstrong working over him.

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"And what did you make of that, Mr. Butler?" inquired the Doctor in a cool and even voice.

"They said that they had been chasing a cat and that Turner had fallen and hurt himself, and put the blame for meddling with the Chapel bell onto some unknown boys who had preceded them," Mr. Butler finished, smiling sarcastically.

"Well," said Dr. Hobart, turning to the boys; "what have you to say to this?"

"What Mr. Butler says is the truth," answered Frank, looking the Doctor steadily in the eye; "but there were a number of things that happened before he came."

"Yes, and what were they?"

"We went up to find Mrs. Bowser's cat, which had come into the Chapel in the morning——"

"Or was brought in," interrupted Mr. Butler.

"I do not know how she got in, but she got in somehow, and when the boys tried to catch her she became frightened and hid."

"And you came to the conclusion that she liked belfries and had hidden up there."

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"No, sir," said Jimmy. "Frank came out to have a walk before going to bed. I had been in his room and as it was cold we raced up to the Chapel, where I slipped and fell. While we were standing there, we thought we heard a cat crying up in the tower."

"And why didn't you report it?" said the Doctor.

"It was late," Frank returned, "and when we found the small door in the tower open, we thought we might be able to find her ourselves and return her to the lady, who was much worried about the loss of her pet. We were particularly anxious to get it for Mrs. Bowser."

"Very generous-minded, indeed," said the Doctor, stroking his chin. "And so you went up alone?"

"Yes, sir, we went up alone, and while we were in the upper part of the tower, the boys who were disturbing the bell came up. We heard them planning to do something, but could not make out what it was at first."

"And why didn't you make your presence known?" inquired the Doctor.

Both boys looked at each other. Why hadn't they? This was the question that each was asking himself. "We were waiting," said Frank, after a noticeable hesitation, "to find out, if we could, who they were. But they spoke so low that we could not recognize their voices, nor could we see who they were because there was so little light."

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"So, so," said the Doctor musingly; "and what then?"

"When they had put the water in the bell and were working at the prop which held the bell in the position they wanted it, something gave way and the bell swung back to its natural position. Turner, here, started to get down, then slipped and fell. When I saw him fall, I started after him and let go of the cat, which flew down stairs. Mr. Butler found us, as he says he did, but we were not responsible for what happened to the bell."

The Doctor heard the recital to the end, while Mr. Butler smiled sarcastically and knowingly, glancing from the boys to the stern old gentleman who was cross-questioning them. After deliberating a full minute, Dr. Hobart spoke again:

"You said a moment ago that you were particularly anxious to get the cat for Mrs. Bowser. Why were you particularly anxious?"

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"Because," blurted out Jimmy, "she helped us out of a scrape once." He could have bitten his tongue off after he had said it, but it was too late to draw back.

"So," said the Doctor, pricking up his ears. "And what was the scrape?"

"Oh, just an accident," said Frank.

"Yes, and what kind of an accident?" There was nothing for it but to tell the story of the wrong box which had reached Mrs. Bowser's house the winter before. Frank told it in a straightforward fashion, but he could feel the blood mounting to his face. The Doctor stiffened perceptibly as he listened. Frank refrained from bringing either the Codfish or Lewis into the story.

"So you are in the habit of practical joking?" he said coldly. "It is a poor business, my young gentlemen, and it must be stopped. We will have no practical jokers around Queen's School. This is a place for study and not for pranks. Your case has been much weakened by what I have just heard. It seems to me I remember, too, Armstrong, that you played a practical joke on some one by pretending to be drowned last year, did you not, and disturbed the whole school? I remember you were before me at that time."

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"He took the place of a boy who was being hazed," Jimmy burst out hotly, "and it served the hazers right."

"Yes, Turner, perhaps it did, but I remember it disturbed the School. In the face of the tendency for practical joking that these incidents seem to prove," turning to Frank, "can you expect me to believe you are



guiltless in the matter of the bell?" The tone was sharp and the glance which accompanied it keen and penetrating, but Frank replied steadily: "We had nothing to do with the bell, sir."

"Is this your fur glove, Armstrong?" said the Doctor, opening a drawer of his desk and producing a glove which Frank thought he recognized as his own. He stepped forward, looked it over carefully, and finally turned the wristband back, where, plainly inked, were the letters "F. A."

"Yes, sir, that is my glove."

"And this one," continued Dr. Hobart. "Did you ever see this before?" handing him another glove, the counterpart apparently of the first.

"Yes, sir, that is also my glove. It's the mate of the one you showed me first."

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"Very well, Armstrong. One of these gloves was found by Mr. Butler in the Chapel belfry and the other in your room; is that not so, Mr. Butler?"

"Yes, Dr. Hobart. I found that glove," indicating the first one shown, "under the bell this morning, and the other lay on the top of his trunk in his sleeping room, where I went to look for evidence this morning."

The boys stared at each other in amazement and from Dr. Hobart to their accuser. "I do not see how the first glove got up there," said Frank at last. "I was in my bare hands when I went out last night, as I only meant to be gone a few minutes."

"Mr. Butler, please bring that young man in here."

The proctor walked from the room, was gone a few minutes and returned, followed by none other than Chip Dixon. Dixon nodded curtly to the two boys and faced the Doctor jauntily.

"You say, Dixon, that you saw these two boys entering the rear door of the Chapel last night?" inquired the Doctor, indicating the supposed culprits by a jerk of his head in the direction of Frank and Jimmy.

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"I did not say it was Turner and Armstrong. I said I saw two boys near the door, and that it looked like these two here. One of them had something in his hand which looked like a bucket."

"Which one was that?"

"Armstrong, sir; or at least the one I took to be Armstrong."

"What time was that?"

"I think it was about a quarter past nine or perhaps a little later."

"We were just under the belfry at that hour," Jimmy snapped out. "The clock striking the quarter startled me. I remember it well." Frank nodded in approval.

"It may have been earlier," continued Dixon. "I didn't think anything much about it till after the racket in the tower. Then I remembered that I had seen some boys around the Chapel, and recalled that they looked like Turner and Armstrong."

"That will do, Dixon, you may go," said the Doctor.

When Dixon had left the room, the Doctor turned to our friends again. "You do not look like boys who would do such silly mischief as that of last night, but all these stories fit together with such nicety that I am forced to believe that you were responsible. These little things that look like jokes sometimes have a very serious result. For instance, that water which filled the bell came down and badly damaged the ceiling in the robing room on the ground floor, and, moreover, it ruined a valuable etching, a gift from one of our alumni, which hung there in that room."

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"But we did not do it," said Frank, "nor did we have anything to do with it in any way, shape or manner." His voice was trembling as he spoke. Jimmy was too savage to speak, but stood glowering at the Doctor.

Unfortunately the Doctor, although a distinguished scholar, was not entirely in sympathy with his pupils. He sometimes forgot that he had been young himself once, and there were not a few in the School who said that "Old-Pop-Eye" had always been as old as he was then. He was too much immersed in the technical side of his school work and school problems to acquaint himself with the units that made up his school. He was apt to judge harshly. And his judgment in this case was harsh.

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"In view of all the circumstances," said the Doctor, after studying the boys for a minute or two, "I should suspend you both from Queen's School or dismiss you entirely. We want boys here who come to study

and not to play idle tricks and destroy school property. I feel convinced that you were concerned in this work of last night, for the evidence is strongly against you. I can perhaps put no greater punishment upon you than to say to you that for the remainder of the School year you can take part in no athletics as the representatives of Queen's School. I understand that you both have played on School teams." The Doctor paused. "If I find you concerned in any other escapades of this character, I have no other course than to ask you to withdraw from the School."

Jimmy was about to burst forth in violent denial, but stopped and held himself in check. Frank said very calmly, "Dr. Hobart, I say it again: I had nothing to do with this affair of last night; neither had Turner. I think I can prove it to your satisfaction some day. May we go?"

"Yes," said the Doctor, who had turned to his desk again.

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The boys almost staggered from the room and down the stairs. It had been an unexpected blow. At the foot of the stairs, Lewis, the Codfish and David were waiting. They bore them off to Honeywell, where the whole scene in the Doctor's office was rehearsed. Most uncomplimentary things were said about the Doctor and almost murderous threats raised against the proctor, Butler, who, the Codfish protested, had "poisoned Doctor Hobart's mind against Frank and Jimmy."

"And what's to become of our baseball nine?" cried the Codfish.

"And the hockey team, and the track contest?" echoed David.

"I told you to let that blooming old cat stay where she had got herself," grumbled the Codfish. "A black cat is unlucky. Don't you remember Poe's story about the black cat?"

"She was unlucky enough for me," said Frank ruefully. "But maybe we'll come out of it all right."

"How do you suppose that glove of mine got up into the tower?" said Frank. "I certainly didn't have my gloves with me. I wouldn't naturally have one in my pocket and one in my room."

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"I distinctly remember seeing them both on the trunk yesterday morning," said David. "I've been thinking about it since you told what Butler found."

"I know positively," cried Frank eagerly, "that I didn't have them on yesterday. I didn't have occasion to use them."

"Then it's a put-up job," said the Codfish. "Some one who has it in for you sneaked in here and got that glove for a purpose."

"Who could it be, do you suppose?" questioned Jimmy. "Dixon wouldn't do such a trick in spite of his general meanness and his disposition toward Frank. And who else is there?"

"Gamma Tau!" said the Codfish suddenly. "They have members in this dormitory and it would be the easiest thing in the world to get in here, for the door is never locked. The gloves were in plain view on the trunk."

"I think you have the answer," said David. "Frank has been too popular to suit our friends, the Gammas, ever since he won fame as a drop kicker. Now this talk of another society has set them going, but I say, it was a dirty way to do it."

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"Well, we'll beat them yet," said Jimmy, jumping up and smashing a fist into the palm of the other hand. "And if I ever get a real good chance at Dixon, I'll give him a thumping he won't forget for fifty years!"

"And I'll help you," said the Codfish, throwing out his narrow chest and thumping it valiantly. At which all laughed.

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## CHAPTER XXI.

### GAMMA'S DESPERATE TACTICS.

Queen's School took the disbarment of Frank Armstrong and Jimmy Turner from athletics as a serious blow to their chances in baseball and on the track. Even the Gamma Tau boys, who bore no particularly kindly feeling toward these two, missed their strengthening presence—or at least they seemed to. There were some who, whatever they might have

said before the School, inwardly rejoiced that "these disturbers of the peace" had been neatly shelved by Old Pop-Eye. Chip Dixon was among the latter. He could never repress a smile when he met Frank or Jimmy. And Jimmy ached to take him in hand and show him something that might not have been good for Dixon. But the opportunity did not come and peace was preserved.

Hockey came and went, and the School team, captained by Dixon and filled up with his followers from Gamma, lost miserably to Warwick. Jimmy and Frank watched the game from the side of the improvised rink on the Wampaug.

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"There are better players among the Freshmen," said Jimmy contemptuously, "but they have no chance. I could pick up a team among the class teams that would beat the School team at hockey to a frazzle."

And Jimmy spoke the plain truth. Chip had followed his usual method of picking out his team from his Society, and he had no eyes for their faults. But the School was fretting under the burden of Gamma Tau and of Dixon himself. How much longer he was going to be allowed to boss everything was a matter of speculation in many a room after books were laid aside.

"Thank goodness, it is his last year!" said Lewis one night, when the possibility of the continuance of Dixon as a dictator was being discussed.

"Yes, but there is Howard Hotchkiss coming along. He is sure to be the next boss." Hotchkiss was in the third class. He was not an athlete, but a masterful fellow who could be depended upon to keep the prestige of the School in the hands of Gamma and not let it get away for a moment.

"The threatening storm against the Gamma is growing every day," said David, "and when it comes, there is bound to be fun. Two of the editors on the *Mirror*, Pickering and Westover, refused the last elections and they are hot for an opposition society."

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"Will it come, do you think?" inquired Frank.

"I wouldn't be surprised to see the sentiment of the class blaze out into action at any moment. Only to-night Pickering suggested a class meeting for a conference on a new society. He has been talking it over with a lot of his friends, and he feels pretty sure we could put something through if we all got behind it. The only trouble is that there are so many toadies to the old Society of the Gamma who say one thing and do another. Most of them grab for a chance to get into Gamma like a drowning man grabs at a straw."

"I'm for a new society," said Frank, "which will have its elections on merit, and which will make no distinctions between athletes, good students, or good fellows who are neither athletes or brilliant at their studies."

"Oh, ho, I think I have heard you say that the Gamma could be reformed!" said the Codfish derisively.

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"That was before I knew much about it. They are so hardened and set in their own notions that the only way to reform them is with a good big club."

A few days later the subject of a new society came up again, and on the night of a certain day in May about a dozen of the prominent boys in the class met in Frank's room to talk it over together. Before the boys separated, it had been agreed to call a meeting of the class in the big room of the Library, where the whole matter was to come up. There was to be a general debate on the subject, and Armstrong, as befitted his position as an athlete in the class, was to make the principal speech. In the room were, of course, several friends of Gamma Tau, and it was not long before the information had penetrated to Dixon and other leaders of the old Society.

"Going to form a new society, are they? Well, we'll see about that! The School isn't big enough for what it has now in the way of societies. We'll pack that meeting full of our own men of the class and block everything they try. We'll see what they can do to old Gamma!"

Meanwhile, the Queen's baseball team continued to lose steadily. With Frank out of the game, there was no pitcher who could do even passable work. Dixon, in desperation, gave up his position behind the bat to the substitute catcher, a fellow named Watson, and went into the box himself. But he only lasted for one game, the game with Porter School, in which the latter fairly buried Queen's under the score of 14 to 3! It was then that resentment began to show itself in even the mildest of the

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students. The feeling was particularly strong in the second class, of which our friends were members. David Powers wrote an article on the situation for the *Mirror*, but the article never appeared in that paper, for the Chief Editor of the paper, under whose eye the article fell, was a Gamma boy, and he thought it too outspoken. David Powers promptly resigned from the paper, and the reason of his resignation soon became known to the class and the school at large. The incident strengthened the determination of every one to have a fight with Gamma to the death, and particularly roused our friends in Honeywell.

Affairs came rapidly to a climax. David and the Codfish put their heads together and prepared a poster calling on the class to meet in the Library room set aside for meetings of the class by the School authorities. The School woke up one morning in the latter part of May to find the posters boldly displayed on tree trunks and on various conspicuous points about the School. The announcement of the meeting was ripped down by the Gamma boys, who well knew what was going on, but the poster had had its effect and every one was on tip-toe.

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At last the eventful day arrived. The Codfish and David, with the help of Lewis and Jimmy, had spent many hours on the constitution of the society. Fifteen boys were to be chosen from the Second Class and they were to be selected on merit. Two members of the teaching staff were to be taken into the society as honorary members and they were to be consulted in the elections. David, who had spent days on the work, had searched the constitutions of all the school societies he could get hold of and had, with his associates, selected the best from them and rejected what seemed not suitable for the new society. The draft of the constitution was to be presented that night before the class meeting in the Library, where discussion would be open. Frank, who was looked upon as a popular leader, had been chosen, as we have said, to present the whole matter at the meeting.

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"If I'm going to do this stunt," said Frank, after the boys had returned to their room after supper that evening, "you've all got to clear out and let me have a little time to myself. I've got to think what I'm to say."

"All right, Napoleon," said the Codfish, "we'll skip and let you compose yourself. If any big thoughts stick, look us up," and he scampered out of the door, eager to talk the coming great event over with others of his class.

Frank was left alone, and he set himself to work up a speech that should present the matter to his classmates. He was before his little desk in Honeywell thinking hard and chewing the end of a lead pencil as an aid, when there came a rap on the half-open door.

Frank turned around and saw a small boy standing just outside the door.

"Hello, son, what is it?" he said, turning again to the matter before him.

"Please, are you Frank Armstrong?"

"I'm that chap," said Frank, scratching away with his pencil.

"Well, please," said the boy, "there's a man wants to see you."

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"That's nice; where is he?"

"Down at the baseball field."

"Down at the baseball field!" echoed Frank. "Why doesn't he come up here? I haven't time to go down to the baseball field to see a man. I've got important business on to-night. Tell him I'll see him to-morrow. I haven't time to see him to-night, unless he comes up here."

"Oh," said the boy, "he said this was very important for you; that he had some news to tell you about the trouble in the bell tower."

Frank gave a long whistle and stood up, interested at once. He looked at the clock over the mantel. It was half past seven and the meeting was set for eight o'clock.

"He said he could tell you who did the mischief in the bell tower and prove it to you," continued the boy, "but that he couldn't come up to your room."

"I've half a mind to go and see this strange man who knows so much. I can be back in half an hour or less," he said half to himself. Then to the boy, "All right, kid, I'll go along with you, for that business of the bell tower is something I'd like to get to the bottom of myself." Then aside, "I'll pick up Jimmy and the Codfish and we'll see what he knows."

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"The man said you must come alone, for he doesn't want to be seen by any one at the School except yourself."

"More mystery. All right, kid, tell him I'll be along in a minute and I'll be alone."

The boy waited to hear no more, but darted out of the door and was off like a flash. Frank followed more leisurely after folding David's draft of the constitution and putting it in his inside coat pocket, along with some of the scribbled notes of his speech. "I can think of what I'm going to say as I go along," he thought, "and no time is lost. I wonder why this fellow is so secret about the appointment."

He picked up his cap from the desk, tripped gayly down the steps and out into the yard. None of his friends happened to be in view, and he hurried on in the gathering twilight across the yard, down past the end of Warren Hall, and down the pitch of the hill to the playground below. Over in the distance the baseball stand loomed darkly. But on the open field there was still plenty of light. He headed directly for the baseball stand, whistling brightly. "What on earth can this man have to tell me?" he said over and over to himself. "Well, I'll know presently."

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He had now come to the outfield of the baseball diamond. Peering ahead into the shadow cast by the stand, he thought he saw a figure moving. Advancing to the diamond itself he spoke out loudly:

"Hullo, any one here want to see me?"

A figure slouched out of the shadow and approached Frank to within a distance of ten or fifteen feet. "You are Frank Armstrong?" said a voice that Frank had never heard before.

"Yes," answered Frank. "What is all this about? If you have anything to tell me, tell it to me quick, for I've got to get back."

"It's pretty important news for you, kid," said the man, coming a step or two closer. "I happen to know all about that affair, who did it, and why it was done, and I've got the proofs for you. Look at that paper," he added, drawing a folded sheet of white paper from his pocket and handing it to Frank. Frank reached for the paper, took it, and bent his head in the dim light to read the writing. As he did so, the strange man sprang upon him, threw an arm around his neck and held him as securely as in a vise. The attack had been so sudden that Frank was powerless to make the faintest resistance. And even had he had the chance, he would have been helpless in that fierce clasp.

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"Hey, Bill," called his captor, "come over here and help me truss him up. We've got him, all right."

There was a sound of feet running across the grass, and in an instant two more men appeared from the shadow of the baseball stand. Each seized an arm of the captured boy, and the man who had made the first attack released his hold on Frank's neck.

"What's this all about?" said Frank huskily. The stranger had nearly choked the wind out of him in the tight grasp in which he had held him until help arrived. "I have no money."

"We don't want your money, kid," said one of the men. "We just want you, and everything will be easy for you if you come along without kicking."

"Come along where?"

"Never mind, that's our little secret."

Frank opened his mouth to yell for help, but a big hand immediately closed over it and shut off his cry. "Come, none of that!"

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"Put that towel over his mouth!" said one of his captors. A towel was whipped out by one of them and in a jiffy he was effectually prevented from making any outcry, and it had been so placed that he could not see. "Now, come along, young fellow, we're not going to eat you."

Two of the men linked their arms in his, and, preceded by the third, they set out at a rapid pace toward the path that ran down along the river edge. Frank tried to hang back, but he was firmly urged forward, and, seeing the uselessness of resistance in the face of such overwhelming odds, he gave up and went along quietly, waiting a chance to escape by some stratagem.

After a walk of a few minutes, Frank's captors halted and turned toward the river. Frank felt the cold chills race up and down his spine as he stood, held firmly between the two. "What does it all mean?" he thought to himself. The man who had preceded them disappeared for a

moment in the alder bushes which fringed the bank. In a moment his voice sounded from below: "The boat's here; hurry it up and let's get it finished."

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Half walking and half sliding, they reached the water's edge. Without any ceremony Frank was forced into the boat, the others followed, and one of the men, after pushing off, began to row rapidly. Two or three hundred yards down stream he beached the boat, sprang out and held her, while the others, still grasping Frank, scrambled out awkwardly. The boat was pulled up a little and then, in the same order as the procession had started, it continued on what seemed to be an old road overgrown with grass. Five minutes of twisting and turning through trees and tangled shrubbery, during which time Frank, by moving his face muscles, had uncovered one eye, brought them to a house, but it was shrouded in the deepest gloom. No lights shone from its windows and no sounds of life came from within. All was dreary and desolate, and a chill struck to Frank's heart as he suddenly recognized the place. It was the Jackson house on the back road to Hamilton, and it was reported to be haunted. Some deed of blood had been done there years before and the house since that time had been vacant. After nightfall few ventured that way. Queer lights were said to have been seen about the house at night. The road was little traveled by man or beast at any hour. Through a broken gate hanging crazily by one hinge the procession passed, and up the overgrown walk to the door. Halting here, the leader fumbled in his pocket and produced a key, which he inserted in the lock of the door. There was a grinding sound as the bolt shot back.

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"Here's where you stay for a few hours, young fellow," said one of his captors. "Nice comfortable shack. You'll have lots of visitors in there and you needn't be a bit lonesome."

Frank fought hard against his imprisonment. He struggled and scratched and kicked with all his might, and braced against the door jamb. But he was soon overpowered and pushed within. The door was jerked back quickly and Frank was alone in the haunted house. Turned by the key on the outside, the lock shot squeaking back into its socket. Just then the clock on the Queen's School tower boomed the hour of eight!

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## CHAPTER XXII.

### SAVED BY THE WIRES.

Finding himself trapped, Frank threw himself on the door and wrenched at the knob with all his strength. It held firm. Again and again he drove his shoulder against the panels, but the door, though old, was stout, and resisted his savage attacks. Soon he gave up in despair the attempt to escape that way.

"I'm kidnapped for sure," he said aloud, and his voice sounded strangely hollow in that empty hallway. He shivered, for, although the night outside was mild and warm, inside there was a deadly chill in the air as if the sunlight had never touched it. A half moon was hanging in the sky and lit the countryside faintly, but in here was the deepest gloom. Tiny slits of light came through the chinks here and there in the boarded windows and cast long knife-like bars across the floor, but instead of lighting the place they actually made it seem blacker because of the contrast.

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Frank was not a coward, but he would have given a good deal to be safely out of the place. The whole house seemed full of noises. He turned his back to the door and faced the stairway, which, now that his eyes were becoming accustomed to the gloom, he could make out dimly. He could trace it about half way up to the floor above, where it disappeared into utter blackness. As he strained his eyes and ears a board creaked near him, as if a human foot had trod on it. He recoiled as if shot and turned his eyes in the direction of the noise. But there was no repetition of the sound. Away down the hall where his vision could not penetrate came a rustle as of silk, and then what appeared to be a few stealthy steps; then silence, broken only by the sighing of the night wind around the corners of the house.

It was all Frank could do to keep from yelling with fright, for the

noises of the old house had gripped his nerve. But by degrees, as he stood there with his back to the door, he gained control of himself. There was nothing to hurt him, he argued with himself; the noises were only natural ones; the rustlings were perhaps made by the wings of birds that had made their nests in the old house, finding entrance through the chimney, maybe, or through a broken upper window.

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"Oh, what a dummy I am," said Frank to himself, "to allow myself to be caught this way! I have been spirited off here and locked up for a while so that Gamma may have its own way up at the Library meeting. But David and Jimmy and the Codfish can carry it through as well or better than I could. They can present the scheme and read the constitution—the constitution," he gasped aloud; "I have it in my pocket!" His hand flew to his pocket. There it was, sure enough, a bulky bundle of papers.

"That settles it. I've got to get out of this hole somehow." There was a determined ring to his voice as it echoed from the bare walls. He left his place by the outer door and turned into the room on the right, the door of which stood partly open. Guided by the chinks of light he examined the windows one after the other. Two of them were broken, but they were securely boarded up from the outside. The window at the side of the room had not even a sash. Raising his foot he drove it here with all his might against the barricading boards, but they did not budge to his repeated blows. He gave up this room as a bad job, and felt his way into the hall once more and across it to the opposite front room. Here he had no better luck. The windows were securely shut and boarded like the windows in the other room. At one of them, where there was an opening of several inches between the boards and where the light came through more strongly than at any other of the windows, he smashed the glass with his foot and, getting hold of the edge of the board, tried to wrench it loose with his hands. He might as well have tried to shake down the door post. The nails, driven in years before, had probably rusted, and the boards would have had to be split to fragments before the nails would release them.

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Nothing daunted, Frank kept on. He pushed open doors that squeaked on rusty hinges and battered at the barriers across the windows. Once in his rounds he caught his toe on some obstruction on the floor and fell headlong. The crash woke the echoes in the old house and set in motion scores of mice and rats that went scurrying, squeaking and chattering across the floors.

Retracing his steps, Frank once more found himself, without further mishap, in the hall where he had started his futile round. "I'll try it upstairs," he said, and advanced boldly toward the upper regions of the house. The stairs creaked and groaned horribly as he ascended, and he heard the patter of the feet of rats as they scurried before him. It was none too pleasant a sound. Two of the rooms he tried on the second floor brought no better result, but in the third, at the back of the house, he found a displaced board and a broken sash.

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"So this is where our friends, the birds, get in," he said. "The question is, can I get out?"

He stuck his head through the opening and looked down. Below there was nothing but blackness. "I don't dare risk it. I might break my neck in a cellarway if I dropped." He drew in his head, refreshed by the breath of free night air, and continued his search. Stumbling through the gloom of the upper hall, his hand came in contact with a ladder. He gave it a jerk, but it was nailed securely to the floor. "The attic!" he exclaimed aloud; "if there's a skylight and I can get out on the roof perhaps I can make some one hear."

Up the ladder he went. If it was black below, it was still blacker where he was now penetrating, for not even a ray of moonlight entered. The air was close and stifling, and in the attic of the old house, where he found himself in a few moments, he could scarcely breathe. His entrance there disturbed some night birds that had taken possession of the place, and they flew about uttering angry cries and dashing so close to him that he could feel the fanning of air from their wings. With his arm across his face, he felt for a ladder which must lead to the skylight, if indeed there was a skylight in the roof above. After traversing half the length of the house and colliding with the corner of the chimney, his hand touched wood. It was another ladder, and his heart jumped with joy at the touch. The rounds were covered with a thick layer of dust, deposited there through many years of disuse. Up its short length Frank went cautiously till his head touched the roof. He felt around carefully till his hand touched a hasp. With a sudden jerk he pulled it aside and with his head

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pressing against the skylight, bored upward. To his great joy the heavy skylight moved and swung up on its rusty hinges, and in another moment he was out on the roof of the house with the stars above his head.

What a relief it was to be out of that dismal house! The horrors of it lay below him, but was he any better off? Could he make any one hear him, and, if they did hear him, would any one be likely to come to such a place? Wasn't he in as bad a fix as before? These questions jumped into his brain in rapid succession.

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"Help! Help!" Frank raised his voice and shouted. Again and again he shouted, but there was no answering hail. Off to the left he could plainly see the lights of Queen's School. As a bird flies, it was not more than half a mile from his perch to the Library where his friends were holding their meeting and no doubt wondering where he was. What were they thinking of him? He began hitching along on the roof toward the front of the house, his intention being to attempt a descent, hand over hand, along the roof's edge to the eaves, where, if he could see the ground, he might risk a drop.

Hitching along laboriously, Frank encountered an obstruction when he was halfway to the end of his journey. He felt of it. It was an insulator, and stretching away from it on both sides was a wire of small diameter. "Telephone," said Frank to himself. "How I wish I had an instrument." He climbed over it and went on. Suddenly he stopped: "By Jove, I wonder if that is our wire to Queen's Station? It certainly comes down this way." He was thinking hard.

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"It *is* the wire!" he shouted joyfully. "I remember now Murphy said he put an insulator on this old house because there were no trees near to take the span."

Instantly he turned back to the wire. On one side of the insulator the wire was stretched tightly, but the other side hung sagging. He reached out and pulled on the slack side and found that he could draw it up a foot or more.

"Just the thing!" he exclaimed joyfully. "Now we'll see what happens!"

Straddling the roof, Frank again took hold of the slack loop of the wire and pulled with all his strength. When he had hauled it as tight as possible, he reached down and put a coil around his foot, and was overjoyed to find that he could hold the wire in position that way, although the strain almost pulled him apart. Then, taking his knife, he began to saw at the wire. When he had made a little notch in it he worked it back and forth, bending it this way and that, and suddenly it fell apart.

"Hurrah!" shouted Frank. "Now we'll see if any one hears me."

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Taking a broken end of wire in each hand he began tapping them together. Carefully he called: *F-F-F-F-F-F; JC-JC-JC-JC*. These were the calls of his own room and of Jimmy's. He was using the ends of the broken wire to send Morse signals. After each attempt, with fingers moistened to accentuate their sensitiveness to any return signal, he waited. Thus calling and waiting he kept on for several minutes. "They're probably all in the Library, but Murphy ought to hear me if the wire is cut in at the Station."

Varying the call of *Q*, which was the Station, with calls of *F* and *JC*, Frank kept on, but with the strain of the wire pulling on his foot and cutting into the flesh he was nearly exhausted.

Suddenly in response to his call of *F-F-F* came a shock which made him jump. Some one had opened a telegraph key somewhere on the line. The current had been broken and closed. He tapped slowly, making the letters very plain so that no one could misunderstand, "*C-o-m-e q-u-i-c-k h-a-u-n-t-e-d h-o-u-s-e F-r-a-n-k*." Over and over he repeated his message. Suddenly there came a succession of electric thrills along the wire as if a key had been rattled rapidly, and Frank received the signals plainly through his moistened fingers "*O-K*." He had been heard and understood. With a sigh of relief, he let go of the loose end of the wire and shook it free of his foot. The released wire went swishing down the roof and the connection was broken for good.

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Carefully Frank made his way back to the skylight and backed down the ladder into the darkness beneath. "I'll be ready for them—if they come," he added dubiously. "And the back room where the board is off is more comfortable in spite of the rats than this sharp roof." Down among the startled birds that beat madly around the attic he went again, down the second ladder to the floor, and then made his way to the back room, where he settled himself on the window ledge waiting for his rescue, if



rescue it was to be.

Frank found himself in comfort compared to his position on the roof, but he soon began to wonder whether he had not better, after all, take a chance of a drop in the darkness. He got up, examined the opening, found it too small to squeeze through, and was preparing to make the best of it on his ledge, when his ear caught the sound of a step in the lower part of the house. He stood up with body bent forward listening intently.

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There was no imagination about it this time. It was a slow step, sometimes shuffling, then again firm and quick. Occasionally it stopped, seemingly irresolute. Then it began again. Whatever or whoever it was, the owner of the step appeared to be going the round of the rooms. Now it was on the stairs ascending. Frank listened with his heart in his mouth. Slowly the step came on, reaching the landing, stopped, began again and came on shufflingly in his direction. Frank stepped on the window ledge and reached for the opening between the boards. Suddenly a light flared up, and through the open door Frank saw a boy standing with a lighted match in his hand. It lit the gloom only for a moment and went out in the draft. Frank, startled by the sight, gave a yell. There was an answering groan, the sound of a falling body and then silence. Almost at the same moment shouts were heard outside. Frank sprang to the opening and answered the hail with all the power of his lungs: "Here, here, 'round at the back of the house!" There was the sound of crashing through the tangle of shrubbery and a voice from below—Jimmy's voice—calling, "What in thunder are you doing there?"

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"Taking a moonlight meditation," returned Frank flippantly; "but hurry up, I've had enough. Rip off a board on one of the lower windows if you can. I'm in trouble up here."

Lights flashed below and the sound of several different voices came to Frank's ears. Reassured by the presence of his friends, Frank groped his way to the door in front of which his visitor had fallen. He found the huddled heap of humanity, touched the face and felt it warm, which relieved him greatly. From below came the sound of ripping wood and breaking glass, and, in another minute, Jimmy, with a lantern in his hand, bounded up the stairway, followed by Lewis and several other boys. All were astonished to see Frank, his face streaked with dust and grime, standing by the side of a prostrate figure. The rays of the lantern were directed to the face of the one on the floor.

"Bronson!" all exclaimed in a breath.

"Great Scott!" cried Jimmy in amazement, "what are you fellows doing here and what's the matter with Bronson?"

Bronson, who had fainted from fright when he heard Frank's yell in the darkness, now opened his eyes and sat up, looking around dazedly. Suddenly he seemed to remember: "Don't leave me! Don't leave me!" he cried piteously, grabbing Jimmy by the legs. "I'll tell all about it, but don't leave me here. He'll come back."

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"Tell us what? Who'll come back?" ejaculated Jimmy.

And there on the floor Bronson poured out his story in broken sentences and with hanging head. He told how the Gamma had planned the kidnapping of Frank to break up the meeting, with the hope that the attempt to form a new society might be checked and the absent boy discredited. The attempt, as it proved, had been partly successful, for, despite the eloquent words of the Codfish and David, who had striven to hold it together until Frank could be found, the Gamma element in the meeting had broken it up. It was on Jimmy's return to the room that he had heard Frank's signal and gone in search of him.

"Was Dixon in this scheme?" said Frank, when Bronson finished.

"Yes," was the answer.

"And was he responsible for the affair in the bell tower?"

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"No; Whitlock, Colson and I were the ones in that. But I'll make it right with Dr. Hobart. I'll confess everything. Only don't leave me here, please don't."

On the way back to Queen's School, Bronson freely confessed his part in the affair of the haunted house. He had been detailed by Dixon to see that the men who had been hired to spirit Frank away, carried out their part of the work, and he was hidden near the path when Frank was marched past him. Just as he started to leave, there arose alongside of him the gigantic figure of a man, who, muttering something about being on his property, drew him to the back of the house and, entering by the

cellarway, left him there, fastening the door on the outside. More dead than alive from fear, Bronson had heard Frank shuffling around on the floor above him, and then, when the noise ceased, with a few matches he had in his pocket he started to find his way out. During Frank's absence on the roof he had gained the first floor, and it was he whom Frank heard when he returned to his post by the broken window. The shock of Frank's voice when Bronson, searching for a means of escape, had penetrated to the second floor, was too much for his shaking nerves, and he collapsed on the floor. The men who had kidnapped and carried off Frank were three men from the village, one of whom was a locksmith, which accounted for his possession of a key to the old house.

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It later came out that the gigantic man who had captured and incarcerated Bronson, was none other than a half-witted negro of the village, who was abroad at all times of the night, and who, unknown to any one, had a way of entering and leaving the old house by an open cellarway. It was probably he who, by showing lights in the house at night, had terrified the villagers into the belief that the place was haunted.

Before Bronson was allowed to go that night, he was taken to Frank's room, where, under the dictation of the Codfish, he wrote and signed a full confession of the part he had played in the bell tower incident, and of his knowledge of the kidnapping of Frank.

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## CHAPTER XXIII.

### END OF GAMMA TAU.

The next morning the School was startled by the announcement that Dixon, Bronson and Whitlock were not to be found. During the night, either separately or together, they had packed their suit-cases and departed, leaving instructions for the forwarding of the remainder of their goods. Murphy, the night operator, reported later that they had been seen boarding the early morning train for Milton. Dixon, alone, left word behind him. The note was directed to the manager of the Queen's Baseball Association and contained his resignation as captain of the nine.

"It was just as well he went," said Jimmy, when he heard the news, "or there would have been the biggest scrap on that this School ever saw. After what he did to Frank last night, he was going to get the worst licking that a kid ever got," and Jimmy flexed his arms and clenched his fists.

"I think I'd have taken a hand at him, myself!" said Frank.

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"Me, too," said the Codfish. "If ever I'd have laid this on him," indicating his right fist, "he would go home in an ambulance."

"Or you would have, eh, scrappy old Codfish?" said Lewis. "I don't know but I'd have had a shy at him, myself."

Dixon's departure cleared the atmosphere of the School at once. You may be sure that no time was lost in carrying Bronson's confession to Doctor Hobart, and that stern old man, quick to repair the wrong he had done to Jimmy and Frank, called them to his office.

"Young gentlemen," he said, "I have an apology to make to you. I see I was wrong and I am glad that I was wrong. You are reinstated in all the privileges of the School. I hope you will pardon an old man for leaning too strongly on circumstantial evidence, furthered by untruthful testimony."

It was a joyful crowd that met that afternoon on the diamond. By unanimous consent of the School nine, Frank Armstrong was elected acting-captain to fill out the remainder of the term, and when practice began every boy who could get there was on the bleachers to watch. Jimmy took his place behind the bat and caught and threw with his old-time ability. Frank pitched wonderful ball and threw the spectators into an enthusiasm of cheering when he struck out batsman after batsman of the Second nine as they faced him.

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After the Chapel exercises next morning, Dr. Hobart announced to the whole School there assembled, that he had visited the punishment for the misdoings in the bell tower upon the wrong boys, and then publicly

expressed his sorrow that he had made a mistake. "The real perpetrators, with one exception," he added, "have left School, and that one exception has not yet been dealt with. I have further to say that the Society of Gamma Tau, which has been responsible for this and other disturbances, is from this day forth abolished and any boy in the future, either offering an election to or accepting one from this Society, should any attempt be made to carry it on in secret, will be summarily dismissed from Queen's School."

To the surprise of every one, the abolition of Gamma Tau was not taken seriously to heart by the School. Its domination had for some years become irksome, and even the members of it, with the exception of a few of its leaders, among whom was Howard Hotchkiss, admitted that it was a good thing for the School to have it done away with.

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Whether the killing of the Society by Dr. Hobart's edict had anything to do with it or not, or whether it was the snap that Frank and Jimmy put into the team, none could say, but it was certain that for one cause or another the School rallied around the nine like one man. From a disorganized body the nine was brought into playing form in remarkably short time, and in the last of the preliminary games of the season won over the strong Butler Academy by six runs to one.

Jimmy and Frank worked like Trojans, in these last days of the term, to get the team into shape for the Warwick game. And the School was back of them. By presence and by voice every one helped at the practice. Finally, at the end of examinations, the day of the great contest came around. Warwick, with a nine strong and experienced, came down to Queen's confident of wiping out the stain of defeat of the previous June. Robinson, the left tackle of the Warwick eleven, was captain of the nine and played first base. He had heard, as had every one in Warwick, of the resignation of Dixon as captain and the incident helped to further their belief that Queen's would be, as he said, "easy picking." Down with the Warwick team came a great crowd of heelers to see the "funeral," as one of them expressed it.

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The "funeral" did not come to pass in just the way that Warwick had expected. For three innings it was nip and tuck between the two nines without a run being scored on either side. Frank was in great form, and, while he used few curves, he was able to put the ball exactly where Jimmy wanted it; and between the two of them they had the Warwick batters swinging wildly at balls which they could not hit.

In the fifth inning, through a hit and an error by the Queen's right fielder, Warwick scored a run, and in the sixth added two more. This was the signal for great yelling in the Warwick sections of the stand, but Queen's came back with two earned runs in the seventh. Jimmy's two-base hit started the trouble.

Frank's great pitching, when the bases were full with only one out, cut Warwick out of what looked like a certain score in the eighth inning, but the Queen's batters could do nothing against Warwick in this inning. The game came to the ninth without further runs, and Queen's still one behind. Warwick tried desperately to get a runner across, and with their fastest man on third, when hits were not forthcoming, tried to work the squeeze play. Frank and Jimmy nipped the runner neatly at the plate. Opinions were freely expressed that Queen's would not score, but when Taylor, the Queen's first baseman, came up and singled, the Queen's heelers let loose a howl of joy. Their glee was cut short when Taylor, in trying to steal second, was thrown out.

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With one gone, Frank came to the bat.

"You are due for a hit," said Jimmy, as he left the bench. "Get on and I'll bring you in."

Frank clenched his bat and faced the Warwick pitcher with determination in his eye. Up to the present time he had done nothing in the way of hitting, and the Warwick pitcher held him rather cheaply. Twice he sent the ball across the plate for strikes, and twice the ball went wide.

"Give him a good one," howled a Warwick boy; "let him hit it if he can. He couldn't hit a barn!"

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Straight over the plate came the next ball, and Frank met it with a short powerful swing. Away flew the ball over the third baseman's head, struck the ground in short left field, and, with a spin on it, rolled on and on over the close-cropped grass. The left fielder chased it desperately, but before he got his hands on it, Frank had turned second. The left fielder slammed it straight and hard, and Frank dived for the last fifteen

feet, beating the ball to third only by inches. As he stood on the bag and dusted himself with his cap, Jimmy sauntered easily to the plate.

"Come on," said Jimmy to the Warwick pitcher, when the yelling had died down; "come on, and I'll do it again just like that," and he grinned at the worried boy in the box. The ball flew wide.

"Don't lose your nerve," taunted Jimmy; "put it over."

Again the Warwickian tied himself up into a knot and again flew the ball. It was to Jimmy's liking. He swung a full swing with all the force of his sturdy young body behind it, and, in the language of the diamond, hit it "right on the nose." Just what happened to that ball no one knows to this day. It rose on its long flight between third and short stop, carried over the head of the left fielder like a golf ball cleanly hit, struck far beyond him and rolled down among the alder bushes which fringed the river. The fielder tore after it, disappeared from view, and, after a minute or two, came back holding up both hands. They were empty. But it would have made no difference whether he had had the ball at that time or not, for Jimmy had completed the circuit of the bases, and the bat boy was picking up the scattered bats and mitts by Queen's bench. Queen's had won the game! It was a glorious finish to a season that had begun in anything but glory, and then and there, before the Queen's team left the bench, after a rousing cheer had been given for the defeated Warwicks, Frank Armstrong was elected captain for the following year, while the Queen's stands yelled their approval.

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"It was worth all our trouble for that last inning, wasn't it?" said Jimmy.

And Frank, grinning happily, admitted that it was.

The further doings of Frank Armstrong and his friends at Queen's School will be told in the next volume of this series, entitled "FRANK ARMSTRONG, CAPTAIN OF THE NINE."

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THE END.

#### Transcriber's Notes:

Obvious punctuation errors repaired.

[pg. 231](#) "euphoneous" changed to "euphonious" (the euphonious name)

[pg. 261](#) "preceptibly" changed to "perceptibly" (stiffened perceptibly)

\*\*\* END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK FRANK ARMSTRONG,  
DROP KICKER \*\*\*

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