

Frank Merriwell at Yale

Burt L. Standish

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[Illustration: "He finally found himself slugged under the ear and sent flying over a chair."]

FRANK MERRIWELL
AT YALE

BY

BURT L STANDISH

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FRANK MERRIWELL AT YALE,

CHAPTER I.

TROUBLE BREWING.

"Here's to good old Yale--drink it down!
Here's to good old Yale--drink it down!
Here's to good old Yale,
She's so hearty and so hale--
Drink it down! Drink it down! down! down!"

From the open window of his rooms on York Street Frank Merriwell heard the distant chorus of a rollicking band of students who had been having a merry evening in town.

Frank had passed his examinations successfully and had been admitted as a student at Yale. In order to accomplish this without taking a preparatory course at Phillips Academy, he had found it necessary to vigorously "brush up" the knowledge he had acquired at the Fardale Military Academy which was a college preparatory school.

Professor Scotch, Frank's guardian, had been of great assistance to him, for the professor knew just about what would be required at the entrance examination, and he had kept the boy digging away at the

propositions in the First Book of Euclid, had drilled him in Caesar, caused him to spend weary hours over Virgil and the Iliad, and made him not a little weary of his Xenophon.

As he passed without a condition, although he had been told again and again that a course at Phillips Academy was almost an absolute necessity, Frank was decidedly grateful to the professor.

Professor Scotch's anxiety had brought him to New Haven, where he remained "till the agony was over," as Frank expressed it. The little man bubbled over with delight when he found his _protege_ had gone through without a struggle.

Having secured the rooms on York Street, the professor saw Frank comfortably settled, and then, before taking his departure, he attempted to give the boy some wholesome advice.

"Don't try to put on many frills here the first year," he said. "You will find that freshmen do not cut much of a figure here. It doesn't make any difference what you have done or what you have been elsewhere, you will have to establish a record by what you do and what you become here. You'll find these fellows here won't care a rap if you have discovered the North Pole or circumnavigated the globe in--er--ah--ten days. It will be all the better for you if you do not let them know you are rich in your own name and have traveled in South America, Africa, Europe, and other countries. They'd think you were bragging or lying if you mentioned it, and--"

"You know well enough that I am not given to boasting about myself, professor, and so you are wasting your breath," said Frank, rather resentfully.

"Hum! ha! Don't fly off the handle--keep cool. I know you have sand, and you're made of the right kind of stuff; but you are the greatest hand to get into scrapes I ever saw, and a little advice won't do you any harm. You will find that in many things you cannot do just as you would like, so you must--"

"I'll get into the game all right, so don't worry. You will remember that I did fairly well at Fardale, and you should not worry about me while I am here."

"I will not. You did well at Fardale--that's right. You were the most popular boy in the academy; but you will find Yale is far different from Fardale."

So the professor took his departure, and Frank was left to begin life at college.

His roommate was a rollicking, headstrong, thoughtless young fellow from Ohio. Harry Rattleton was his name, and it seemed to fit him perfectly. He had a way of speaking rapidly and heedlessly and turning his expressions end for end.

Frank had been able to assist Harry at examination. Harry and Frank were seated close to each other, and when it was all over and the two boys knew they had passed all right, Harry came to Frank, held out his hand, and said:

"I believe your name is Merriwell. Mine is Rattleton and I am from Ohio. Merriwell, you are a brick, and I am much obliged to you. Let's room together. What do you say?"

"I am agreeable," smiled Frank.

That was the way Frank found his roommate.

Harry was interested in sports and athletics, and he confided to Frank that he was bound to make a try for both the baseball and football teams. He had brought a set of boxing gloves, foils, and a number of sporting pictures. The foils were crossed above the mantel and the pictures were hung about the walls, but he insisted on putting on the gloves with Frank before hanging them up where they would be ornamental.

"I've taken twenty lessons, old man," he said, "and I want to point you a few shows--I mean show you a few points. We'll practice every day, and I'll bet in less than ten weeks I'll have you so you'll be able to hold your own with any fellow of your age and weight. Ever had the gloves on?"

"A few times," answered Frank, with a quiet smile.

"That's all the better. I won't have to show you how to start in. Here, here--that hand goes on the other glove--I mean that glove goes on the other hand. That's the way. Now we're off. Left forward foot--er, left foot forward. Hold your guard this way. Now hit me if you can."

Almost like a flash of lightning Frank's glove shot out, and he caused the glove to snap on Harry's nose.

"Whee jiz--I mean jee whiz!" gasped the astonished boy from Ohio. "You're quick! But it was an accident; you can't do it again."

He had scarcely uttered the words before Frank feinted and then shot in a sharp one under Harry's uplifted guard.

"Great Scott! You do know some tricks! I'll bet you think you can box! Well, I'll have to drive that head out of your notion--I mean that notion out of your head. Look out for me now! I'm coming!"

Then Harry Rattleton sailed into Frank and met with the greatest surprise of his life, for he found he could not touch Merriwell, and he was beaten and hammered and battered about the room till he finally felt himself slugged under the ear and sent flying over a chair, to land in a heap in one corner of the room. He sat up and held his gloved hand to his ear, which was ringing with a hundred clanging bells, while he stared astounded at his roommate.

"Wow!" he gurgled. "What have I been up against? Are you a prize fighter in disguise?"

That experience was enough to satisfy him that Frank Merriwell knew a great deal more than he did about boxing.

As Frank sat by his window listening to the singing, on the evening that this story opens, he was wondering where Harry could be, for his roommate had been away since shortly after supper.

Frank knew the merry singers were sophomores, the malicious and unrelenting foes of all freshmen. He would have given not a little had he been able to join them in their songs, but he knew that was not to be thought of for a moment.

As he continued to listen, a clear tenor voice struck into that most beautiful of college songs when heard from a distance:

"When the matin bell is ringing,
U-ra-li-o, U-ra-li-o,
From my rushy pallet springing,
U-ra-li-o, U-ra-li-o,

Fresh as the morning light forth I sally,
With my sickle bright thro' the valley,
To my dear one gayly singing,
U-ra-li-o, U-ra-li-o."

Then seven or eight strong musical young voices came in on the warbling chorus, and the boy at the window listened enchanted and enraptured, feeling the subtle charm of it all and blessing fortune that he was a youth and a student at Yale.

The charm of the new life he had entered upon was strong, and it was weaving its spell about him--the spell which makes old Yale so dear to all who are fortunate enough to claim her as their alma mater. He continued to listen, eagerly drinking in the rest of the song as it came through the clear evening air:

"When the day is closing o'er us,
U-ra-li-o, U-ra-li-o,
And the landscape fades before us,
U-ra-li-o, U-ra-li-o,
When our merry men quit their mowing,
And along the glen horns are blowing,
Sweetly then we'll raise the chorus,
U-ra-li-o, U-ra-li-o."

The warbling song died out in the distance, there was a rush of feet outside the door, and Harry, breathless and excited, came bursting into the room.

"I say, old man," he cried, "what do I think?"

"Really, I don't know," laughed Frank. "What do you think?"

"I--I mean wh-what do you think?" spluttered Harry.

"Why, I think a great many things. What's up, anyway?"

"You know Diamond?"

"The fellow they call Jack?"

"Yes."

"I should say so! It was his bull pup that chewed a piece out of the leg of my trousers. I kicked the dog downstairs, and Diamond came near having a fit over it. He's got a peppery temper, and he was ready to murder me. I reckon he thought I should have taken off my trousers and given them to the dog to chew."

"He's a Southerner--from Virginia. He's a dangerous chap, Frank--just as lief eat as fight--I mean fight as eat. He's been in town to-night, drinking beer with the boys, and he's in a mighty ugly mood. He says you insulted him."

"Is that so?"

"It's just so, and he's going to dallenge you to a chewel--I mean challenge you to a duel."

Frank whistled softly, elevating his brows a bit.

"What sort of a duel?" he asked.

"Why, a regular duel with deadly weapons. He's awfully in earnest, Frank, and he means to kill you if you don't apologize. All the fellows

are backing him; they think you will not fight."

"Is that so? Looking for me to show the white feather, are they? Well, I like that!"

"But you can't fight him! I tell you he's a fire eater! I've heard that his father killed a man in a duel."

"And that makes the son dangerous! No, Harry, I can't afford to--What's all that racket?"

The sound of voices and of many feet ascending the stairs could be heard. Harry turned pale.

"They're coming, Frank!" he exclaimed. "It's the whole gang, and Diamond is with them. He means to force you to fight or squeal!"

CHAPTER II.

CHALLENGED AND HAZED.

The voices were hushed, the feet halted in the hall, and then there was a sharp knock on the door.

Before Harry could reach the door Frank called out:

"Come in."

Open flew the door, and there stood the tall, straight, dark-eyed Southerner, with half a dozen other fellows behind him.

"Mr. Merriwell," said Diamond, stiffly, "I have called to see you on a very important matter, sir."

"Walk right in," invited Frank, rising to receive them. "Bring your friends in. State your business, Mr. Diamond."

The party came trooping in, and Frank was not a little astonished to observe among them Bruce Browning, a big, strong, lazy sophomore, a fellow who was known to be a great hand to plan deviltry which was usually carried into execution by his friends. As for Browning, he was not given to exerting himself when he could avoid it.

That a soph should associate with a party of freshmen seemed but a little short of marvelous, and Frank instantly scented "a job." Believing he had been singled out for the party to "jolly," his blood was up in a moment, and he resolved to show them that he was not "easy."

Jack Diamond drew himself up, his eyes fastened threateningly on Frank, and said:

"Sir, you had the impudence to kick my dog, and when I remonstrated with you, you insulted me. I demand an apology before these gentlemen."

Frank held himself in check; he appeared as cool as an iceberg.

"Sir," he said, "your confounded dog spoiled a pair of ten-dollar trousers for me, and I demand another pair--or satisfaction."

Harry Rattleton caught his breath. Was Merriwell crazy? He started forward, as if to intervene, but Diamond, his eyes blazing, motioned him

back.

"Very well, sir," said the Southerner, addressing Frank, "you shall have all the satisfaction you desire. Mr. Ditson will represent me."

Roland Ditson pressed forward. He was a loud-voiced youth who wore loud clothes and sported a large amount of jewelry.

"Name your second, Merriwell," he said in an authoritative way. "We want to settle this matter as soon as possible."

Frank named Harry, and the seconds conferred together.

Merriwell sat down and coolly awaited the result, with his hands in his pockets. Diamond drew aside, his friends gathering about him. Bruce Browning interested himself in what was passing between Rattleton and Ditson, and it was plain that he was urging them to do something.

After a few minutes Harry approached Frank, a troubled look on his face.

"It's an outrage!" he indignantly exclaimed. "Ditson insists that it be a degular ruel--I mean a regular duel with rapiers. He says you gave the challenge, and so Diamond has the right to name the weapons. Such a thing can't take place!"

"Oh, yes, it can," said Frank, coolly. "Accept the proposition and have the affair come off as soon as possible."

"But, Frank, think of it! I'll bet Diamond is an expert swordsman, and he's just the kind of a chap to lose his head and run you through the body! Why, it would be dimply serrible--I mean simply terrible!"

"I'll have to fight him or take water. Now, Harry, old man, you don't want me to show the white feather, so go back and complete the arrangements."

"But there ought to be some other way of settling it. If you could fight him with your fists I know you'd beat him, but you don't stand a show this way."

Frank looked his roommate squarely in the eye.

"Go back and accept every proposition Ditson makes," he commanded, and Rattleton felt the influence of Merriwell's superior will.

Back he went, and it did not take the seconds long, with Bruce Browning's aid, to settle matters. Browning said he knew a nice quiet place where the duel could take place without danger of interruption, and in a short time the entire party was on the street, following the lead of the big sophomore.

Harry was at Frank's side and he was greatly agitated.

"If you are counting on Diamond backing down you'll be dadly--I mean sadly disappointed," he whispered. "That fellow doesn't know what it is to be afraid, and he'll stand up to the end."

"Keep cool," directed Frank. "He'll find there are others."

Harry gave up in despair.

"This is a terrible affair!" he muttered to himself. "It's likely to mean arrest, disgrace, imprisonment for the whole of us, if those blamed hot-headed fools don't kill each other!"

But he decided to stand by his roommate, no matter what came.

Browning led them away from the vicinity of the college buildings and down a dark street. At length they came to an old brick structure, in which not a light was to be seen. Down some slippery stone steps they went, and the big soph let them in by unlocking a door.

It was dark inside. Browning closed and locked the door, after which he conducted them along a narrow passage, opened another door, and ushered them into a room.

The smell of cigarette smoke was strong there, and Frank knew the place had been lately occupied by smokers.

A match spluttered, and then a lamp was lighted.

"Get ready for business," directed Browning. "I will bring the rapiers and another light."

Then he vanished beyond a door that opened into another dark room.

Frank looked around and saw a table, upon which were cards and empty beer bottles. There were chairs and some copies of illustrated sporting papers. The walls were bare.

It was warm down there, and Frank immediately discarded his coat.

Diamond was about to follow Merriwell's example, when there was a sudden rush of feet and the room filled in a twinkling with masked youths, who flung themselves on the astonished freshmen and made all but Frank a prisoner in a moment.

Frank instantly understood that they had been trapped and he knocked down four of his assailants before they could bear him to the floor and overpower him.

His hands were securely bound, and then he was lifted to his feet.

"Well, fellows, that was a pretty slick trick," he half laughed, as he coolly looked around. "You sophs have been trying to corral a gang of us for a week, and with the aid of the smooth Mr. Browning you succeeded very finely this time."

"Silence!" roared a deep voice, and a tall fellow in a scarlet Mephisto rig confronted Frank. "You have intruded upon forbidden ground. None but the chosen may enter here and escape with life."

"Not one!" chorused all the masks in deep and dismal unison.

Mephisto made a signal. Once more the freshmen were seized.

"Away with them!" shouted the fellow in red.

In another moment all but Frank had been hustled out of the room. Then Frank was suddenly held fast and blindfolded. He was dragged along to some place where the opening of another door brought to his ears the sound of horns and shouts of fiendish glee. He was made to mount some stairs and then his feet were kicked from beneath him, and he shot down a steep and slippery incline into the very midst of the shouting demons. He dropped through space and landed—in a vat of ice-cold water. Then he was dragged out, thumped on the head with stuffed clubs, deafened by the horns that bellowed in his ears, and tossed in a blanket till his head bumped against the ceiling. Then he was forced to crawl through a piano box that was filled with sawdust. He was pushed and pulled and hammered and thumped till he was sore in every part of his body.

All through this ordeal not a word or murmur escaped his lips. His teeth were set, and he felt that he had rather die than utter a sound that betrayed pain or agitation.

This seemed to infuriate his assailants. They banged him about till he could scarcely stand, and then, of a sudden, there was a great hush, while a terrible voice croaked:

"Bring forth the guillotine!"

There was a bustle, and then the bandage was stripped from Frank's eyes, he was tripped up, and a second later found himself lying helpless with his neck in the socket of a mock guillotine. Above him was suspended a huge gleaming knife that seemed to tremble, as if about to fall. At his side was a fellow dressed in the somber garments of an executioner.

It was really a severe strain upon his nerves, but still his teeth were clinched, and not a sound came from his lips.

"The knife is broken," whispered the mock executioner in Frank's ear, "so it may accidentally fall and cut you."

"Have you any last message, fresh?" hoarsely whispered the mock executioner. "There might be a fatal accident."

Frank made no reply save to wink tauntingly at the fellow.

The next instant, with a nerve-breaking swish, the shining blade fell!

A piece of ice was drawn across Frank's throat and a stream of warm water squirted down his back.

It was most horribly real and awful, and for a moment it seemed that the knife had actually done the frightful deed.

Despite his wonderful nerve, Frank gasped; but he quickly saw that the knife had swung aside and his head was still attached to his body.

Then he forced a derisive laugh from his lips, and seemed not the least disturbed, much to the disgust of the assembly.

"Confound him!" growled a voice, which Frank fancied he recognized as belonging to Browning. "There's no fun in him. Let's try another."

Then Frank was lifted to his feet and assisted to don his coat.

"If you want to stay and see the fun, put on a mask," directed Mephisto. "You must not be recognized by the other freshies."

He was given a mask and he put it on as directed.

A moment later the masked youths began to howl and blow horns. A door opened, and Diamond, blindfolded and bound, was led into the room.

The young Virginian stood up haughtily, and he was seen to strain and struggle in an effort to free his hands.

"I protest against this outrage!" he cried, angrily. "I want you to know that my father--"

The horns and the shouts drowned his words. He was forced to mount the steps to a high platform, and an instant later he found himself shooting down a slippery incline of planed and greased boards.

The racket stopped as Diamond scooted down the slippery surface. He dropped sprawling into the vat of icy water. Several hands caught hold of him, yanked him up, and thrust him down again.

"Oh, somebody shall suffer for this!" gurgled the helpless freshman, spluttering water from his mouth.

He was dragged out of the vat, and then he was forced to endure all the hustling, and thumping, and banging which Frank Merriwell had passed through. His protests seemed to fall on deaf ears.

It had been reported that Diamond had declared that the sophomores would not dare to haze him, as his father would make it hot for them if they did. The report was remembered, and he was used more severely than Frank had been.

Hazing at Yale was said to be a thing of the past, but Frank saw it was still carried on secretly.

"Make a speech, fresh!" shouted a voice.

"Speech! speech!" yelled the masked lads.

Diamond was placed on a low table.

For a moment he hesitated, and then he fancied he saw his opportunity to make a protest that would be heard.

"I will make a speech," he declared. "I'll tell you young ruffians what I think of you and what--"

Swish! a sponge that was dripping with dirty water struck him square in the mouth. Some of the water went down his throat, and he choked and strangled.

The table was jerked from beneath his feet, and he fell into the waiting arms of the masked sophomores.

"He called us ruffians! Give it to him!"

Then the unfortunate freshman was used worse than ever. He was tossed in a blanket, given a powerful shock of electricity, deafened by the horns, pounded with the stuffed clubs, and hustled till there was scarcely any breath left in his body.

Then the bandage was torn from Diamond's eyes and he was confronted by the guillotine, over which fresh red ink had been liberally spattered. The blade of the huge knife was dripping in a gory manner, and it really looked as if it had just completed a deadly piece of work.

Despite himself, the young Virginian shivered when his eyes rested on the apparently blood-stained blade.

"Be careful!" some one distinctly whispered. "We do not want to kill more than one freshman in a night."

Some one else spoke of the frightful manner in which the knife had cut Merriwell, and then, despite his feeble struggles, Diamond was placed upon the instrument of torture.

"The other fresh died game," muttered the executioner. "Of course we didn't mean to kill him, but the knife is out of order and it slipped by accident. We haven't time to fix it properly, but there are only about nine chances out of ten that it will fall again."

"Oh, you fellows shall pay for this!" feebly gasped Diamond.

Despite himself, although he knew how unlikely such a thing was, he could not help wondering if a terrible accident had really happened. If not, where was Merriwell. He looked around, but saw nothing of Frank, who was keeping in the background.

And then, when his nerves had been quite unstrung, the knife fell, the ice and warm water were applied, and Diamond could not choke back the cry of horror that forced itself from his lips.

A roar of laughter broke from the masked students.

When Diamond was lifted to his feet he was almost too weak to stand. He clinched his teeth, vowing over and over to himself that he would find a way to square accounts.

"If it takes me a year, I'll find out who the leaders in this affair are, and they shall suffer for it!" he thought.

"Give him a chance to see the others put through the mill," said Mephisto, and Diamond's hands were released.

The Virginian looked around, seeming irresolute for a moment. Not far away he saw a masked lad whose clothes were wet and bedaubed with dirt and sawdust.

In an instant Diamond sprang toward this person and snatched the mask from his face.

"It's Merriwell!" he triumphantly shouted, "and he has helped to haze me! His career at Yale will be suddenly cut short!"

CHAPTER III.

THE BLOW.

There was a sudden hush. The students saw that Diamond was really revengeful, and his words seemed to indicate that he intended to report any one whose identity he discovered.

The Virginian was pale and he trembled with anger.

"You don't mean to say that you will blow, do you?" asked one.

"That's exactly what I do mean, sir!" came resolutely from the lips of the infuriated freshman. "I am a gentleman and the son of a gentleman, and I'll never stand it to be treated like a cur. Hazing is said to be no longer tolerated here, and an investigation is certain to follow my report of this affair."

A little fellow stepped out.

"You claim to be a gentleman," he said, distinctly, "but you will prove yourself a cad if you peach."

"I had rather be a cad than a ruffian, sir!"

"If you were a gentleman you would take your medicine like a gentleman. You'd never squeal."

"You fellows are the ones who are squealing now, for you see you have been imposing on the wrong man."

"Man!" shot back the little fellow, contemptuously. "There's not much man about a chap that blows when he is hazed a little."

"A little! a little! Is this what you call a little?"

"Oh, this is nothing. Think of what the poor freshies used to go through in the old days of Delta Kappa and Signa Epsilon. Why, sometimes a fellow would be roasted so his skin would smell like burned steak for a week."

"That was when he was burned at the stake," said a chap in the background, and there was a universal dismal groan.

"This is some of the Delta Kappa machinery here," the little fellow explained. "Sometimes some of the fellows come here to have a cold bot and hot lob. You freshies walked right in on us to-night, and we gave you a pleasant reception. Now, if you blow I'll guarantee you'll never become a soph. The fellows will do you, and do you dirty, before your first year is up."

"Such threats do not frighten me," haughtily flung back the lad from Virginia. "I know this was a put-up job, and Bruce Browning was in it. He got us to come here. Frank Merriwell knew something about it, or he'd never been so ready to come. And I know you, too, Tad Horner."

The little fellow fell back a step, and then, with a sudden angry impulse, he tore off his mask, showing a flushed, chubby, boyish face, from which a pair of great blue eyes flashed at Diamond.

"Well, I am Tad Horner!" he cried, "and I'm not ashamed of it! If you want to throw me down, go ahead. It will be a low, dirty trick, and will show the kind of big stuff you are!"

The masked lads were surprised, for Tad had never exhibited such spirit before. He had always seemed like a mild, shy, mother-boy sort of chap. He had been hazed and had cried; but he wouldn't beg and he never squealed. After that Browning had taken him under his wing, had fought his battles, and had stood by him through the freshman year. Anybody who was looking for trouble could find it by imposing on Horner; and Browning, for all of his laziness, could fight like a tiger when he was aroused.

Some of the students clapped their hands in approbation of Tad's plain words, and there was a general stir. One fellow proposed that everybody unmask, so that all would be on a level with Horner, but the little fellow quickly cried:

"Don't do it! You'd all be spotted, and the faculty would know who to investigate if anything should happen to Diamond. If I'm fired, I want you fellows to settle with him for me."

"We'll do it--we'll do it, Tad!" cried more than twenty voices.

Diamond showed his white, even teeth and laughed shortly.

"Perhaps you think that will scare me," he sneered. "If so, you will find I am not bluffed so easily."

"We are not trying to scare you," declared another of the masked students, "but you'll find we are in earnest if you blow."

"Well, you will find I am in earnest, and I do not care for you all."

The boys began to despair, for they saw that Diamond was determined and obstinate, and it would be no easy thing to induce him to abandon his intention of reporting the hazing. If he did so, Browning and Horner would find themselves in deep trouble, and others might become involved during the investigation. It was not probable that the consequences would be serious for Merriwell, who would be able to prove his innocence in the matter.

What could be done?

The boys fell to discussing the matter in little groups, and not a few expressed regret that Tad Horner had unmasked, as an alibi could have been arranged for him if he had not done so. Now he would be too proud to permit them to try anything of the sort, and he would tell the truth about his connection with the affair if the truth were demanded of him.

"We're in a bad box," said one fellow in one of the little groups. "Diamond is mad enough to do as he threatens."

"Sure," nodded another. "And that breaks up this joint. No more little lunches here--no more games of penny ante."

"It's a howling shame!" exploded a third. "It makes me feel grouchy."

"I move we strangle Diamond," suggested the first speaker.

"It seems that that is the only way to keep his tongue still," dolefully groaned a tall chap. "This is a big horse on us."

"That's what," sighed a boy with a face like a girl's. "The whole business puts me in a blue funk."

Then they stood and stared silently at each other through the eyeholes in their masks, and not one of them was able to propose anything practicable.

The rest of the assembled sophomores seemed in quite as bad a plight, and some of them were inclined to indulge in profanity, which, although it relieved their feelings for the moment, did not suggest any way out of the scrape.

At this point Merriwell spoke up, addressing Diamond.

"Look here, old man," he said in a friendly way, "you've only taken the same dose they gave me. It's nothing when you get used to it."

Diamond gave him a contemptuous look, but did not speak.

"Now, I don't propose to make a fuss about this little joke," Frank went on. "What's the use? I'm not half killed."

"Perhaps you think you can hoodwink me!" cried Diamond. "Well, you cannot! You were in the game all the time. That's why you were so ready to meet me in a duel--that's why you came here."

"I assure you on my word of honor that you are wrong."

"Your word of honor!"

"Yes, my word of honor," he calmly returned. "See--look at my clothes. You can tell that I have been through the mill."

"You may have had them fixed that way on purpose to fool me."

"Oh, you must know better than that! Be reasonable, Diamond."

The Virginian made a savage gesture.

"If you are so pleased to be made a laughingstock of it's nothing to me," he flashed. "Keep still if you want to. I'm going to tell all I know."

"That would make a very large book—full of nice clean, blank pages," said some one in the background.

Frank's manner suddenly changed.

"Look here, Diamond," he said, "you won't tell a thing."

The Southerner caught his breath and his eyes stared.

"Eh?" he muttered, surprised at the other's manner. "I won't?"

"Not on your life."

"Why not?"

"Because it will mean expulsion for you as well as myself if you do."

Every one was listening. They gathered about the two freshmen, wondering not a little at Merriwell's words and manner.

"Expulsion for me?" slowly repeated Diamond. "How is that?"

"It's straight goods."

"Explain it."

"Well, I will. We came here to fight a duel, didn't we?"

"Yes, sir."

"You admit that?"

"I do, sir."

"That is all that's needed."

"How? Why? I don't understand."

"Duels are not countenanced in the North, and nothing would cause a fellow to be fired from Yale quicker than the knowledge that he had had anything to do with one while here. Do you twig?"

There was a moment of silence and then a stir. A deep sigh of relief came from the masked lads, and some of them showed an inclination to cheer Merriwell.

Diamond seemed nonplused for the moment. He glared at Frank, his hands clinched and his face pale.

At last he slowly said:

"A duel is something no gentleman can blow about, so if you are a gentleman you will have to remain silent, sir."

"That's the way you Southerners look at it, but you will excuse us Northerners if we do not see it in the same light. A hazing is something we do not blow about, but you seem determined to let out everything, for

all that it would be a dirty thing to do. In order to even the matter, these fellows are sure to tell that you came here to fight a duel with deadly weapons, and you'll find yourself rustivating in Virginia directly."

"Way down in ole Virginny," softly warbled one of the delighted sophomores. "That's the stuff, Merry, old boy!"

Diamond trembled with intense anger. He tried to speak, but his voice was so hoarse that his words were unintelligible. A blue line seemed to form around his mouth.

"Merriwell's got him!" Bruce Brown lazily whispered in Tad Horner's ear. "See him squirm!"

Tad was relieved, although he endeavored not to show it; but a satisfied smile crept over his rosy face, and he felt like giving Frank Merriwell the "glad hand."

Diamond's anger got the best of him. He strode forward, looked straight into Frank's eyes, and panted:

"I hate you, sir! I could kill you!"

And then, before he realized what he was doing, he struck Merriwell a sharp blow on the cheek with his open hand.

CHAPTER IV.

THE FIGHT.

The blow staggered Frank. It had come so suddenly that he was quite unprepared for it. His face became suddenly pale, save where Diamond's hand had struck, and there the crimson prints of four fingers came out quickly, like a danger signal.

With the utmost deliberation Merriwell removed his coat.

"Come, sir!" he said to Diamond as he passed coat and hat to a ready sophomore.

"I--I can't fight you that way!" protested the Virginian. "Bring the rapiers."

"This time I claim the right to name the weapons, and they will be bare fists."

"Right! right!" cried several voices. "You'll have to fight him that way, Diamond."

"I will fight him!" grated Jack, furiously. "It is the prize fighter's way, but I'll fight him, and I will lick him!"

He tore off his coat and flung it down. The boys quickly formed a ring, and the freshmen foes faced each other.

Then the door of the room where the other freshmen were confined was thrust open, and Harry Rattleton excitedly cried:

"Whee jiz--I mean jee whiz! what do you fellows think? Do you imagine we are going to stay penned in here while there is a scrap going on? Well,

I guess not! We're coming out!"

Harry came with a rush, and the other freshmen followed at his heels, the party having been abandoned by the sophs who had been placed on guard over them.

"Hold on! hold on!" commanded Harry, forcing his way toward the fighters. "I am Merriwell's second, and I'm going to see fair play, you bet!"

"And I am Diamond's second," said Roland Ditson. "Just give me a chance in the ring there."

The appearance of the freshmen caused a brief delay. There was some talk about rules and rounds, and Diamond said:

"If I must fight with my fists, I'll fight as I please. I don't know about your rules, and there will be but one round—that will finish it."

"How does that suit you, Merriwell?" asked Tad Horner, who seemed to have assumed the position of referee.

"I am willing that Mr. Diamond should arrange that matter to suit himself."

"But there is to be no kicking," Tad Horner hastily put in.

"Certainly not," stiffly agreed the Southerner.

"All right. Shake hands."

Diamond placed both hands behind his back, and Merriwell laughed.

"Ready!" called Horner. "On guard! Now you're off!"

Barely had the words left the little referee's lips when—top, tap, slap!—Merriwell had struck Diamond three light blows with his open hand.

A gasp of astonishment came from the watching sophomores. Never had they seen three blows delivered in such lightning-like rapidity, but their ears had not fooled them, and they heard each blow distinctly.

Merriwell's guard was perfect, his pose was light and professional, and he suddenly seemed catlike on his feet.

Diamond was astonished, but only for an instant. The tapping blows started his blood, and he sprang toward his foe, striking out with his left and then with his right.

Merriwell did not attempt to guard, but he dodged both blows with ease, and then smiled sweetly into the face of the baffled Virginian.

"Oh, say!" chuckled Harry Rattleton, hugging himself in delighted anticipation, "just you fellows wait a minute! Diamond will think he has been struck by an earthquake!"

Bruce Browning, himself a scientific boxer, was watching every movement of the two freshmen. He turned to Puss Parker at his side and said:

"Merriwell handles himself like an old professional. By Jove! I believe there's good stuff in that fellow!"

"Diamond would like to kill Merriwell," said Parker. "You can see it in his face and eyes."

In truth there was a deadly look in the eyes of the pale-faced young Virginian. His lips were pressed together, and a hardening of the jaws told that his teeth were set. He was following Merriwell up, and the latter was avoiding him with ease. Plainly Diamond meant to corner the lad he hated and then force the fighting to a finish.

The rivals were nearly of a height and they were built much alike, although Frank had slightly the better chest development.

Merriwell seemed to toy with Diamond, giving him several little pat-like blows on the breast and in the ribs. When the Virginian felt that he had Frank cornered he was astonished to see Merriwell slip under his arm and come up laughing behind him.

Merriwell's laughter filled Diamond's very soul with gall and wormwood.

"Wait!" he thought. "He laughs best who laughs last."

"Give it to him, Frank!" urged Rattleton. "You'll get out of wind dodging about, and then it will not be so easy to finish him off."

But Frank saw that in a scientific way Diamond was no match for him, and he disliked to strike the fellow. He regretted very much that the unfortunate affair had come about, and he felt that there could be no satisfaction in whipping the Southerner.

Merriwell hoped to toy with Diamond till the latter should see that his efforts were fruitless and give up in disgust.

But he did not yet recognize the kind of stuff of which John Diamond was built.

"Come! come!" impatiently called one of the spectators. "Quit ducking and dodging and get into the game."

"That's right! that's right!" chorused several. "This is no sport."

"And it's no six-day walking match," sneered Roland Ditson. "Merriwell seems afraid to stand up and face Diamond."

"Is that what you think?" Frank mentally exclaimed. "Well, I suppose I will have to hit him a few times, although it goes against my grain."

A moment later he dropped his hands by his side and took a step to meet the Virginian. It seemed like a great opportunity for Diamond, and he led off straight for Frank's face, striking with his left.

With a slight side movement of his head Frank avoided the blow, allowing his enemy's fist to pass over his shoulder. At the same time he cross countered with his right hand, cracking Jack a heavy one under the ear.

"Hooray!" cried Harry Rattleton in delight. "That was a corker! Bet Sparkler saw more stars than there are in the Wilky May--I mean Milky Way."

For a few minutes the fight was hot. Again and again Frank struck his enemy, but without putting his full strength into any of the blows, but it did not seem to have any effect on Diamond save to make him more fierce and determined.

"The Southerner's got some sand," commented Bruce Browning.

"That's right," nodded Puss Parker.

"He takes punishment well for a while, at least; but I don't believe he will hold out much longer. I think he is the kind of a fellow to go to pieces in an instant."

"You can't tell about that. I have a fancy that he's deceptive."

None of them, save Rattleton, possibly, knew that Merriwell was reserving any of his strength when he struck his foe.

The fellows who a short time before were the most indignant against the Southerner because he seemed determined to "blow" were now forced to admire his bulldog tenacity and sand.

Merriwell had no desire to severely injure Diamond, although he had felt some resentment toward the fellow for forcing him into a duel with rapiers.

To Frank it had seemed that the Virginian had no hesitation in taking advantage of an enemy, for Diamond must have presumed that Merriwell knew nothing of the art of fencing and swordplay.

But for this belief, Merriwell would have been inclined to keep on and tire his enemy out, without striking a single blow that could leave a mark.

But when Frank came to consider everything, he decided that it was no more than fair that he should give his persistent foe a certain amount of punishment.

Again and again Frank cross countered and upper-cut Diamond, and gradually he came to strike harder as the Virginian forced the fighting, without showing signs of letting up.

Bruises and swellings began to appear on Diamond's face. On one cheek Merriwell's knuckles cut through the skin, and the blood began to run, creeping down to his chin and dropping on the bosom of his white shirt.

Still, from the determination and fury with which he fought, it seemed that Diamond was utterly unconscious that he had been struck at all.

Jack did not consider how he had led Frank into a duel with rapiers without knowing whether the fellow he hated had ever taken a fencing lesson in all his life.

His one thought was that, being an expert boxer himself, Merriwell had forced him to a fist fight, believing it would be easy to dispose of him that way.

Diamond's hatred of Frank made him blind to the fact that he was in the least to blame, and filled him with a passionate belief that he could kill the smiling Northerner without a qualm of conscience—without a pang of remorse.

At last, disgusted with his non-success in striking Frank at all, he sprang forward suddenly and grappled with him.

Frank had been on the watch for that move.

Then the boys saw a pretty struggle for a moment, ending with Diamond being lifted and dropped heavily, squarely on his back.

Merriwell came down heavily on his persistent enemy.

Frank fell on Jack with the hope of knocking the wind out of the fellow and thus bringing the fight to a close.

For a few moments it seemed that he had succeeded.

Frank sprang up lightly, just as Tad Horner grappled him by the hair with both hands and yelled: "Break away!"

Roland Ditson was at Diamond's side in a twinkling.

"Come, come, old man!" he whispered; "get up and get into the game again! Don't let them count you out!"

But the Virginian was gasping for breath, and he did not seem to hear the words of his second.

"That settles it," said Puss Parker, promptly.

"Better wait and see," advised Bruce Browning. "Diamond may not give up when he gets his breath."

"It doesn't look as if he'd ever get his breath again."

Harry Rattleton was at Frank's side, swiftly saying:

"Why didn't you knock him out and show the fellows what you can do? You monkeyed with the goat too long. He's stuffy, and you had to settle him sometime. It didn't make a dit of bifference whether it was first or last."

"That's all right," smiled Frank. "He's got sand, and I hated to nail him hard. It seemed a shame to thump such a fellow and cover his face with decorations."

"Shame? shame?" spluttered Harry. "Why, didn't he force you into a duel with rapiers, or try to? and he is an expert! Say, what's the matter with you? If I'd been in your place I'd gone into him tooth and nail, and I wouldn't have left him in the shape of anything. Have you got a soft spot around you somewhere, Merriwell?"

"I admire sand, even if it is in an enemy."

"You take the cherry pie--yes, you take the whole bakery!"

Harry gazed at his roommate in wonder that was not entirely unmingled with pity and disgust. He could not understand Merriwell, and such generosity toward a persistent foe on the part of Frank seemed like weakness.

In the meantime Ditson had been urging Diamond to get up.

"They'll call the scrap finished if you don't get onto your pins in a jiffy," he warned. "Horner's got his watch in his hand."

Still the Virginian gasped for breath and seemed unable to lift a hand. If ever a fellow seemed done up, it was Diamond just then.

Roll Ditson ground his teeth in despair.

"Oh, Merriwell will think he is cock of the walk now!" he muttered. "He'll crow and strut! He's laughing over it now!"

"Wh-what's that?" gasped Diamond, trying to sit up.

"He is laughing at you," hurriedly whispered Ditson, lying glibly. "I just heard him tell Rattleton that he could have knocked the stuffing out of you in less than a quarter of a minute. He says you'll never dare

face him again."

"Oh, he does! oh, he does!" came huskily from Diamond's lips. "Well, we'll see about that--we'll see!"

With Ditson's aid he got upon his feet. Then his breath and his strength seemed to come to him in a twinkling. With a backward snap of his arm he flung his second away. Then uttering a hoarse cry, he rushed like a mad bull at the lad he hated.

CHAPTER V.

THE FINISH.

Diamond's recovery and the manner in which he resumed the fight caused general astonishment. Even Bruce Browning had come to think that the Virginian was "out."

Frank was taken by surprise. Before he could square away to meet his foe, Diamond struck him a terrific blow near the temple, knocking him into Rattleton's arms.

"Foul!" cried Harry, excitedly. "Horner hadn't given the word."

"Foul! foul!" came from all sides.

"There is no foul in this fight save when something is used besides fists," declared Merriwell as he staggered from his roommate's arms. "It's all right and it goes."

But he found that everything seemed swimming around him, and dark spots were pursuing each other before his eyes. The floor seemed to heave like the deck of a ship at sea. He put out his hand to grasp something, and then he was struck again.

Once more Rattleton's arms kept Frank from going down.

"This is no square deal!" Harry shouted. "By the poly hoker--I mean the holy poker! I'll take a hand in this myself!"

He would have released Merriwell and jumped into the ring, but Frank's strong fingers closed on his arm.

"Steady, old man!" came sharply from Merriwell's lips. "I am in this yet awhile. If Diamond finishes me he is to be let alone. The fellow that lays a hand on him is no friend of mine!"

"You give me cramps!" groaned Harry.

Instead of aiding in finishing Frank, Diamond's second blow seemed to straighten him up, as if it had cleared a fog from his brain. The spots disappeared before his eyes and things ceased to swim around him.

Into the ring to meet his foe sprang Frank, and, to the astonishment of everybody he still smiled.

At the same time, Merriwell knew he had toyed with Diamond too long. He realized that the Virginian's first blow had come within a hair of knocking him out, and he could still hear a faint, ringing and roaring in his head.

Frank saw that the only way he could end the fight was to finish his unrelenting and persistent foe.

Diamond fought like an infuriated tiger. Again and again Frank's fist cracked on his face, and still he did not falter, but continued to stand up and "take his medicine."

In less than a minute the Virginian was bleeding at the nose, and had received a blow in one of his eyes that was causing it to swell in a way that threatened to close it entirely.

The spectators were greatly excited, and not a few of them declared it was the most gamey fight they had ever witnessed.

The front of Diamond's shirt was stained with blood, and he presented a sorry aspect. His chest was heaving, but his uninjured eye glared with unabated fury and determination.

"Will he never give up?" muttered Harry Rattleton. "He's a regular hog! The fellow doesn't know when he has enough."

It was true Southern grit. It was the unyielding Southern spirit--the spirit that led the soldiers of the South to make one of the pluckiest struggles known in history.

While the fellow's grit had won Frank's admiration, still Merriwell had learned that it would not do to let up. The only way out of the fight was to end it, and he set about trying to accomplish that with as little delay as possible.

Once Diamond succeeded in getting in another blow, and it left a slight swelling over one of the other lad's eyes.

But Merriwell did not seem to know that he had been hit. He soon cracked the Virginian upon the uninjured eye, and that began to swell. In a few seconds it seemed that Diamond must soon go blind.

"Finish him, old man--finish him!" urged Harry.

Frank was looking for the chance, but it was some time before he found it. It came at last, and his left landed on the jaw beneath Diamond's ear.

Over went the Southerner, and he lay like a log where he fell.

At a glance, it was evident to all that he was knocked out.

The boys crowded around Merriwell, eager to congratulate him, but he thrust them back, saying:

"It's the first time in my life I ever did a thing of which I was ashamed! Look after him. I'm all right."

"Say!" exploded Harry Rattleton, "you make me sick! Didn't you have to do it?"

"I suppose so."

"Didn't he strike you foul twice?"

"He knows nothing of rules, and we were fighting by no rules, so there could be no foul."

"Oh, no! If he'd soaked you with a brick you'd said it was all right! I say, you make me sick! Wait till he gets a good chance to do you, and

see how quick he will take it."

"He'll not be to blame if he tries to get square."

"Oh, go hoke your sed—I mean soak your head! I'll catch you some time when you are asleep and try to pound a little sense into you."

"Well, take care of Diamond," ordered Merriwell. "That last one I gave him was a beastly thump."

"Let the other fellows take care of him," said Harry. "We'll rub you down. You need it. Got any towels, Mr. Horner?"

"Guess we can find one or two," cheerfully answered Tad. "Come on, Merriwell. We'll fix you up."

Frank followed them into the room where the captured freshmen had been confined, and there they found running water, an old iron sink, a tin wash basin, and some towels.

The visitor was stripped and given a brisk and thorough rubbing and sponging by Harry and Tad.

Bruce Browning, with his mask still over his face, came loafing in and looked the stripped freshman over with a critical eye. He inspected Frank from all sides, poked him with his fingers, felt of his arms and legs, surveyed the muscles of his back and chest, and then stood off and took him all in at a glance.

"Humph!" he grunted.

Frank's delicate pink skin glowed, and he looked a perfect Apollo, with a splendid head poised upon a white, shapely neck. Never had he looked handsomer in all his life than he did at that moment, stripped to the buff, his brown hair frowsled, his body glowing from the rubbing.

"By Jove!" cried Tad Horner, who was sometimes called Baby, "he's a Jim Hickey—eh, old man?"

The interrogation was directed at Browning.

"Humph!" grunted Bruce, and then with his hands in his pockets he loafed out of the room.

Afterward it was reported that Browning said the freshman was the finest-put-up chap he had ever seen, but he didn't want to give him the swelled head by telling him so.

By the time Merriwell was well rubbed down one of the freshmen came in and reported that Diamond had come around all right.

"They're going to bring him in here and give him a rubbing," said the freshman.

Frank hastened to get into his clothes, in order that Diamond might have a chance. Rattleton had brushed the dirt and sawdust off those clothes, so they looked pretty well, and Merriwell showed no traces of what he had passed through when he stepped out of the little room.

Some of the boys were trying to induce Diamond to be rubbed down, but he objected, declaring he was going directly to his room. The blood had been washed from his face, and one or two cuts had been patched up with court-plaster, but his eyes were nearly closed, and he presented a pitiful appearance.

Frank hesitated a moment, and then he stepped up to his foe, saying in a manner most sincere:

"Old man, I am sorry this affair took place. I had the advantage, because I have taken boxing lessons, but you made a beautiful fight. I hold no hard feelings. Let's call it quits and shake."

He held out his hand.

Diamond's reply was to turn his back squarely on the proffered hand.

An additional flush arose to Merriwell's cheeks, and he dropped his hand by his side, turning away without another word.

A few moments later Diamond left the building, accompanied by a single companion, and that companion was not Roland Ditson.

Ditson remained behind, and he was among those who crowded about Frank Merriwell and offered congratulations.

"I was Diamond's second," said Roll, "but I am satisfied that the best man won. He is no match for you, Merriwell. I shouldn't have been his second, only he urged me to. I was glad to see you do him up."

He got hold of Frank's hand and held on, but received no friendly pressure in return. When he said he was glad that Merriwell did Diamond up Frank looked incredulous.

"As for me," said the victor, "I was sorry to have to do him up."

Somewhere about the place Rattleton had found an old floral decoration representing a harp. He brought it forward and presented it to Frank.

"Take it," he said. "You'll need it pretty soon. Your wings must be sprouting already!"

"What is it?" asked Frank.

"Why, can't you see? It's a harp."

"It looks to me like a blasted lyre," said Merriwell. "You'd better give it to Ditson."

Then everybody but Ditson laughed.

CHAPTER VI.

A FRESH COUNCIL.

Diamond was in a wretched condition. Hunk Collins, his roommate, procured two slices of fresh beefsteak, and the Virginian had them bound over his eyes, while his face was bathed with soothing and healing lotions; but nothing could soothe his bruised and battered spirit, and Collins said he was kept awake all night by hearing Diamond grind his teeth at irregular intervals.

Even when he slept near morning the Southerner continued to grind his strong white teeth.

Collins was dropping off to sleep from sheer weariness when he awoke to find his roommate astride him and clutching him by the throat.

"This time I'll fix you!" mumbled Diamond, thickly. "I'll kill you, Merriwell—I'll kill you!"

Then he struck feeby at Collins, who rolled over and flung him off. They grappled, and it was a severe struggle before Diamond was flung down on the bed and held.

"What in thunder is the matter with you?" gasped Collins, whose hair was standing. "I'm not Merriwell! Have you gone daft?"

"Where are we?"

"Why, in our room, of course. Where did you think we were?"

"I didn't know. I was dreaming."

"Well, if you are going to be this way often, I'll have to take out a life insurance policy or quit you."

"Don't mind. I'll be all right in the morning. Oh, hang the luck!"

Then the passionate Southerner turned over with his face toward the wall. Collins smoked a cigarette to quiet his nerves, after which he got into bed once more. At intervals he could feel the bed shake, and he knew Diamond was shivering as if he had a chill.

In the morning Diamond was not all right. He was ill in bed, and it was necessary to call a physician, although he protested against it. His eyes were in wretched shape, but when the doctor questioned him, he persisted in saying he had injured them by falling downstairs.

Of course he could not appear at chapel or recitations, and he sent in an excuse.

Then Mr. Lovejoy came around to investigate.

Now, Mr. Lovejoy was most mild and lamblike in appearance, and one would have thought never in all his life had he indulged in anything that was not perfectly proper.

But appearances were deceptive in the case of Mr. Lovejoy. When a student at Yale he had made a record, but he had been fortunate, and he was never detected in anything the faculty could not approve. By those who knew him he was regarded as a terror, and by the faculty he was looked on as one of the most quiet and docile students in college.

When Cyrus Lovejoy became an instructor he did not forget the days when he had been a leader in scrapes of all sorts, and he was not inclined to be prying into the affairs of students under him. Not only that, but he could be blind to some things he accidentally discovered.

So when Mr. Lovejoy reported that John Diamond's eyes, being naturally weak, were inflamed by too close application to his studies, especially in the evening, no one thought of investigating further. The doctor, it was said, had forbidden Diamond to attempt to study for several days, and had ordered him to wear a bandage over his eyes.

Two or three evenings after the fight a party of freshmen gathered in Merriwell's room, for they were beginning to realize that Frank was likely to be a leader among them.

"I say, fellows," cried Dan Dorman, who was sitting on the sill of the open window, with a cigarette clinging to his lips, "do you know what Diamond is doing?"

"He's doing his best to cure those beautiful eyes of his," said Bandy Robinson.

"I'm giving it to you straight that he was out to-day and went down to the nearest gun store," declared Dorman. "Collins says he bought a Winchester rifle, a shotgun, two revolvers, a bowie knife, a slungshot, and a set of brass knuckles."

"Wo-o-oh!" groaned Dismal Jones. "Why didn't he purchase a cannon and start for some battlefield?"

"Look out, Merry," laughed Ned Stover. "He's after your scalp."

"He'll have to get a bigger outfit than that before he takes it," declared Harry Rattleton.

"How about it, Merry?" asked Bandy Robinson.

"I'll tell you, fellows," said Frank, who was not smoking. "Diamond is not the fellow to give up whipped very soon. I'm dead sure to hear from him again."

"He's a cad," growled Dismal Jones.

"I think you fellows judge him rather harshly," said Frank. "He is a Southerner, and he looks at many things differently than we do. From his standpoint he seems to be right."

"Well, he'll have to get those notions out of his head if he wants to stay in college," airily declared Dan Dorman. "Now, I came here with the idea of falling into the ways in vogue. Everything goes with me. That's the way to get along."

"I am not so sure of that," Merriwell returned. "A man must have some individuality. If you do everything everybody wants you to, it won't be long before they'll not want you to do anything."

"Oh, well, what's the use to be always hanging off and getting yourself disliked?"

"One extreme is as bad as the other. Now, I make allowances for Diamond, and I am not inclined to believe him such a bad fellow."

Harry Rattleton flung a book across the room.

"Oh, you give me the flubdubs!" he exploded. "Why, that fellow hates you, and he means to do you some time. Still you are soft enough to say he's not such a bad fellow! It's disgusting!"

"Time will tell," smiled Frank. "All of you fellows must admit that he has sand."

"Oh, a kind of bulldog stick-to-it-iveness," murmured Stover.

"I'll tell you one thing," said Bandy Robinson; "now that Diamond has not blowed, he's going to be backed by some of the leading sophs."

"Eh? What makes you think so?"

"Oh, I've got it straight. Browning has been to see him."

"No! Why, Browning is king of the sophs!"

"And he is jealous of Merriwell."

"Jealous?"

"Sure. He says Merry is altogether too 'soon' for a fresh, and he must be taken down. I tell you I've got it straight. He'll put up some kind of a game to enable Diamond to get square."

"Well, this is rather interesting," confessed Frank, showing that he was aroused. "I'll have to look out for Mr. Browning."

"He's a hard fellow to go against," solemnly said Dismal Jones. "He's a Le Boule man, and they say he may take his choice of the other big societies next year."

"Oh, what's that amount to?"

"It amounts to something here; but then he's a fighter, and he is authority on fighters and fighting."

"He is too fat to fight."

"They say he can train down in a week. He was the greatest freshman half-back ever known at Yale."

"Half-back—Browning a half-back! Oh, say, that fellow couldn't play football!"

"Not a great deal now, perhaps, but he could last year. He'd be on the regular team now, but his father swore to take him out of college if he didn't stop it. You see, Browning is not entirely to blame for his laziness. He inherits it from his father, and the old man will not allow him to lead in athletics, so whatever he does must be done secretly."

Frank was interested. He wondered how a fellow like Bruce Browning could come to be known as "king of the sophomores," unless such a title was applied to him in derision. Now he began to understand that Browning was something more than the lazy mischief planner that he had seemed.

Frank's interest in Browning grew.

"And you say he is backing Diamond?"

"That's the way it looks from the road."

"Well, Mr. Bruce Browning may need some attention. It is he who puts the sophs up to their jobs on us. We ought to put up a big one on him."

"That's right! that's right!"

"Merry," said Jones, "set the complicated machinery of your fertile brain to work and see what it will bring forth."

"That's right! that's right!"

"I'll have to take time to think it over."

"We have a few soph scalps," grinned Rattleton, pointing to a number of caps with which the walls were decorated, all of which had been snatched from the heads of sophomores. "Have the rest of you fellows done as well?"

"I have lost two," confessed Dan Dorman. "They seem to single me out as easy fruit."

"And haven't you made an attempt to get one in return?" asked Bandy Robinson.

"I haven't had a good chance."

"If you wait for a good chance you'll never get a scalp. You must snatch 'em whenever you can."

"By Jove!" laughed Frank, "this talk about scalps has given me an idea."

"Let's have it!" exclaimed several of the boys in unison.

"Not now," he said. "Wait till I have perfected it."

Roll Ditson strolled in, smoking a cigarette, and said:

"Hello, Merry! Hello, fellows! What's up? Council of war?"

"Just that," said Dan Dorman. "Merry is perfecting a scheme to put a horse on Browning."

"Eh? Browning? Great Scott! Is that so? He's a bad man to monkey with. Better let him alone, Merry."

Ditson had a patronizing way that was offensive to Frank, who had given him numberless digs; but he was too thick to tumble or he deliberately refused to take Merriwell's words as they were intended.

"You'll have to kick him before he knows he's not wanted," Rattleton had said.

"Thank you for your advice," said Frank, with mild sarcasm--"thank you exceedingly! Perhaps you are right."

"Oh, I know I am. I don't want to get the king after me, and I don't believe you care to have him on your trail. He is the most influential soph in college. Why, his name is on a table down at Morey's."

Ditson looked around as if his last statement had settled the question of Browning's vast superiority over all sophomores.

Morey's was the favorite resort of the students, and no freshman could enter there. It was an old frame house, with low-posted rooms, and there one could drink everything except beer. No beer could be had at Morey's.

Morey's was headquarters for the Society of the Cup. This cup had six handles and was kept in a locked closet. On the cup was engraved in large letters the word "Velvet," which is a well-known Yale drink, composed of champagne and Dublin stout, a drink that is mild and soft, but has a terrific "kick."

Besides the word "Velvet," a number of students' names were engraved on the cup, and no one whose name was not there could ask the proprietor to show the cup.

The marked tables were two round tables on which names of the frequenters of the place had been cut in the hard wood. One table had been filled with six hundred and seventy-five names and was suspended against the wall, where it would revolve, and the other tables were fast filling up.

Merriwell laughed at Ditson's statement.

"I don't see as it is such a wonderful thing for a soph to get his name on one of those tables," he said. "If you had said that Browning's name

was on the cup, it would have seemed a matter of some consequence."

"It may be, for all I know. Sophs are not in the habit of telling us everything. Steer clear of Browning, Merry, old man."

"Thanks again! You have made me so nervous that I think I will take your advice."

"That's right, my boy—that's right," nodded Ditson, swelling with importance. "Always listen to your uncle, my lad, and you will never go wrong."

The other lads seemed rather disappointed, but Merriwell said nothing more of his scheme to get a "horse" on Browning—that is, he said nothing more that night.

CHAPTER VII.

A SURPRISE.

It was singular how quickly Browning learned that Merriwell had contemplated working a job on him. It seemed an absolute certainty that some one of the party in Merriwell's room had gone forth and "blowed." Who had done so was a question.

As was the most natural thing, considering his dislike for the fellow, Frank felt that Roll Ditson was the telltale. Of this he had no proof, however, and he was too just to openly condemn a man without proof.

It was certain that Browning had learned all about it, for he sent word to Merriwell to go slow. At the same time, in all public places he avowed the utmost contempt and disregard for the freshman who had done up Diamond.

"The boy is altogether too new," Browning sneered. "What he needs is polishing off, and he is bound to get it."

Now, Frank had won admiration from the sophomores, and there were one or two who did not like Browning and would have given not a little to have seen him beaten at anything.

This being the case, it is not surprising that Merriwell received an anonymous note warning him to keep in his room on a certain evening and look out for squalls.

Frank knew Browning would not come alone, and he determined to be prepared. With this object in view, he gathered ten stout freshmen and had them come to his room early on the evening mentioned.

The curtains were drawn closely, and the arrivals were astonished to see a lot of Indian toggery piled up on tables and chairs, imitation buckskin suits, feathered headdresses, bows, arrows, tomahawks, and so forth. On Merriwell's table was a full supply of Indian red grease paint.

"Oh, say," gasped Ned Stover, his eyes bulging, "what's this—a powwow outfit?"

"This is the result of the idea you fellows gave me when you spoke of capturing scalps the other evening," laughed Frank. "Select your suits, gentlemen, and proceed to make up."

"Make up? What for?"

"Just you make up, and I will tell you what for afterward."

Merriwell's influence was sufficient to induce them to obey, and he aided them in the work.

"Blate grazes--I mean great blazes!" chuckled Rattleton, as he rubbed the war paint on his face. "Won't we make a bloodthirsty gang of roblened men--er, noble red men!"

The boys aided each other, and Frank assisted them all.

"Aren't you going to make up, Merry?" asked Bandy Robinson.

"Not now. I am to be the decoy."

"The decoy? What's in the wind, anyway?"

"Well, I have it pretty straight that some sophs, led by Browning, are coming to take me out for an airing to-night."

"Eh? Take you out?"

"Yes."

"And he means to take them in," laughed Rattleton, arranging a war bonnet on his head.

"That's just it," nodded Frank. "If they come here, we'll be ready for them. If they do not come, we'll call on Mr. Browning."

"I'm afraid this is rather a serious matter," said Dismal Jones.

"Oh, don't begin to croak!" cried Rattleton. "Merriwell knows his business. Hurry up with your makeup. Can't tell how early the sophs will call."

So the boys hastened to complete their disguise, and a decidedly savage-looking band they were when all was completed. Frank surveyed them with satisfaction.

"Ah! my bold warriors!" he cried. "I am proud of you. To-night--to-night we deal the enemy a terrible and deadly blow."

"We're ready to hear what the layout is," eagerly said Ned Stover.

"Well, you are to retire to Robinson's room, which is exactly opposite this, and wait. I have two fellows outside to let me know when the enemy approaches and to take a hand in the game at the right time. When I whistle you are to make your way into this room if you have to break down the door. That's all."

The boys retired to Robinson's room, where they smoked and waited with great impatience.

Frank sat down and coolly went at his studies.

Nearly an hour passed, and then there was a sound of wheels outside. The sound stopped before the door.

A few moments later some one ascended the stairs and there came a knock on the door.

"Come in," called Frank.

The door opened, and Roll Ditson sauntered in, smoking the inevitable cigarette.

"Hello, Merry!" he cried, looking around. "All alone?"

"All alone, Ditson," yawned Frank. "It's beastly stupid but I am having a hard pull at my studies."

"Better come out with me and get a little air. It's stuffy here."

"Oh, you'll have to excuse me to-night. I don't believe I'll go out."

Ditson urged, but Frank persisted in refusing. Roll stopped near a table and picked up a stick of grease paint.

"Hello! what's this?" he exclaimed. "Aren't going into amateur theatricals, are you, Merry?"

"Oh, I don't know," smiled Frank. "I may do a turn."

Ditson looked at Merriwell curiously, as if in doubt concerning his sincerity, but Frank simply continued to smile.

"Indian red," said Roll, reading the lettering on the stick. "You don't mean to become a big chief, do you?"

"Perhaps so."

"Well, you are pretty sure to become a big chief here at Yale, old man," said Ditson, with apparent earnestness. "You will be a leader here some day."

"Think so?"

"Oh, I am dead sure of it."

"Thank you."

Merriwell yawned again.

"Oh, come on!" Ditson urged. "You're stupid from digging over those books. Come out and have a walk."

"No."

"You won't?"

"You'll have to excuse me to-night, Ditson."

"All right. But say, I came near forgetting something. As I came in, there was a fellow down to the door who said he wanted to see you."

"A fellow? Who was it?"

"Don't know. Some of the students, I think."

"Oh, if that is the case, go down and bring him up, Ditson. You can open the door and let him in without disturbing Mrs. Harrington."

"All right," nodded Roll. "Sorry you won't come out, old fel. You'll get grouchy. Good-night."

"Good-night."

Ditson went out, and Frank heard him descending the stairs.

"There'll be music in the air," muttered Merriwell as he again lay back in his chair, elevating his feet to the top of the table. "But the surprisers are liable to be surprised."

He heard the front door creak. Often he wondered why Mrs. Harrington did not grease the hinges.

Frank had good ears, and it was not long before he was sure he could hear rustlings and whisperings in the hall. Then one person seemed to ascend the stairs very slowly, but he made out that there were two or three others with that one, the others stepping as softly as possible.

Merriwell remained cool and apparently quite unaware that anything unusual was taking place.

The footsteps reached the head of the stairs and advanced to the door, on which there was a distinct knock.

"Come in!" Frank once more called.

The door was promptly flung open, and into the room strode a person who was wrapped in a big overcoat and wore a wide-brimmed hat slouched over his eyes. His face nearly to his eyes was covered with bushy whiskers.

"Hello!" exclaimed Frank, as if surprised. "Who are you?"

"Sh!" hissed the stranger, with a warning gesture. "Are we alone?"

"Yes."

"Where is your roommate?"

"Out."

The fellow whistled sharply, and the next minute four masked lads appeared at the door and leaped into the room. One of them slammed the door shut and the others sprang at Frank.

Merriwell flung a book at the first one, and it struck the fellow's mask, tearing it from his face.

The well-known countenance of Bruce Browning was exposed!

"Good-evening, Browning!" cheerfully called the lively freshman as he darted behind the table. "I have been expecting a call from you."

"Grab him!" directed Browning. "Get hold of him!"

Frank was on the point of uttering a whistle, but it was not required, for the whistle that came from the lips of the disguised fellow had served as a signal to the painted braves.

There was a bang at the door, which flew open as if assaulted by a catapult, and into the room poured the disguised freshmen.

The Indians leaped upon the masked sophomores, and for a short time a very sharp struggle took place.

Bruce Browning did his best to escape from the room, but three of the savages laid hold of him, and he was finally subdued.

"Out of the house with them as soon as possible," ordered Frank. "Come

on, two or three of you. We must nail the hack and the fellows outside."

Down to the door he led the way.

Mrs. Harrington came out into the hall, caught a glimpse of the painted faces, uttered a wild shriek of terror, and dodged back, slamming the door.

"All ready?" said Frank as he prepared to fling open the front door.

"All ready!" panted Harry Rattleton, close behind him.

"Don't let anybody get away," warned Merriwell. "I will look after the driver."

"Go ahead."

Creak! open swung the door, and out into the night leaped a youth who seemed to be hotly pursued by four painted and bloodthirsty-appearing redskins.

The hack was standing exactly as Frank expected it would be, and he was on the box with the driver at two springs.

"It's all right," he asserted. "We've got the fellow up there, though he did kick up some. A part of our gang was rigged up like Indians, and they nipped him all right."

"It's the devil's own set ye shtudints are!" muttered the driver. "Av ye hurry, Oi'll sthay to take him away; but Oi'll not remain here long, fer it's th' cops will be down on us roight away."

"We'll get away ahead of the cops, don't fear that," declared Frank. "They're bringing him downstairs now. We had to take two or three others with him; but well not bother with them long."

"Arrah! th' poor freshman!" said the driver. "Oi'd not loike to be in his place this noight!"

He was completely fooled, thinking all the time that Frank was one of the party he had brought there to capture the freshman.

As they rushed out Frank had seen a fellow standing near the open door of the hack, and that fellow had promptly taken to flight at sight of the Indians, two of whom pursued him hotly.

Frank hoped they would be able to overtake the fugitive, for if one of the party escaped he would report to the sophs, who were bound to make a big hustle to rescue their captured comrades.

The disguised freshmen came downstairs, bearing their captives, who were swiftly thrust into the hack, which was a big, roomy, old-fashioned affair.

As many of the freshmen as could do so piled inside and upon the hack, and then Frank gave the signal, the driver whipped up his horse and away they went.

"East Rock," said Frank.

"Eh?" exclaimed the driver. "Thot's not pwhere ye wur goin' in th' firrust place."

"We have changed the programme. East Rock is where we are bound for now."

"All roight, me b'y."

The triumphant freshmen felt like shouting and singing in jubilant mood. Indeed, Rattleton could not refrain from "letting off steam," as he called it, and he gave one wild howl of triumph that made the streets echo:

"'Umpty-eight! 'Umpty-eight!"

"Break it off!" sharply commanded Frank. "Want to let the sophs know we're up to something?"

"I don't care."

"They might raise a rescue party and follow us."

"But they wouldn't frof any chost--I mean chop any frost with us."

"Pwhat's thot?" came suspiciously from the driver. "An' is it not softmores ye are yersilves?"

"Of course we are," returned Harry, instantly.

"Thin pwhat fer do ye yell fer 'Umpty-eight?"

"Oh, it's a way we have. Don't mind it, but keep on driving if you want to retain your scalp, paleface. We are mighty bad Injuns!"

The driver knew how to pick out the darkest and most deserted streets. By the time the outskirts of the city were reached the freshmen were bubbling over.

Frank Merriwell improvised a stanza of a song, and in a few moments the entire band caught the words and the tune. As the hack rolled along toward East Rock the freshmen sang:

"We belong to good old 'Umpty-eight,
For she's a corker, sure as fate, sure as fate.
We have met the sophomores,
And they're feeling awful sore;
So hurrah for good old 'Umpty-eight! 'Umpty-eight!"

"Begobs! ye're th' quarest gang av softmores Oi iver saw!" cried the driver. "An' it's not wan av yez Oi remimber takin' up to th' freshman's boording house."

"We have changed," explained Ned Stover.

"And it's the first change I have seen for a week," declared Harry Rattleton. "I'm waiting to hear from the governor."

"Howld on," said the driver. "Oi want to see the mon thot hired me."

He threatened to pull up, but Frank caught the whip and cracked it over the horses.

"What do you want?" asked Merriwell.

"Oi want me pay."

Now, Frank knew well enough that the driver had received his pay in advance, but he was beginning to suspect that the party that hired him had come to grief, and so he was for exacting an extra payment from the victors.

"Look here, driver," said Frank, sternly, "I want your number."

"Pwhat fer?"

"In case it may appear later on that you have received money at two separate and distinct times for doing the same piece of work."

"Get oop!" yelled the driver. "It's ownly foolin' Oi wur."

So the hack rolled on its way, with the happy freshmen smoking and singing, while the captive sophs ground their teeth and railed at the bitter luck.

Inside the hack Dismal Jones, most hideously bedaubed, was smoking a cigarette and brandishing a wooden tomahawk at the same time, while he sat astride of Bruce Browning, who was on the floor.

"This is a sad and solemn occasion, paleface," croaked Dismal. "You have driven the noble red man from his ancestral halls, which were the dim aisles of the mighty forests; you have pushed him across the plains, and you have tried to crowd him off the earth into the Pacific Ocean. Ugh! You have pursued him with deadly firearms and still more deadly fire water. You have been relentless in your hatred and your greed. You have even been so unreasonable that whenever a poor red man has secured a few paleface scalps as trophies to hang in his wigwam you have taken your trusty rifles and gone forth with great fury and shot the poor Indian full of hard bullets. You have done heap many things that you would not have done if you had not done so. But now, poor, shivering dog of a paleface, the injured red man has arisen at last in his might. If we are to perish, we are to perish; but before we perish, we will enjoy the gentle pleasure of roasting a few white men at the stake. Ugh! We have held a council of war, we have excavated the hatchet, we have smashed the pipe of peace to flinders, or something of the sort, and have struck out upon the war trail."

"You act as if you had struck out," growled one of the captives.

"That's because he has had a few balls," gurgled Browning. "Talk about being burned at the stake! That's not torture after being obliged to inhale his breath. My kingdom for some chloroform! Will somebody please hit me on the head with a trip hammer and put me out of my misery?"

"Whither art thou bearing us, great chief?" asked one of the captives.

"We will bare you out yonder," answered Dismal. "At the stake you shall stand arrayed in the garments nature provided for you."

"I don't care for tea," murmured Browning--"not even for repartee."

"This is worse than being roasted at the stake!" muttered a soph in a corner. "It is severe punishment."

"Help!" cried Dismal. "Somebody take me out! I can't get ahead of these miserable palefaces."

"You'll get a head if I ever find a good chance to give it to you," declared the voice of Puss Parker from the darkness.

Outside the painted savages were roaring:

"Farewell! farewell! farewell, my fairy fay!
Oh, I'm off to Louisiana
For to see my Susy Anna,
Singing 'Polly-wolly-woodle' all the day."

And thus the captured sophomores were borne in triumph out to East Rock, and as they were the ones who engaged the hack, they paid for their own conveyance.

Never before had anything like it happened at Yale. It was an event that was bound to go down in history as the most audacious and daring piece of work ever successfully carried through by freshmen in that college.

And Frank Merriwell was to receive the credit of being the originator of the scheme and the general who carried it out successfully.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE "ROAST" AT EAST ROCK.

A strange and remarkable scene was being enacted in the peaceable and civilized State of Connecticut--a scene which must have startled an accidental observer and caused him to fancy for a moment the hand of time had turned back two centuries.

Near a bright fire that was burning on the ground squatted a band of hideously-painted fellows who seemed to be redskins, while close at hand, bound and helpless, were a number of palefaces, plainly the captives of the savages.

That a council of war was taking place seemed apparent. And still the savages seemed waiting for something.

At length, out of the darkness advanced a tall, well-built warrior, the trailing plumes of whose war bonnet reached quite to the ground. If anything, this fellow was more hideously painted than any of the others, and there was an air of distinction about him that proclaimed him a great chief.

"Ugh!" he grunted. "I am here."

The savages arose, and one of them said:

"Fellow warriors, the mighty chief Fale-in-his-Hoce--I mean Hole-in-his-Face--has arrived."

Then a wild yell of greeting went up to the twinkling stars, and every savage brandished a tomahawk, scalping knife, or some other kind of weapon.

"Brothers," said Hole-in-his-Face, "I see that I am welcome in your midst, as any up-to-date country newspaper reporter would say. You have received me with great _eclat_--excuse my French; I was educated abroad--in New Jersey."

"Go back to Princeton!" cried one of the captives.

"Fellow warriors," continued Hole-in-his-Face, without noticing the interruption, "I am heap much proud to be with you on this momentous occasion."

"Yah! yah! yah!" yelled the savages.

"And now," the chief went on, "if you will proceed to squat on your haunches I will orate a trifle."

Once more the redskins sat down on the ground, and then the late arrival struck an attitude and began his oration:

"Warriors of my people, why are we assembled together to-night?"

"Because we couldn't assemble apart," murmured a voice.

"We are assembled to avenge our wrongs upon the hated paleface," the chief declared. "It was long ago that the proud and haughty paleface got the bulge on the red man, and we have not been in the game to any great extent since then. Every time we have held two pairs he has come in with one pair of sixes or a Winchester and raked the pot. He has not given us any kind of a show for our white alley. Whenever we seemed to be getting along fairly well and doing a little something, he has wrung in a cold deck on us and then shot us full of air holes, purely for the purpose of ventilation in case we objected. Warriors, we have grown tired of being soaked in the neck."

"That's right," nodded a savage, "unless we are soaked in the neck with fire water."

"At last," shouted the orator--"at last we have arisen in our wrath and our war paint and we are out for scalps. We have decided that the joy of the red man is fleeting. To-night a flush mantles your dark cheeks, but to-morrow it will be a bobtail flush. What have we to live for but vengeance on the white man and a little booze now and then? Nothing! Our squaws once were beautiful as the wild flowers of the prairie, but now the prize beauty of our tribe is Malt Extract Maria, whose nose is out of joint, whose eyes are skewed, whose teeth are covered with fine-cut tobacco, and who lost one of her ears last week by accidentally getting it into the mouth of her husband.

"My brothers, we are not built to weep. It is not the way of the noble red man. A few more summers and we will be no more. We will have kicked the stuffing out of the bucket and wended our way up the golden stair. But before we cough up the ghost it behooves us to strike one last blow at the hated paleface. When we get a chance at a paleface it is our duty to do him, and do him bad. Are you on?"

"We have been successful in capturing a few of our hated foes, and they are bound and helpless near at hand. Shall they be fricasseed, broiled, fried, or made into a potpie? That is the question before the meeting, and I am ready to listen to others. Let us hear from Squint-eyed Sausageface."

"It doesn't make a dit of bifference--I mean a bit of difference to me how I have my paleface cooked," said the one indicated as Squint-eyed Sausageface. "Perhaps it would be well enough to cook them at the stake."

"I think that would be the proper mode," gravely declared another warrior; "for I have heard that they boast they are hot stuff. They should not boast in vain."

"Warriors," said Hole-in-his-Face, "you have heard. What have you to say?"

"So mote it be," came solemnly from one.

"Yah! yah! yah!" yelled the others.

"That settles it, as the sugar remarked to the egg dropped into the coffee. Prepare the torture stakes."

There was a great bustle, and in a short time the stakes were prepared and driven into the ground, one of the savages hammering them down with a huge stick of wood.

Then the captives were bound to the stakes and a lot of brush was brought and piled about their feet.

Some of the sophs actually looked scared, but Browning kept up a continual fire of sarcastic remarks.

"Ugh!" grunted Hole-in-his-Face. "This paleface talks heap much. Remove his outer garments, so the fire may reach his flesh without delay."

Then Browning was held and his clothes were stripped off till he stood in his under garments, barefooted, bareheaded, and still defiant.

"Oh, say!" he muttered, "won't there be an awful hour of reckoning! Merriwell will regret the day he came to Yale!"

At this Hole-in-his-Face laughed heartily, and Browning cried:

"Oh, I know you, Merriwell! You can't fool me, though you have got the best makeup of them all."

When everything was ready, one of the savages actually touched a match to the various piles of brush about the feet of the unfortunate sophomores.

As the tiny flames leaped up the painted band joined in a wild war dance about the stakes, flourishing their weapons and whooping as if they were real Indians. Some of their postures and steps were exact imitations of the poses and steps taken by savages in a war dance.

"Say, confound you fool freshmen!" howled one of the captives. "This fire is getting hot! Do you really mean to roast us?"

"Yah! yah! yah! Hough! hough! hough!"

Round and round the stake circled the disguised freshmen, and the fire kept getting higher and higher.

Puss Parker fell to coughing violently, having sucked down a large quantity of smoke. Some of the others raved and some begged. But still the wild dance went on.

"Merciful cats!" gasped Tad Horner. "I believe they actually mean to roast us!"

"Sure as fate!" agreed another. "They won't think to put out the fires till we are well cooked, if they do then!"

"This is awful!" gurgled Parker. "Browning, can't you do something?"

"Well, I hardly think so," confessed the king of the sophomores. "But I will do something if I ever get out of this alive! You hear me murmur!"

"Say!" cried Tad Horner. "I can't stand this much longer. The fire is beginning to roast me."

"It's getting warm," confessed Parker. "But it seems to keep burning around the outside edge."

"Keep cool," advised Browning.

"What's that?" yelled Horner. "Who said 'keep cool?' Oh, say! That's

too much!"

"Just look at the wood," directed the king of the sophomores. "You will notice that all the wood about our feet is water soaked, and there's only a little dry wood out around the edges. That's all that is burning."

This they soon saw was true, and it gave them great relief, for it had begun to seem that the crazy freshmen actually meant to roast them.

At the very moment when the uproar was at its height there came a sudden loud cry, like a signal, and out of the darkness rushed at least twenty lads.

They were sophomores who had somehow followed them out there to East Rock, having been aroused and told of the capture of Browning and his mates by the soph who escaped.

One fellow on a bicycle had followed them till he felt sure of their destination, and then he had turned back and told the others, who hastily secured teams and flew to the rescue.

"Umpty-seven! Umpty-seven! Rah, rah! rah!" yelled the rescuers as they charged upon the freshmen.

"Umpty-eight! Umpty-eight! Rah! rah! rah!" howled the painted lads in return.

Then for a few moments there was a pitched battle.

The battle did not last long, for the freshmen saw they were outnumbered, and at a signal from their leader they broke away and took to their heels.

By rare good luck every man was able to get away, for, not knowing anything about the water-soaked wood piled about the feet of the captives, the rescuers nearly all stopped to scatter the burning brush.

"Oh, say!" grated Browning, as he was released. "But this means gore and bloodshed! We'll never rest till we have squared for this roast, and we will square with interest! Merriwell's life will be one long, lingering torture from this night onward!"

"What's all this racket and cheering?" asked one of the rescuers. "Listen, fellows! By Jove! it seems to come from the place where we left our carriages!"

"That's what it does, and it's the freshman yell," cried another. "Come on, fellows! If we don't get a move on we may have to walk back."

They started on a run, but when they arrived at the place where the teams had been left not a team was there.

The freshmen had captured the teams, drivers and all, together with the hack, and far along the road toward the city could be heard a cheering, singing crowd. As the disgusted and furious sophs stood and listened the singing and cheering grew fainter and fainter.

"Fellows," said Chop Harding, "I am sorry to leave Yale, but I am certain to be hanged for murder. After this, whenever I see a freshman I shall kill him instantly."

It was a doleful and weary crowd of sophs that came filing back into town and sneaked to their rooms that night.

Of course the sophs would have given a great deal could they have kept the story quiet, but on the following morning it seemed that every student in the college knew all about it.

The juniors laughed and chaffed the sophomores, who were sullen and sulky and who muttered much about getting even.

The freshmen were jubilant. They were on top for the time, and they all knew they might not have long to crow, so they did all the crowing they could in a short time.

And still nobody seemed to know just who was concerned in the affair, save that Merriwell and Browning must have been.

When Browning was questioned he was so blankly ignorant of everything that it seemed as if he had slept through the whole affair. He had a way of turning every question off with another question, and it was soon discovered that no information could be obtained from him.

Still it was passed from lip to lip that the great and mighty king had been found by the rescuers, stripped to his underclothes, and tied to a stake, while the smoke arose thickly around him and nearly choked him.

Some one suggested that Browning's complexion seemed to have changed in a remarkable manner, and then the students fell to asking him if he really enjoyed a smoke.

Browning seemed subdued; but those who knew him best were telling everybody to hold on and see what would happen.

"This is just the beginning," they said.

However, several days passed and still nothing occurred. It began to look as if the sophs had decided that they were outgeneraled and were willing to let the matter drop.

Frank Merriwell was not deceived. He knew the sophs were keeping still in order to deceive the freshmen into a belief that there was no danger, and he continued to warn all his friends to "watch out."

In the meantime Diamond had recovered and was in evidence among the freshmen. It was said that he went down to Billy's, a favorite freshman resort, and spent money liberally there almost every night.

The result of this soon became apparent. Diamond was surrounded by a crowd of hangers-on who seemed to regard him as a leader. He was working for popularity, and he was obtaining it in a certain way.

Now, Frank Merriwell was no less generous than Jack Diamond, but he would not drink liquor of any kind—he would not touch beer. It did not take him long to discover that this peculiarity caused many of the students to regard him with scorn. He was called the Good Templar and was often derisively addressed as Worthy Chief.

The very ones who were first to apply the name in derision afterward came to call him Worthy Chief in sincere admiration.

Frank went around to Billy's occasionally, and although he would not drink, he treated frequently, paying for anything his companions wanted to take, from beer to champagne.

One evening Frank, Harry and Dismal Jones went into Billy's and found Diamond and a large crowd there. Jack had been drinking something stronger than lemonade, and he was holding forth to a crowd of eager listeners.

One look at Diamond's flushed face did Merriwell take, and then he knew the fellow was open for anything. The high color in the cheeks of the Virginian was a danger signal.

Merriwell and his two friends ordered drinks, Frank taking ginger ale. Harry and Jones lighted cigarettes.

Frank examined the pictures around the walls. There were ballet dancers who were standing on one toe, famous trotters, painted pictures of celebrated fighting cocks, hunters in red coats leaping five-barred fences, and so forth.

As he looked over the pictures he became aware that Diamond was saying something that was intended for his ears.

"Southerners never fight with their fists," the Virginian declared. "They consider it brutal and beastly, and so they do not learn the so-called 'art.' They are able to fight with some other weapons, though. There is a man in this college who is trying to be a high cock of the walk, but he will never succeed till he shows his right by meeting me face to face with weapons of which I have knowledge. I have met him with his weapons, and if he is not a coward he will give me a show. But I think he is a coward and a sneak, and I--"

That was more than Frank could stand. He did not pause to think that Diamond had been drinking and was utterly reckless, but he whirled and advanced till he stood squarely in front of the Virginian.

"I presume, Mr. Diamond, that you are referring to me," he said, coldly and steadily, although he could feel the hot blood leaping in his veins.

Diamond looked up insolently, inhaled a whiff of his cigarette, and then deliberately blew the smoke toward Frank.

"Yes, sir," he said, "I presume I did refer to you. What are you going to do about it?"

"You called me a coward and a sneak."

"Exactly, sir."

"If I had not already left the marks of my knuckles on you I would slap your face. As it is, I will simply--pull your nose!"

And Frank did so, giving Diamond's nose a sharp tweak.

Up to his feet leaped the Virginian, his face white with wrath. He picked up a glass of champagne as he arose, and then he dashed it into Frank's face.

In a twinkling friends were between them, keeping them apart.

CHAPTER IX.

THE DUEL.

Merriwell smiled and wiped the champagne from his face with a white silk handkerchief. The proprietor bustled in and threatened. Diamond quivered with excitement.

"There will be no further trouble here," calmly said Frank. "This matter must be settled between us--I could see that plainly enough. It was just as well to bring it to a head at once."

"Lunder and thightning--I mean thunder and lightning!" panted Rattleton. "He won't fight you again with his fists."

"I do not expect him to."

"You'll have to fight with rapiers, sure!" said another.

"Merriwell, you're a fool!"

"Thank you."

"You have fallen into his trap. He was making that talk to drive you to do just what you did."

"Well, he may congratulate himself on his success."

"Blamed if I understand you! You seem cool enough, and still you act as if you actually meant to meet him with deadly weapons."

"I shall meet him with any kind of weapons he may name."

Roll Ditson came forward.

"Of course you understand that I have no feeling, Merry, old man," he said; "but Diamond has chosen me as his second once more, and so I can't refuse to serve him. It is a most unfortunate affair, but he insists that you fight him with rapiers."

"Very well; I agree to that. Arrange the time and place with my second, Mr. Rattleton."

Frank sat down, picked up an illustrated paper, and seemed deeply interested in the pictures.

Ditson drew Rattleton aside.

"My principal," said he, swelling with importance, "demands that this meeting take place at once."

"Great Scott!" exploded Harry. "I object to this sort of business. It is outrageous! If one of them should be seriously wounded, what excuse can be made?"

"We'll find some excuse that will go."

"But what if one of them should be killed?"

"I hardly think anything as serious as that will occur."

"But should it, there would be an investigation, and expulsion and disgrace, if nothing worse, would overtake us."

"Oh, well, if you are afraid, just go back and tell Mr. Merriwell to apologize here and now, and I think Mr. Diamond will let him off."

Harry looked at Merriwell and then shook his head.

"He'll never do that," he said, hoarsely. "We'll have to arrange this duel. There is no other way for it."

Between the ages of sixteen and twenty-three blood runs hot and swift in

the veins of a youth. It is then that he will do many wild and reckless things—things which will cause him to stand appalled when he considers them in after years.

Frank believed that in order to retain his own self respect and the respect of his comrades he must meet Diamond and give him satisfaction in any manner he might designate.

But there was another reason why Frank was so willing to meet the Virginian. Merriwell was an expert fencer. At Fardale he had been the champion of the school, and he had taken some lessons while traveling. He had thoroughly studied the trick of disarming his adversary, a trick which is known to every French fencing master, but is thought little of by them.

He believed that he could repeatedly disarm Diamond.

His adventures in various parts of the world had made him somewhat less cautious than he naturally would have been and so he trusted everything to his ability to get the best of the Virginian.

Roland Ditson longed to force Merriwell to squeal. He did not fancy Frank knew anything of fencing, and he thought Merriwell would soon lose his nerve when he saw himself toyed with by Diamond.

And Diamond had promised not to seriously wound the fellow he hated.

The meeting was arranged as quietly as possible, and the freshmen who were to witness it slipped out of Billy's by twos and threes and strode away.

Thirty minutes later, in a small, stuffy room, two lads, with their coats and vests off and their sleeves turned back, faced each other, rapiers in hand.

"Ready, gentlemen!" called Ditson.

They made ready.

"On guard!"

The position was assumed.

Then came the command that set them at it.

In less than twenty seconds the spectators, who kept back as well as possible, had seen something they never beheld before. They saw two beardless lads fighting with deadly weapons and using skill that was marvelous.

It took Jack Diamond far less than twenty seconds to discover that Frank Merriwell was a swordsman of astonishing skill. He had expected to toy with the Northerner, but he found himself engaged with one who met every stroke like a professional.

A great feeling of relief came over Harry Rattleton.

"Whee jiz!" he muttered. "Merry is a cooler at it! I believe he's Diamond's match!"

With Diamond astonishment gave way to fury. Was it possible that this fellow was to get the best of him at everything? He fought savagely, and Ditson turned white as a ghost when he saw the Virginian making mad thrusts at the breast of the lad he hated.

"He's forgotten his promise—he's forgotten!" huskily whispered Ditson. "What if he should run Merriwell through the body?"

Then came a cry of anger from Diamond and a cry of surprise and relief from the spectators.

Frank Merriwell, with that peculiar twisting movement of his wrist, had torn the rapier from the Virginian's hand.

The blade fell clanging to the floor, and Merriwell stepped back, with the point of his rapier lowered.

Snarling savagely, Diamond made a catlike spring and snatched up the weapon he had lost.

"On guard!" he cried, madly. "The end is not yet! I'll kill you or you'll kill me!"

There was a clash of steel, and then the fight was on with more fury than before.

Diamond was utterly reckless. He left a dozen openings where Frank could have run him through. But Merriwell was working to repeat the trick of a few seconds before.

The frightened spectators were beginning to think of intervening, when once again Diamond was disarmed.

At the same moment there came a heavy knocking at the door.

One fellow, who had been on guard, ran in from a corridor and cried:

"It's the faculty! Somebody has given them wind of this!"

"Here! here!" called a freshman. "Follow me!"

They did so, and he led them to a back window, out of which they clambered.

Diamond was the last to get out, and just as he touched the ground somebody came around the corner and grabbed him.

"I have one of them!" shouted a voice, which he recognized as belonging to one of the faculty.

He struggled to break away, but could not.

Then somebody dashed back to his side, caught hold of him, and with wonderful strength tore him from the grasp of the man.

"Run!" panted Frank Merriwell's voice in his ear.

And they ran away together, and in a short while were safe in their rooms.

It turned out that it was not the faculty that had tried to get in where the duel was taking place, but some of the sophs. At the time he turned back to rescue Diamond, however, Frank had believed the Virginian was in the grasp of one of the professors.

Merriwell was regarded as more of a wonder than ever when it became generally known that he had twice disarmed the Virginian in a duel with rapiers—or a "fencing contest," as the matter was openly spoken of by those who discussed it.

But Bruce Browning, king of sophomores, was awaiting an opportunity to get at Frank.

CHAPTER X.

AT MOREY'S.

"Say, fellows, this thing must stop!"

Puss Parker banged his fist down upon the table as he made this emphatic declaration, the blow causing the partly emptied glass of ale to dance and vibrate.

"Aw, say," yawned Willis Paulding, "you want to be a little cawful or you will slop the good stuff, don't yer know."

Willis affected a drawl, had his clothes made in London, and considered himself "deucedly English," although he sometimes forgot himself for a short time and dropped his mannerisms.

Tad Homer gave Paulding a look of scom.

"Come off your perch, Paul!" he invited. "You give me severe pains! Get onto yourself! I don't wonder Parker is excited over this matter."

"Who wouldn't be excited?" exclaimed Puss. "These confounded freshmen have overthrown all the established customs of the college. They have been running things with a high hand. Why, they have really been cocks of the walk ever since that little affair out at East Rock."

"Sh!" cautioned Punch Swallows, a lad with fiery red hair. "Don't speak of that, for the love of goodness! Just think of a gang of sophs being captured by freshmen disguised as Indians, taken out into the country, tied to stakes and nearly roasted, while the freshmen dance a gleeful _cancan_ around them! It's awful! The mere thought of it gives me nervous prostration!"

It was two weeks after the duel, and the five sophomores had gathered in the little back room at Morey's, They looked at each other and were silent, but their silence was very suggestive.

"By Jawve!" drawled Paulding, "it is awful! I wasn't in the crowd. If I had been--"

"You'd been roasted like the rest of us," cut in Parker.

"But I'd made it warm faw some of the blooming cads."

"Haven't we been doing our level best to make it warm for them?" cried Horner. "But no matter what we do, they see us and go us one better."

"It all comes from Merriwell," asserted Swallows. "He's king of the freshmen, the same as Browning is king of the sophomores."

"And he's a terror," nodded Horner. "He can put up more jokes than one."

"And they say he can fight."

"They say! Why, didn't you see him do Diamond, the fresh from Virginia? Oh, no. I remember you were not with us that night. Yes, he can fight, and he doesn't seem to be easily scared."

"I think he is a blawsted upstart," said Paulding, lazily puffing at his cigarette. "He needs to be called down, don't yer know."

"Some time when he is upstairs, call him down," suggested Horner.

"Fists are not the only things that fellows can fight with," said Parker. "The matter has been kept quiet, but it is said to be a fact that Diamond forced him into a duel with rapiers, and he disarmed the Southerner twice, having him completely at his mercy each time."

"And Diamond prides himself on being an expert with that kind of weapon," nodded Horner.

"Why doesn't Browning do something?" asked Paulding. "It is outrageous faw a lot of freshies to run things this way."

"Browning is in training," said Parker.

"In training? What faw? Why, he is so lazy--"

"He's training to get some of the flesh off him. It is my opinion that somebody must check Merriwell's wild career, and he is getting in condition to do it. You know that Browning was one of the hardest men who ever entered Yale. He is a natural athlete, but he's lazy, and he has allowed himself to become soft. Why, he knocked out Kid Lajoie, the professional, in a hard-glove contest of three rounds. Lajoie was easy fruit for him. I fancy he means to go up against this fresh duck Merriwell and do him. That's the only thing that will pull Merriwell off his perch. He doesn't mind being hazed."

"Doesn't mind it!" shouted Horner. "Confound him! He always manages to turn the tables in some way, and hazes the parties who try to haze him."

Two youths came in from the front room.

"Hey, Browning! Hello, King! Come join us. You, too, Emery"--to the other fellow. "What'll you have, Browning?"

Browning accepted a seat at the table, but waved his hand languidly as he declined to drink.

"I'm not taking anything now," he said.

"Oh, but you must! Have some ale, old man."

"Excuse me, gentlemen. I tell you squarely that I am not taking anything just now. By and by I will be with you again. Emery will go you one. That's what he came in for."

"That's right," declared Browning's companion. "I was out stargazing last night. Looked at the Long-Handled Dipper a long time, and it gave me an awful thirst. I've had it with me all day. Yes, mine's ale."

So another round was ordered. Horner passed around the cigarettes, and Browning declined them. The others lighted up fresh ones.

"Say," broke out Emery, suddenly, "do you know that fresh Ditson gives me that tired feeling?"

Tad Horner grinned.

"He's no good," said Tad. "He is crooked and he's a toucher. Touched me for a V once, and I am looking for that fiver yet. That was two years ago, before I came here. I knew him then."

"He tried to touch us for a drink as we came along," said Browning. "I took him in here once, but I've been sorry ever since. He said he had his thirst with him just now. I told him to go sit on the fence and let the wind blow him off."

"And he is a big bluff," asserted Emery. "The other day he was telling how he once sat at the table with kings and queens. I told him that I had--and with jacks and ten spots. Here comes the amber. My! I won't do a thing to it!"

The waiter placed the glasses of ale before them, and Emery eagerly grasped his.

"Here's more to-morrow," was his toast, and he seemed to toss it off at a single swallow.

"By Jawve!" drawled Paulding. "You must be thirsty!"

"I am. Have been all day, as I said before. It was hard stuff last night, and we went the rounds. My head needed hooping when I arose from my downy couch this morning."

"Well, you shouldn't have gotten intoxicated, in the first place," said Parker.

"I didn't. It was in the last place. If I'd gone home before we struck that joint I'd been all right."

"Wow!" whooped Tad Horner. "You seem full of 'em!"

"Oh, I am. I've been eating nothing but red pepper lately, and I'm hot stuff. Let's have another one all around."

More ale was ordered.

"Your neck must be dry enough to squeak, old man," said Parker, addressing Browning. "It doesn't seem natural for you to go thirsty. Won't you have just one?"

"Not one," smiled Bruce, lazily. "I've got too much flesh on me now, and I'm trying to get some of it off."

"Going to try for the football team--or what?"

"Nothing of that sort--but I have a reason."

"We know."

"You do?"

"Sure."

"What is it?"

"You're laying for Merriwell, and you mean to do him. I am right, am I not?"

The king of the sophomores smiled in a lazy way, but did not reply.

"That settles it," laughed Parker. "I knew I was right. Well, somebody must curry that young colt down and it must be done right away."

Browning showed sudden animation. He looked around at the faces of his companions and then said:

"This crowd is straight, and I am going to make a few remarks right here and now. I feel just like it."

"Drive ahead." "Go on." "We are listening."

"I am not inclined to talk this matter over publicly," said Bruce, "but I will say that the time is ripe to get after these confounded freshmen, and we must do it. I want to tell you what I found this morning. Open wide your ears and listen to this."

His companions were quite prepared to listen.

"You know I am getting up every morning and taking a stiff walk. I turn out at daybreak."

"Good gracious!" gasped Tad Horner. "How do you do it?"

"Well, I've got one of those electric alarm clocks, and I put it just as far away from my bed as possible."

"Why is that?"

"So I won't get hold of it and smash thunder out of the thing when it gets to going. You know it won't stop its racket till somebody stops it or it is run down, and it takes an hour for it to run down after it starts in to ring you up."

"By Jawve!" drawled Paulding; "I hawdly think I'd like to have one of the blooming things in my room."

"I don't like to have one in my room, but it is absolutely necessary that I do. Hartwick, my roommate, admires it!"

The listeners laughed.

"I should think he might," said Puss Parker. "He's got a temper with an edge like a cold-chisel."

"Oh, yes, he admires it! I've got so I believe I should sleep right through the racket, but he kicks me out of bed and howls for me to smother the thing. So you see I am bound to get up at the proper time. Once I am out of bed, I stay up. The first morning after I bought the clock the thing went off just as it was beginning to break day. I got up and stopped it and then went back to bed. Hartwick growled, but we both went to sleep. I had been snoozing about five minutes when the clock broke loose once more. Hartwick was mad, you bet! I opened my eyes just in time to see him sit up in bed with one of his shoes in his hand. Whiz! Before I could stop him he flung the shoe at the clock. I made a wild grab just as he did so, struck his arm, and disconcerted his aim. The shoe flew off sideways and smashed a mirror. Hartwick said several things. Then I got up and stopped the clock again. I dressed and went out for my walk, leaving Hartwick in bed, sleeping sweetly. When I came back I found him, about half dressed, jumping wildly up and down in the middle of the bed, upon which was heaped all the bedclothes, all of Hartwick's clothes except those he had on, all of mine, except those I was wearing, and as I appeared he shrieked for me to tear down the window shades and pass them to him quick.

"'What's the matter?' I gasped. 'Are you mad?'"

"'Yes, I am mad!' he howled, tearing his hair. 'I am so blamed mad that I don't know where I am at!'"

"'But what's the matter?'"

"Matter! Matter! Hear it! Hear the daddy thing! It has driven me to the verge of insanity! I tried to stop it, but I couldn't find how it works. And now I am trying to stifle it! Hear it! Oh, bring me a club! Bring me something deadly! Bring me a gun, and I will shoot it full of holes!"

"Then I found that I could hear my clock merrily rattling away under that heap of clothes. It seemed to be defying Hartwick or laughing at him.

"I got him off the bed, pawed around till I found the clock between the mattresses, and then stopped it. Hartwick offered me three times what it was worth if I'd let him use his baseball bat on it. I told him it seemed to be a very willing and industrious alarm clock, and it was mine. I warned him to injure it at his peril. Since then I have learned how to stop it so it will stay stopped, but it barely commences to rattle at daybreak when I feel Hartwick's feet strike me in the small of the back, and I land sprawling on the floor. That explains how I succeed in getting up at daybreak."

"You started in to tell us what you found this morning," said Punch Swallows, to Browning, lighting a fresh cigarette.

"So I did, and the alarm clock ran me off the trail. Well, I got up this morning as usual--when Hartwick kicked me out to stop the clock. I went out for my walk and crossed the campus. What do you think I found?"

"A diamond ring. We'll all have ale."

"Oh, no, Tad, it wasn't a diamond ring. I noticed something stuck up on one of the trees. It was a big sheet of paper, and on it was skillfully lettered these words:

"Bruce Browning will wear a new set of false teeth to chapel to-morrow morning."

Browning stopped and looked around. He was very proud of his even, regular, white teeth. They were so perfect that they might be taken for "store teeth" at first glance, but a second look would show they were natural.

The sophs laughed, and Bruce looked indignant.

"That caused me to look still further," he went on, "and I soon found another sheet upon another tree. This is what I read:

"Conundrum. Why is King Browning a great electrician? Because all his clothes are charged."

"By that time I felt like murdering somebody. I did take a morning walk, but it was in search of more stuff of the same order. I found it everywhere in the vicinity of the college, and some of the stuff was simply awful. It made me shudder. I knew who was back of it all. Merriwell put up the job."

"But you outwitted him by getting around in time to tear down everything he had put up. You matched him that time."

"By accident. But I must more than match him. He must be suppressed."

"That's right! that's right!" cried the boys in chorus.

"I know he put the advertisement for black and white cats and yellow dogs in the papers. My name was signed to it, and more than two hundred

black and white cats and yellow dogs were brought me by parties anxious to sell them at any price. One time there were seven women with cats in my room, when two men came up leading dogs. The first woman had managed to get into the room, and while I was arguing with her, trying to convince her that I did not want her blamed old cat, the others found their way in. They opened on me altogether. Hartwick shut himself in the clothespress, and I could hear him laughing and gasping for breath. I was nearly crazy when the men sauntered in with the dogs in tow. Oh, say!"

Browning fell over limply in his chair, as if the memory of what followed was too much for him.

"You have had a real warm time of it," grinned Swallows.

"Warm! Warm! My boy, it was warm! Two of the women were showing me their cats. The dogs saw the cats; the cats saw the dogs. One of the cats made a flying leap for a dog. The other fled, and the other dog pursued. The seven women shrieked all together, and the two men swore and tried to catch the dogs. The other cats escaped from the baskets in which they were confined. Warm! Say!"

The king of the sophomores mopped his face with his handkerchief. He seemed on the verge of utter collapse.

The listening lads could not entirely restrain their laughter. The picture Browning presented and the incident he was relating were altogether too ludicrous.

"Talk about rackets!" he wearily continued; "we had one then and there. The cats yowled and the dogs howled. The women fell over each other and screamed blue murder. The men chased the dogs and roared blue blazes. And the wind blew hard!

"One of the cats alighted on an old lady's head. The cat's mistress grabbed her and took her away. The cat had socked her claws into the old lady's wig, and it came off, leaving her almost as bare as a billiard ball. Oh, marmar!

"Two of the cats fell to tearing the fur out of each other. Some of them walked on the ceiling, like flies, in their endeavors to get away from the dogs. One of them pounced on a dog's back and rode him around the room, as if she were a circus performer. The other dog chased a cat under the bed, and they were having it there. Oh, they didn't do a thing--not a thing!

"After a while one of the men captured one of the dogs and dragged him toward the door. The other man saw him and made a rush for him. 'Drop that dawg!' he yelled. 'It's my dawg!' the other man yelled back. And then the other man howled, 'You're another. It's my dawg!'

"Right away after that there was trouble between the owners of the dogs. They tried to hurt each other, and they succeeded very well. One of them had both eyes blacked, while the other lost two teeth, had his lips split and his nose knocked out of plumb. But they smashed the stuffing out of the furniture while they were doing it.

"I climbed up on something in one corner and did my best to cheer them on. I sincerely hoped both would be killed. The dogs seemed to feel it their duty to enter into the spirit of the occasion, and they chewed each other more or less.

"Then the police came in. I came near landing in the station house, along with the two men who were fighting, but they concluded not to pinch me. The women departed after having once more expressed their

opinion all around concerning me.

"When they were gone Hartwick came out of the clothespress. We sat down amid the ruins and said over some words that will not bear repetition.

"That's the whole of the cat-and-dog story. I've never been able to prove that Merriwell put the advertisement into the paper, but it is all settled in my mind. It was directly after this that I went into training."

Some of the sophs laughed and some showed indignation.

"It was a very nawsty thing to do," declared Paulding.

"I can't help laughing over it." chuckled Tad Horner. "But of course you ought to get back at Merriwell."

"Well, I shall do my best."

"I don't think you need to train to do that trick," said Punch Swallows. "A man who can knock out Kid Lajoie ought to polish off a freshman in a minute."

"You haven't seen Merriwell fight?"

"No."

"I have."

"He is clever?"

"He is a corker. Of course I believe I can do him, but I want to do him easy, and that is why I am training."

Another party of sophomores came in.

"It is Harrison and his crowd," said Parker, "and I'm blowed if they haven't got Roll Ditson with them! That cad of a freshman has succeeded in getting in here again."

"Ditson hates Merriwell, don't yer know," said Paulding. "He pretends to be friendly with Merry, but he's ready to do him any time."

CHAPTER XI

"LAMBDA CHI!"

Ditson had fawned around Browning a great deal since entering college, with the result that the king of the sophomores came to entertain a feeling of absolute disgust for the fellow. The very sight of Ditson made the "king" feel as if he would enjoy giving him a good "polishing off."

But Bruce was no bully, although he was a leader of the sophomores. He had proved his ability to fight when it was necessary, but no one could say that he ever showed any inclination to do bodily harm to one who was weak and peaceable.

During his freshman year Browning had originated any number of wild projects for sport, and he had always succeeded in carrying them through successfully. Thus it came about that he was called the "king," and his

companions continued to call him that when he became a sophomore.

But now there was a man in college who had fairly outwitted Browning on several occasions, and so it came about that the king was aroused against Frank Merriwell.

Browning keenly felt the sting of being beaten at his own game, and he was obliged to confess to himself that Merriwell had accomplished the trick.

But our hero was not inclined to let Bruce alone. He did not wait for the king to become aggressive; he set about keeping Bruce in hot water, and he succeeded very well.

The other freshmen, stimulated by the example of one who was distinctly a leader among them, carried on such an energetic campaign against the sophomores that the latter found themselves almost continually on the defensive.

Such a thing had never before been known at Yale and the sophs were highly indignant. They informed the freshmen that they were altogether too fresh. They said the freshmen were breaking a time-honored custom, and it must be stopped.

But the triumphant freshmen kept right on, laughing in the faces of their angry foes.

It was expected that Browning would not delay about getting back at Merriwell and his friends, and the admirers of the king were surprised when he seemed to remain inactive.

Then it came out that Bruce was in training, and it was said that he was putting himself in condition to give Merriwell the worst licking of his life.

Frank heard about it, but he did not seem disturbed in the least. Whenever any one spoke to him about it he merely smiled.

Among the freshmen there were some who believed Merriwell able to hold his own against Browning. They were Harry Rattleton, Jack Diamond and one or two more.

Diamond and Merriwell were not friendly, but they had ceased to be open enemies. For the time being the hatchet was buried, and there was peace between them.

But the two did not become friends. Merriwell continued to assert that Diamond had sand, and Diamond was ready to back his judgment in saying that Merriwell was a match for any man in Yale.

Morey's was a sophomore resort. Juniors and seniors patronized the place, but a freshman was not allowed there unless invited to accompany some of the regular frequenters of the place.

Ditson was ambitious. He was not satisfied to associate with those of his own class, but he wanted it thought he was such a fine fellow that the sophomores picked him up for his company.

Thus it happened that he had succeeded in getting into Morey's several times, but he was killing his own chances of ever having any popularity, although he did not know it.

Browning was angry when he saw the fellow come in. He called one of the sophs over and said:

"Say, what are you bringing it in here again for, my boy? It's been here too many times already."

"Who--Ditson?"

"Sure."

"We're working him."

"Working him? He's working you--for the drinks."

"That's all right. He's telling us what he knows about Merriwell. If there is anything in that fellow's history that we can use as a sore spot, we may be able to suppress him."

"All right," scowled Browning. "Go ahead and pump the crooked sneak, but don't swallow his lies. I don't believe he knows anything at all about Merriwell."

A few minutes later the soph returned and said:

"I don't think he knows much about him, myself, but he says he's down at Billy's now--or was an hour ago. We might get a chance to Lambda Chi him a little."

Browning seemed to arouse himself.

"That's right," he agreed. "We'll go down to Billy's."

The party filed out of Morey's and Browning took the lead. Ditson went along with them as if he was a sophomore. He seemed to feel himself highly honored, but Browning had hard work to choke back his absolute contempt for the fellow.

As they went along, it was arranged that Ditson should go into Billy's and see if Merriwell was there. One of the sophomores should accompany him. If Merriwell was there and he should come out alone or in company with one or two others, he was to be captured. Browning had a plan that should be carried out if the capture was made.

Ditson seemed to think he was doing something very smart and cunning in betraying a fellow freshman into the hands of the sophomores. He fancied he was making himself solid with Browning's crowd.

Billy's was reached, and one of the sophs went in with Ditson, while the others kept out of sight nearby.

After a little the soph came out and reported that Merriwell and Rattleton were in there. He had treated the house, but Merriwell had absolutely declined to take anything.

"Oh, yes," nodded Browning. "They say he never drinks. That's how he keeps himself in such fine condition all the time. He will not smoke, either, and he takes his exercise regularly. He is really a remarkable freshie."

Arrangements were then made that a cab should be brought to the corner near Billy's, where the driver should remain, apparently waiting for somebody.

It was known to be quite useless to attempt to decoy Merriwell out, so dependence must be placed on chance. If he came out with no more than one or two companions his name was "mud," according to the assembled sophs.

Arrangements were made to bind handkerchiefs over their faces to the eyes, so they would be partly disguised. Some of them turned their coats wrong side out, and some resorted to other means of disguising themselves.

Then they waited patiently.

It was not so very long before Ditson came out in a breathless hurry. He signaled, and they called him. As he hastened up he panted:

"Merriwell is coming right out, fellows! Be ready for him!"

The sophomores knew which way Frank was likely to go after leaving Billy's, and they lay in wait at a convenient spot.

"Is he alone?" eagerly asked Puss Parker.

"No."

"Who is with him?"

"Rattleton."

"Any others?"

"Not likely."

"Good! Take a tumble to yourself and skip."

Ditson did so.

"Now, fellows," hurriedly said Browning, "be ready for a struggle. Remember that Merriwell is a scrapper and he is likely to resist. We must take him completely by surprise. Get back and lay quiet till I give the signal."

They did as directed, and as they were in a dark corner, there was not much danger that they would be seen till they were ready to light on their game.

Footsteps were heard.

"Here he comes!"

Browning peered out, and two figures were seen approaching.

"How many?" anxiously whispered Tad Horner, quivering with anxiety.

"Two. They are easy. Ready for the rush."

The sophomores crouched like savage warriors in ambush.

Merriwell's peculiar, pleasant laugh was heard as the two unsuspecting freshmen approached.

Rattleton was talking, and, as usual, he was twisting his expression in his haste to say the things which flashed through his head.

"It doesn't make a dit of bifference if we haven't proved anything against him, I say Ditson can't be trusted. He's got a mooked crug--I mean a crooked mug."

"Oh, don't be too hard on the fellow till you know something for sure," advised Merriwell. "I will confess that I do not like him, but--"

There was a sudden rush of dark figures out of the shadows, and the two freshmen were clutched. Coats were flung over their heads and they were crashed to the ground.

Although taken by surprise, both lads struggled.

In the suddenness of the rush Browning had made a mistake and flung himself on Rattleton, while he had intended to grasp Merriwell. The coat being cast over the head of the lad prevented him from discovering his mistake.

Punch Swallows and Andy Emery were devoting themselves to Merriwell, and it was their first impression that they had tackled Rattleton.

For an instant it seemed that the trick had worked to perfection, and the freshmen had been made captives easily.

Then came a surprise.

Swallows and Emery were unable to hold their man down. He tore off the smothering coat and rose with them, despite all they could do. They cried out for help:

"Give us a hand, fellows! He's like an eel! Quick!"

Some of the sophs had been unable to render much assistance, and they now did their best to aid Swallows and Emery. In their haste to do something they seemed to get in the way of each other.

"Well, I don't know--I don't know!" laughed a familiar voice, and the freshman gave Swallows a snap that lifted him off his feet and cast him into the stomach of another fellow, who received such a blow from Punch's head that the wind was knocked out of him in a moment.

"We'll have to see about this," said the freshman as he cracked Emery on the jaw and broke his hold.

"Great smoke! It's Merriwell!" gurgled Emery as he reeled back.

"Onto him, fellows!" urged a soph, and Frank suddenly found six or seven of the crowd were at him.

Just how he did it no one could tell, but he broke straight through the crowd and in another moment was rushing back toward Billy's, shouting:

"Lambda Chi! Lambda Chi!"

It was useless to try to follow him, as all quickly saw.

In the meantime Rattleton had been cornered, and the disappointed sophs resolved to escape with him. They lifted him and made a rush for the cab. He was bundled in, and away went the cab.

Frank rushed into Billy's and gave the alarm. He was out again in a very few seconds, with a crowd of excited freshmen at his heels; but when they came to look for the sophomores and Rattleton they found nothing.

"Confound it!" exclaimed Frank in dismay. "How could they get him away so quick? I can't understand it."

The freshmen searched, but they found nothing to reward them. Rattleton was in the toils of the enemy, and the would-be rescuers were given no opportunity to rescue him.

Then Merriwell blamed himself for leaving his roommate at all. But Billy's had been so near and his chance with his many assailants had seemed so slim that he had done what seemed the right thing to do on the spur of the moment. He had not fancied that the sophomores would be able to get Harry away before he could arouse the freshmen and bring them to the rescue.

"Poor Harry! I wonder what they will do with him?" Frank speculated.

"Oh, they won't do a thing with him!" gurgled Bandy Robinson.

"How did it happen, anyway?" asked Roland Ditson, who had joined the freshmen after the affair was over.

He tried to appear innocent and filled with wonder and curiosity, but his unpopularity was apparent from the fact that nobody paid enough attention to him to answer his question.

Frank, however, found it necessary to tell his companions all about the assault, and Ditson pretended to listen with interest, as if he had known nothing of the affair.

The freshmen went back to Billy's and held a council. It was decided to divide into squads and make an attempt to find out where Harry had been taken.

This was done, but it proved without result, and not far from midnight all the freshmen who had been there at the time of the capture, and many others, were again gathered at Billy's. They were quite excited over the affair, and it seemed that the beer they had absorbed had gone to the heads of some of them.

In the midst of an excited discussion the door burst open, and a most grotesque-looking figure staggered into the room. It was a person who was stripped to the waist and painted and adorned like a redskin, his face striped with red and white and yellow, his hair stuck full of feathers, and his body decorated with what seemed to be tattooing.

"Bive me a gear--I mean give me a beer!" gasped that fantastic individual. "I am nearly dead!"

"It's Rattleton!" shouted the freshmen.

They crowded around him.

"Well, say, you are a bird!" cried Lucy Little, whose right name was Lewis Little.

"A regular bird of paradise," chuckled Bandy Robinson.

"Where are those fellows?" demanded Frank Merriwell. "Where did they leave you? Tell me, old man."

"At the door," faintly replied Rattleton as he reached for a mug of beer which some one held toward him. "They took me right up to the door and made me come in here."

"Out!" shouted Frank--"out and after them! Capture one of them if possible! We want to even this thing up."

Out they rushed, but once more the crafty sophomores had vanished, and not one of them was to be found.

The freshmen went back and listened to Harry's story. He told how he had been blindfolded and taken somewhere, he did not know where. There they

had kept him while his friends were searching. When there was no danger that the freshmen would discover them, they set out to have fun with Rattleton.

"Say, Merry, old man," said Harry, "I know Browning was the leader of this job, although he was disguised. They seemed to feel pretty bad because you got away. They got twisted--took me for you at first, and by the time they discovered their mistake you were knocking them around like tenpins. One chap insists you broke his jaw."

"Well, I am glad I did that much. I didn't mean to leave you, Harry. Billy's was so near I thought I could get the boys out and rescue you before they could carry you off. I couldn't rescue you alone, so I ran here to stir up the fellows."

"That was right. I was glad you got away. They were laying for you. They told me so."

"Well, come back, and we'll wash this stuff off you."

"I don't know as you can do it."

"Eh? Why not?"

"They said it was put on to stay a while. They told me we were so fond of playing the noble red man's part that they would fix me so I could play it for a week or two. Some of them advised me to use sand to scrub myself with if I hoped to get the paint off."

"Oh, that must be all a bluff. It will come off easy enough if a little cocoa butter is used on it. Here, somebody run out to a drug store and get some cocoa butter."

After they had worked about fifteen minutes they looked at each other in dismay, for they had scarcely been able to start the paint, and it become plain that cocoa butter, soap and water would not take it off.

"Didn't I tell you?" murmured Harry, sorrowfully. "I'm done for! I'll never be able to get it off! I'll have to go out West and live with the Sioux! If I do I'll take along the scalps of a few sophomores!"

They continued to work on him for nearly an hour, but were unable to get off more than a certain portion of the paint. Harry was still grotesquely decorated when the boys arrived at the conclusion that further scrubbing with the materials at hand was useless.

Then Frank went out and rang up a druggist who had gone to bed, for it was after midnight. He told the man the sort of scrape his friend was in and offered the druggist inducements to give him something to remove the paint.

The druggist said it could not be paint, but must be some sort of staining, and he gave Frank a preparation.

Frank went back and tried the stuff on Harry. It removed a certain amount of the stain, but did not remove it all.

At last, being thoroughly worn out, Rattleton said:

"I'll give it up for to-night, fellows. Perhaps I'll be able to get the rest off in the morning. I'll poultice my face and neck. But you'll have to watch out, Frank. They say they will use you worse than this when they get hold of you."

For the time the sophomores seemed to have the best of the game.

CHAPTER XII.

FRESHMAN AGAINST SOPHOMORE.

On the following morning a large piece of cardboard swung from the door of Merriwell and Rattleton's room in Mrs. Harrington's boarding house. On the cardboard was this inscription:

"Good-morning!
Have you used
Soap?"

Harry was up at an early hour industriously scrubbing away. He succeeded fairly well, but despite his utmost efforts the coloring refused to come off entirely.

And it was absolutely necessary that he should attend chapel.

On their way to chapel Frank and Harry came face to face with Professor Such, who peered at them sharply and said:

"Good-morning, gentlemen."

"Good-morning, professor," returned the boys.

Harry tried to keep behind Frank, so that his face would not be noticed. The professor was nearsighted, but he immediately noted Rattleton's queer actions, and he placed himself in front of the boys, adjusting his spectacles.

"Hang his curiosity!" muttered Harry in disgust.

"Eh?" said the professor, scratching his chin with one finger and peering keenly at Harry. "Did you speak, sir?"

"Yes, sir--I mean no, sir," spluttered Harry, while Frank stepped aside and stood laughing silently to himself.

"I thought you did. Er--what's the matter with your face, young man?"

"That's the result of my last attack of chilblains," said Harry, desperately. "They hent to my wed--I mean they went to my head."

"Eh?"

The professor seemed to doubt if he had heard correctly, while Merriwell nearly exploded.

Rattleton looked frightened when he came to think what he had said. He felt like taking to his heels and running for his life.

"Chilblains, sir?" came severely from Professor Such. "Sir--sir, do not attempt to be facetious with me! You will regret it if you do!"

Cold sweat started out on Harry's forehead, and he looked appealingly toward his companion; but Frank had turned away to conceal his merriment.

"I--I don't think I--I understood your--your question," stammered Harry. "I'm a little heard of haring--I mean hard of hearing."

"I asked you what was the matter with your face, sir."

"Oh, my face! Ha! ha! He! he! I thought you said something about my pace, because I was walking so slowly. That made me fancy you were interested to know what ails my feet. Excuse me! I beg your pardon, professor!"

"Hum!" coughed the professor, again scratching his chin with the tip of his finger, while he peered through his spectacles, plainly still somewhat suspicious. "It is rather remarkable that you should get things mixed in such a manner."

"I am not feeling well, professor, not at all."

And it was apparent to Frank that Harry told the truth.

"You are not looking well," came somewhat sarcastically from Professor Such's lips. "Your countenance has a strangely mottled hue."

"It comes from Injun jestion," explained Merriwell, coming to his roommate's relief.

"Eh? From what, sir."

"From indigestion," said Frank, very soberly. "He is much troubled that way."

"Much troubled! much troubled!" exclaimed the professor, whose ear had been offended and who immediately turned his attention on Frank. "I advise you to be somewhat more choice and careful of your language, young man. There is a right and a wrong use of words."

Just then the chapel bell clanged, and the professor exclaimed:

"Bless me! we'll be late if we're not careful!"

Away he hurried.

Frank and Harry followed him, and as they went along Harry expressed his feelings forcibly and violently.

"How dare you howl before me?" laughed Frank.

"Excuse me," said Rattleton. "I didn't know you wanted to howl first."

At chapel Harry felt that the eyes of everybody were upon him. He kept one hand up to his face as much as possible, but he saw the sophomores smiling covertly and winking among themselves. He longed to get even; that was his one burning ambition and desire.

When the service was over the freshmen stood and bowed to the faculty as they passed out. They were supposed to keep bowing to the seniors, juniors and sophomores, but that custom had long been a dead letter at Yale. The freshmen had become too independent for such a thing.

However, they stood and saw the upper classmen go past, and it seemed to poor Harry that every fellow stared at him and grinned. The sophs added to his misery and anger by winking at him, and Tad Horner ventured to go through a swift pantomime of taking a scalp.

"Oh, I am liable to have yours yet," thought Harry.

On their way back to their rooms Harry and Frank were greeted by all sorts of calls and persiflage from the sophomores, who had gathered in

knots to watch them pass.

This sort of chaffing gave Rattleton "that tired feeling," as he expressed it, and by the time they reached their room he was in a desperate mood.

"I'll get even!" he vowed, fiercely. "I'll do it."

"Go ahead—you can do it," laughed Frank. "You can do anybody."

Then Harry flung a book at him, which Frank skillfully caught and returned with the utmost politeness.

At breakfast Rattleton was chafed by the freshmen, and he boiled more than ever.

"Somebody has my coat, vest, hat, shirt and undershirt," he said as he thought the affair over. "I had to go home in a linen duster which I got down to Billy's last night. I don't care so much for the clothes I lost, but I'd like to know who has 'em. I'd sue him!"

But after breakfast an expressman appeared with a bundle for Rattleton, and in the bundle were the missing articles.

The sophomores were jubilant, and they taunted the freshmen. They said the fate that had befallen Rattleton was simply a warning. It was nothing beside what might happen.

For the time the freshmen were forced to remain silent, but they felt that the sophomores had not evened up matters by any means. And the affair would not be dropped.

During the afternoon of that day it rained for at least two hours, and it did not clear up and let the sun out, so there was plenty of dirt and mud at nightfall.

Then it was that Rattleton some way found out that a number of sophomores who dined at a club on York Street were going to attend a party that evening. It was to be a swell affair on Temple Street, and the sophs were certain to wear their dress suits.

"They'll din for dresser—I mean dress for dinner," spluttered Harry as he was telling Frank. "It's certain they'll go directly from dinner to the party."

"Well, what has worked its way into your head?"

"A scheme."

"Give it to us."

"We'll be ready for 'em when they come from dinner, and we'll give 'em a rush. They're not likely to be in any condition to attend a party after we are through with them. What do you say, old man? What do you think of it?"

"We are likely to get enough of rushing in the annual rush, but I'm with you if you want to carry this job through."

"All right, then, we'll do it. We'll give those sophs a warm time. I have been grouchy all day, but I begin to feel better now."

So Frank and Harry communicated the plan to their friends, and a party gathered in their room immediately after supper.

Dismal Jones was out as a scout, and he had agreed to let them know when the sophomores left their club. They were inclined to take much more time in dining than the freshmen.

Pretty soon Jones came racing up the stairs and burst into the room.

"Come on, fellows!" he cried. "The sophs are leaving their club, and there's lots of 'em wearing dress suits. We'll have a picnic with 'em!"

Dismal seldom got excited, but now he was quite aroused.

The freshmen caught up their caps and hurried downstairs. They were soon on the street, and they hastened to meet their natural enemies.

The sophomores had formed by twos, with Browning and Emery in advance. It was true that many of them were in dress suits, and they were not a little disturbed when they saw the solid body of freshmen coming swiftly to meet them.

To pass on the right the sophomores were entitled to the inside of the sidewalk, and although they would have given much to avoid the encounter, they formed solidly and prepared to defend their rights.

The freshmen also formed in a compact mass, and came on with a rush, keeping hard up against the wall.

"Turn to the right! Turn to the right!"

The sophomores uttered the cry as they hugged the wall on the inside.

"Sweep 'em off! Sweep 'em off!"

That was the cry that came from the determined freshmen.

"Hold on! hold on!" ordered Browning. "There is a law for this!"

"Then you will have to produce officers to enforce it," laughed Frank Merriwell.

"But there is a regular time for rushing."

"This is not a regular rush, so we don't mind."

"But you fellows have no right to do it!"

"Is that so?" was the derisive retort. "Hear the sophs squeal fellows! Oh, my! but this is funny!"

"Stop a minute and we will argue this matter, freshies," invited Browning, who was thoroughly disgusted over the prospect.

Then the whole crowd of freshmen roared with laughter.

"Hear the baby cry!" they shouted. "He is begging! Ha! ha! ha!"

Browning's face was crimson with anger and confusion.

"You are an insolent lot of young ruffians!" he snapped, "and Merriwell is the biggest ruffian of you all!"

"Back it up! back it up!"

"I can!"

"Why don't you?"

"I will when the right time comes."

"What's the matter with this for the right time?"

"No! no! Turn to the right and let us pass now. We will see you again."

"We see you now, and we are going to raise you the limit."

The sophomores held a hurried consultation, and then Browning said:

"If you fellows will wait till we go change our clothes we'll come out and give you as warm a time as you want."

"All right, we will wait."

"Then let us pass."

"We'll do that, but you will have to pass on the outside."

That was something the sophomores could not do without yielding to the freshmen, and they felt that they had rather die than yield unless compelled to do so.

The sophomores stormed and scolded, and the freshmen, who outnumbered them, laughed and flung back taunts.

Then the sophomores determined on a quick, sudden rush, but it happened that the freshmen had decided on a rush at the same moment, and the two bodies of lads plunged forward as if at one signal.

"'Umpty-eight! 'Umpty-eight!" yelled the freshmen.

"'Umpty-seven! 'Umpty-seven!" shouted the sophomores.

Crash! They met!

Then there occurred one of the liveliest struggles of the season up to that date. Each side did its best to force the other off the sidewalk, and for some moments they swayed and surged in one spot.

At last the superior weight of the freshmen began to tell, and the sophomores were slowly swept backward, contending every inch.

Feeling that they must be crowded to the outside, Browning gave the signal for them to break and make it a hand-to-hand affair. Then he grappled with Merriwell.

Frank was ready, and he willingly left the line as the freshmen forged onward. He was anxious for an opportunity of seeing just what sort of stuff the king of the sophomores was made of, and this was his chance.

Finding that they could not hold the freshmen back, the sophs had each singled out a man, and the contest became hand to hand.

In a few moments several parties were down, and some of them rolled from the sidewalk into the street.

Now that they had been forced to do battle, the sophs were desperate, and they sailed in like a lot of tigers.

Rattleton found himself pitted against Andy Emery, and Emery had the reputation of being as full of grit as a bulldog. He was on the 'Varsity crew, and he had a back and shoulders which were the admiration of those who had seen him strip to the buff.

Emery had a quick temper and a strong arm. He grappled with Harry, lifted him off his feet and tried to throw him, but the freshman came down on his feet like a cat.

A second later Emery was astonished to feel his own feet flung into the air, and he could not help falling, but he clung to his antagonist and they went down together.

Over and over they rolled, each striving to get on top. They were soon off the sidewalk and into the street.

Emery was furious, for he felt that his dress suit was the same as ruined, and he uttered some very savage language.

"That's right," chuckled Harry. "Cuss a little--it may help you."

It seemed to, for Emery finally succeeded in getting astride Rattleton and holding him down for a few moments. He was soon pulled off by another freshman, and the merry war went on.

Little Tad Horner was right in the hottest scrimmage, and he proved formidable for the freshmen, despite his size. He had a way of darting under them and tripping them up, then getting away before he could be grappled.

Dismal Jones was quoting Scripture and doing his best to make himself felt by the sophomores. Jones was a character. His parents were "shouting Methodists," and they intended him for the ministry. He had a long, sad face, but he was full of devilry, and it was very seldom that the freshmen entered into any affair against the sophomores that he was not on hand and interested.

"Lay on and spare not!" he cried, after the style of a camp-meeting revivalist. "If the wicked entice thee, consent thou not. Get behind me, Satan! Brothers, oh, my dear brothers! it makes my heart sad and weary to see so much wicked strife and contention."

Punch Swallows, the red-headed soph, found himself pitted against Lucy Little. Despite his name, Little was not a "sissy," and he was no mean antagonist, as Punch found out. It was nip and tuck between them, and neither seemed to have the best of it.

Some of the sophs were able to down their men, but they were so outnumbered by the freshmen that they could not hold an advantage very long.

The struggle between Browning and Merriwell waxed furious. The big sophomore exerted himself to his utmost, and he found that it was necessary that he should do so if he had any thought of holding his own with the freshman leader.

Frank knew all the time that he was pitted against a hard man, and so his muscles were strained and his nerves were taut.

"Now, fresh, we'll see what we can do for you," Browning said, as he made a mighty effort to land Frank on his back.

"You are very kind," laughed Merriwell. "I will not forget your kindness."

"You are not the only one," panted Browning. "There are others."

"Are you going to the party this evening?" chuckled Frank.

"Not till I have done you up, my friend with the swelled head."

"Then you expect to be rather late?"

"We'll see!"

Frank resorted to all the tricks he knew, but Browning was familiar with every one of them. They gave up trying to down each other by main strength, and science cut quite a figure in their battle.

At length Browning got Frank foul, and to his dismay the leader of the freshmen felt himself falling. Browning fell with him, a cry of triumph coming to his lips.

That cry turned to an exclamation of dismay, for Merriwell seemed to twist about in the air, and they fell side by side on the ground. In a twinkling they were at it again, and over and over they went, till they finally stopped and got upon their feet together.

"Very good thus far," laughed Merriwell. "But I see your wind will not hold out. I am bound to do you in the end."

That was the very thing Browning feared.

"Well, I don't know about that," he said as he broke Frank's grip. "This may settle the whole business."

He struck hard and straight at Merriwell's face!

CHAPTER XIII.

JUBILANT FRESHMEN.

Spat!

Merriwell staggered.

"Down you go!"

Browning followed the freshman closely, launching out again, with the full expectation that the second blow would be a settler.

Frank had been taken slightly off his guard, so that he had failed in getting away from the first blow, but he skillfully ducked the second, countering as the king's fist passed over his shoulder.

Browning reeled backward, having received a terrific crack on the ear.

If Frank had not been slightly dazed he might have followed the sophomore closely, but he was a bit slow in getting after Bruce.

For a few seconds the boys gave an exhibition of scientific sparring which would have proved very interesting to their comrades if all had not been too busy to watch them.

Frank Merriwell continued to laugh, and it had been said at Yale that he was most dangerous in an encounter when he laughed.

"You came near doing it, Browning," he admitted, "but it was rather tricky on your part. I wasn't looking for a fight."

"You will get many things you are not looking for before you have been at Yale much longer," returned the king.

"Think so?"

"Dead sure."

The two lads seemed to be very evenly matched, save that Merriwell was the more catlike on his feet. Browning was solid, and it took a terrific blow to stagger him. Merriwell was plainly the more scientific. He could get in and away from his foe in a most successful manner, but he saw that in the confined limits of a ring Browning's rush would be difficult to escape.

What the result of this encounter might have been cannot be told, for two freshmen suddenly appeared and gave the alarm that at least a hundred sophomores were coming in a body to aid their comrades.

A moment later the sophs appeared, hurrying along the street toward the scene of the encounter.

"Umpty-seven! Umpty-seven! Rah! rah! 'rah!"

Then the signal was given for the freshmen to break away and take to flight, which they promptly did.

"Oh, soph--oh, my poor soph!" cried many taunting voices.

"Good-evening, gentlemen!" called Bandy Robinson. "Shall I toss you down soap and towels?"

"Say, fellows," cried Lucy Little, "don't you think it is rather warm out this evening?"

"Hello! hello!" shouted Rattleton. "Has it been raining, or did we have a small shower?"

Then Merriwell's beautiful baritone voice pitched the chorus of a familiar negro melody, in which the triumphant and delighted freshmen joined:

"Git erway from de window, mah love an' mah dove!
Git erway from de window--don't yeh heah?
Come eround some odder night,
For dere's gwine ter be er fight,
An' dar'll be razzers er-flyin' through de air."

The sophomores retired to a safe distance and then challenged the freshmen to come out and fight. They called them cowards and other things, but the freshmen laughed and taunted them in return.

"Is--er--King Browning present?" yelled a freshman, leaning out of a window. "If so, I'd like to inquire if he means to attend the party this evening."

"If he does," said another freshman, "he will be able to obtain a dress suit down at Cohen's, price 'von tollar ber efenin' to shentlemen."

"Oh, you wait till we get at you fresh ducks!" shouted back an angry sophomore. "We'll make you sweat for this!"

"Go on! you're only fooling!" sang the freshmen.

"We'll show you we're not fooling!" excitedly declared Punch Swallow. "We'll scalp a few of you!"

"Ah!" cried Bandy Robinson. "He is a bad man! Methinks I can detect his cloven foot."

"You're wrong," laughed Merriwell. "But you may have been near enough at some time to detect his cloven breath!"

The three freshmen who were leaning out of one of the upper windows repeated in chorus:

"Punch, brother--punch with care,
Punch in the presence of the passenjair."

Another freshman shouted:

"Say, Swallows, give us a lock of your hair. It'll save the expense of gas in my room."

"I'd like a lock of it, too," declared another. "I'm troubled with rats, and I haven't any paris green handy."

"Oh, rats!" yelled twenty voices.

"Hello, Parker!" cried Little. "I hear you were held up last night? Is it true?"

"Oh, yes," said Rattleton. "He'd been down to Morey's, and that was the way he got home."

"But oh, what a difference in the morning," sang the freshmen.

"Ask Rattleton if he means to join the Indians?" called a soph.

"Or will he Sioux for damages?" put in another.

"Oh, say!" groaned Dismal Jones. "That's the worst I ever heard! It's enough to give one heart failure!"

"Come out and fight! Come out and fight!" urged the sophomores. "You don't dare to come out and fight!"

"You will have to excuse us this evening, gentlemen," said Merriwell, suavely. "We have done our best to entertain you, and we will see you again at some other date."

"You are certain to see me again," assented Browning. "You ran away, or we would have settled matters between us this evening. As it is, I am going to watch my opportunity to do you fairly and squarely. When I am done with you one of us will be beautifully licked."

"And that one will not be King Bruce," declared Andy Emery.

"Say! say! say!" spluttered Rattleton. "I'll go you a shot that it is! I'll stand you a supper for twenty at any place you'll name that Merriwell knocks the everlasting stuffing out of Browning."

"Done!" returned Emery.

"You name plime and tace--I mean time and place, and we'll be there, you bet!" declared Harry. "All we want is a fair deal."

"You'll get that," assured Browning. "This little affair shall be arranged very soon."

"The sooner the better. Don't delay on our account."

The sophomores, seeing it was useless to linger there and be taunted by the freshmen, began to stroll away one by one.

Up in Merriwell's room Rattleton got down his banjo and began to put it in tune. A merry party gathered there. One of the strings snapped, and as he was putting on another Harry fell to laughing.

"What are you laughing at?" asked Bandy Robinson.

"Down at the table to-night," explained Harry, "Merriwell was poking his finger into the butter. I asked him what he was doing that for, and he said he was only feeling its muscle."

The boys who dined in the house appreciated that, and there was a general laugh. Then Harry adjusted the string and placed the banjo in tune. Pretty soon the boys were singing "Bingo," "Upidee," "Nellie Was a Lady," and other college songs. Every one of them seemed familiar with "Paddy Duffy's Cart" and its pretty chorus:

"Twinkling stars are laughing, love,
Laughing on you and me,
While your bright eyes look into mine,
Peeping stars they seem to be."

Such glorious days and such merry nights will never come again to those who have known them. Here's to good old Yale!

CHAPTER XIV.

THE RUSH.

At last the sophomores were thoroughly aroused. The freshmen had long been carrying things with a high hand, but the rushing of a lot of them who were in dress suits and bound for a swell party was the straw that broke the camel's back.

An indignation meeting was held, and certain freshmen were placed under the ban.

Of these Merriwell was the leader, and it was agreed that every effort must be made to "take the starch" out of him. That Browning intended to "do" Merriwell was well known, but some of the others proposed to get at him.

"Wait," advised Bruce—"wait till I have had it out with that fellow. Then you may do whatever you like with him. But I feel it a solemn duty to settle our little affair before anybody else tackles him."

The freshmen were getting their ball team in condition for the coming season, and they were practicing as often as possible. Frank was interested in the team, and it was said by those who watched him that he seemed to have the making of a pitcher in him. He had sharp curves and good control. If he had a head, they said, he was all right. But this was something that could not be decided till he had been tried in a game.

Another freshman by the name of Walter Gordon seemed certain to be the regular pitcher of the team. He had a record, as he had shown, while Merriwell would say nothing about what he had done in the way of pitching.

The students had found it extremely difficult to find out much about Merriwell, as he persistently avoided talking about himself. If he had been one of the kind of fellows who go around and brag about themselves and what they have done he would not have aroused so much interest; but the very fact that he would not talk of himself made the students curious to know something of his history.

In a vague sort of way it became known that although he lived in simple style, like any freshman whose parents were not wealthy, he had a fortune in his own right and had traveled extensively in various parts of the world.

Frank's silence seemed to cast an air of mystery about him, and that air of mystery made him all the more interesting, for the human mind is ever curious to peer into anything that has the flavor of a secret.

The sophomores had been rushed by the freshmen, and they resolved to retaliate in a similar manner. On Saturday afternoons the freshmen ball team practiced, and Saturday was at hand. It would be an opportune time to meet the youngsters and make it warm for them.

The affair was carefully planned, but wind of it reached the freshmen. As a result, the youngsters prepared for what they knew must take place. There could be no such thing as avoiding it, so when Saturday noon came they dressed themselves in their old clothes and started for the park, going out as much as possible in a body.

When the park was reached it was found that the sophomores were there ahead of them. More than that, the sophs had closed and fastened the gate, and they proposed to hold it. They taunted the freshmen, and told them they would have to climb the fence if they hoped to get into the park.

Then there was a consultation among the freshmen. "We'll have to make a rush," was the universal decision.

Frank looked the ground over, and he decided that an ordinary rush would not be successful, for that was the very thing the sophomores were expecting. But there seemed no other way of getting into the park unless they climbed the fence, and not a man thought of doing such a thing as that.

The sophomores formed in front of the gate, five deep. In the front rank of the sophs were Browning and two 'Varsity crew men. Bruce was in the middle, with the rowers on either side. The ends were two men from the football team.

Thus the very first line of the sophomores made a formidable array, and it is not surprising that some of the freshmen were chicken-hearted.

With assistance, Frank marshaled the freshmen, reserving a place in the first line for himself. While that might be considered a position of honor, it was the most dangerous, and every fellow there knew this rush was to be no baby play.

For companions Merriwell selected Dismal Jones, Jack Diamond, Puss Parker and a big, broad-shouldered fellow by the name of Hovey.

Rattleton and Robinson, together with a dozen others, were appointed as "scouts." It was their duty to "hook" out men from the ranks of the sophs and break the force of the enemy's rush as far as possible.

The sophomores had likewise appointed a dozen scouts, strong, active fellows, every one of whom had shown ability as an athlete.

The sophs prepared quickly for the rush, but it took more time to get the freshmen in order. In this the seniors rendered not a little assistance.

When everything was ready the order was given, and the freshmen started forward. Those in the front line leaned back at a slant, and those behind pushed.

At the same time the sophomores moved toward the freshmen, and then there were shouts, taunts and jeers. Each side gave its own cheer.

"This is the last of the freshmen!" cried the sophomores. "We'll wipe them off the earth. Good-by, freshies!"

"Umpty-seven will never be heard of again," returned the freshmen. "They'll be angels right away."

Then the two bodies came together with a frightful impact. They had locked their arms about each other's waists, and there they clung, while they pressed upon each other with all their might.

For a little time they swayed and swayed. There were screams and cries of pain. They wavered and turned about, but still the crush continued.

The scouts were getting in their work, hooking their bent arms around the necks of their opponents and yanking them out of the line.

Before long the rush turned into a general pushing and hauling. Freshman pitted himself against sophomore, and a score of wrestling matches were in progress.

Merriwell and Browning had clinched at the outset, but it was a long time before they could do anything but cling to each other. When they did have an opportunity another soph, a scout, spoiled the match by making a low tackle on Frank and flinging him to the ground. Browning came down heavily on the leader of the freshmen, but he immediately jumped up, crying:

"That was not a square deal. Let's have it over."

But the breath had been knocked out of Frank with the force of the fall, and he fell back twice as he struggled to arise.

"Are you hurt?" asked Browning.

"No," panted Frank, who could dimly see his opponent through a thick haze which seemed to hang before his eyes.

"Then why don't you get up?"

"I--I'm going to."

Setting his teeth, he did so, but Rattleton caught Browning by the collar and flung him aside as the big soph sprang at Frank.

"You are hurt, old man!" insisted Harry. "I saw the fellow when he tripped you. It wasn't a fair thing. You are in no condition to meet Browning now. Wait till you get your wind."

"I must meet him!" cried Frank. "He'll say he did me up if I do not."

"Then he'll lie. It's all right. You do as I say."

Frank tried to resist, but Rattleton dragged him aside, being able to do

so because Browning found himself occupied by a little freshman who stuffily blocked his way, declaring that Merriwell should have a show.

Frank was more than disgusted by the result of the affair. He felt that he must have it out with Browning then and there, and he made desperate attempts to break from Harry. Ordinarily he would have succeeded with the greatest ease, but the fall had robbed him of his strength.

Then came the knowledge that the freshmen had been repulsed. The sophomores were cheering wildly, and the unfortunate freshmen were downcast.

"They've held us out," muttered Harry, bitterly. "It begins to look as if we'll have to climb over the fence if we get inside."

"What's that?" cried Frank, bracing up a little. "Climb the fence? Not much!"

"Then how'll we get in? Will you tell me that?"

"We'll find a way."

"Wind a fay!" spluttered Harry excitedly. "It's easy enough to say that, but I don't believe we can do it."

"Oh, freshies! oh, you poor freshies!" tauntingly cried the victors. "Don't you wish you could? But you can't do it, you know!"

"That remains to be seen," muttered Merriwell, brushing the hair back from his eyes. "I didn't think we could do it in this way. But there are others."

"You'll be a dandy if you devise a way," declared Little.

Diamond, with his coat off, his vest ripped up the back and his shirt torn open at the throat, was regarding the jeering sophomores with a fierce, sullen look. Evidently he was ready for anything. He glanced at Merriwell, but said nothing.

Frank called the freshmen around him.

"Look here, fellows," he said, "we are bound to go into that park, and we're going through that gate."

"That sounds well," said Dismal Jones, who wore an unusually long face, "but I'm inclined to believe we're not in it with that crowd."

"Guess again!" exclaimed Frank. "Now listen to me, and I don't want one of you to look around. You might arouse suspicion if you did. Close to the wall there lies a long stick of timber."

"Well?"

"We'll use it."

"How?"

"As a battering-ram."

"To batter down the gate? Why, how are we to get to the gate?"

"The timber will take us there, and it will open the gate. When I give the word we will rush for it, pick it up, and sail right into the sophs. I'll bet anything they get out of the way when they see us coming with that. It will take them by surprise."

"Rah! 'rah! 'rah!" yelled several of the enthusiastic freshmen.

The sophomores yelled back at them in derision.

"They think we are beaten now," said Diamond, whose face had lighted up somewhat as he listened to Merriwell's plan. "If we only can get the best of them that way!"

"We can and we will," assured Frank. "Those who can't get hold of the timber may look out that they don't hook our men away from it. That is all."

The freshmen became eager for the effort, but Frank held them back till he was certain they all understood just what was to be done.

"Are you ready?" he finally asked.

"All ready," was the eager reply.

"Then go!"

The sophomores were astonished to see the freshmen suddenly whirl all together and rush toward the wall.

"They're going over! They're going over!"

The sophomores shouted their satisfaction and delight, fully convinced that they had forced the freshmen to abandon all hope of going through the gate.

Then came a surprise for them.

The freshmen caught up the timber, and Merriwell cried:

"Charge!"

Like a tornado they bore down on the men near the gate, toward which the timber was directed.

With cries of amazement the alarmed sophomores broke and scattered before the oncoming freshmen.

Crash!

The timber struck the gate, bursting it open instantly, and the triumphant freshmen swarmed into the park, cheering wildly.

"Hurrah for 'Umpty-eight!" yelled Bandy Robinson, turning a handspring. "We are the boys to do 'em!"

"Hurrah for Frank Merriwell!" shouted Harry Rattleton, his face beaming with joy. "It was his scheme that did it."

"Hurrah! hurrah! hurrah!" roared the freshmen. "'Rah! 'rah! 'rah!"

Then Frank felt himself lifted to the shoulders of his enthusiastic admirers and carried to the home plate of the ball ground, where the freshmen cheered again and again.

The sophomores were filled with rage and chagrin.

"That was the blamedest trick I ever heard of in all my life!" declared Andy Emery. "We weren't looking for anything of the kind."

"And we have Merriwell to thank for it!" snapped Evan Hartwick. "He's full of tricks as an egg is full of meat."

"By Jawve!" said Willis Paulding, who had managed to keep out of harm's way during the entire affair. "I think somebody ought to do something to that fellow--I really do, don't yer know."

"Suppose you try to see what you can do with him," grinned Tad Horner. "You ought to be able to do something."

"Aw--really you will hawve to excuse me!" exclaimed Willis in alarm. "I hawdly think I could match his low cunning, don't yer understand."

"Oh, yes, I understand," nodded Horner, significantly. "It takes a man to go up against Merriwell."

"I hope you don't mean to insinuate--"

"Oh, no!" interrupted Tad. "I have said it."

"Eh? I hawdly think I understand, don't yer know."

"Think it over," advised the little soph as he turned away.

It is probable that Bruce Browning was more thoroughly disgusted than any of his friends.

"Confound it!" he thought. "If I'd stuck to that fellow and done him up anyway he wouldn't have been able to carry out this trick. If he is given any kind of a show he is bound to take advantage of it."

Bruce felt like fighting.

"I'm going in there and lick him," he declared. "I will settle this matter with Merriwell right away."

But some of his friends were more cautious.

"It won't do," declared Puss Parker.

"Won't do?"

"No, sir."

"Why not?"

"It might be done under cover of a rush, but a single fight between a soph and a fresh under such public conditions would be sure to get them both in trouble."

"I don't care a continental! I've stood him just as long as I can! If I can give him a good square licking I'll stand expulsion, should it come to that!"

They saw that Browning was too heated to pause for sober thought, and so they gathered close around him and forced him to listen to reason.

It took no small amount of argument to induce the king to give over the idea of going onto the ball field and attacking Merriwell, but he was finally shown the folly of such a course. However, he vowed over and over that the settlement with Merriwell should come very soon.

CHAPTER XV.

ON THE BALL FIELD.

The sophomores went in to watch the freshmen practice and incidentally to have sport with them.

Two nines had been selected, one being the regular freshman team and the other picked up to give them practice.

As Merriwell had been given a place on the team as reserve pitcher, his services were not needed at first, and so he went in to twirl for the scrub nine.

Walter Gordon went into the box for the regular team, and he expected to fool the irregulars with ease. He was a well-built lad, with a bang, and it was plain to see at a glance that he was stuck on himself. He had a trick of posing in the box, and he delivered the ball with a flourish.

The scrub team did not have many batters, and so it came about that the first three men up were disposed of in one-two-three order, not one of them making a safe hit or reaching first.

Rattleton had vainly endeavored to get upon the regular team. He had played pretty fast ball on a country nine, but he was somewhat out of practice and he had not made a first-class showing, so he had failed in his ambition.

He went into catch for Merriwell, and they had arranged a code of signals beforehand, so that they were all prepared.

There was no affectation about Frank's delivery, but the first man on the list of the regulars found Merriwell's slow drop was a hard ball to hit. He went after two of them before he saw what he was getting. Then he made up his mind that he would get under the next one and knock the peeling off it.

He got under it all right, for instead of being a drop it was a rise, and the batter struck at least eighteen inches below it.

"Well, say," laughed Gordon, who had been placed second on the list at his own request. "I'll go you something he doesn't work that on me."

He was full of confidence when he walked up to the plate. The watching sophomores were doing their best to rattle Merriwell, and it seemed that he must soon get nervous, even though he did not seem to hear any of the jolly that was being flung at him.

The very first ball seemed to be just where Gordon wanted it, and he swung at it with all his strength. It twisted in toward him and passed within two inches of his fingers.

Gordon looked mildly surprised, but he was still confident that he would be able to hit the next one with ease. He found out his mistake later on when he went after an out drop and failed to come within six inches of it.

Then it was Gordon who grew nervous. He did not fancy the idea of being fanned out by his rival, and he felt that he must make connections with the next one. He resolved to wait for a good one, and Frank fooled him by putting two straight ones right over the center of the plate. Gordon felt sure that both would be curves, and so he offered at neither of them. The umpire, however, who was a particular friend of Gordon, called them both balls. Then Gordon went after the next ball, which was a

raise, but found nothing but empty air.

The third man was easy, and he fanned, also, making three in succession.

Parker punched Browning in the ribs.

"Say," he observed, "I'll go you two to one that Merriwell is on the Varsity team before the end of next season."

"If he is alive he may be," returned the king, grimly.

Our hero's pitching was a surprise to his friends, for until that day he had not seemed to let himself out. Even then he did not appear to be doing his best work, and one who watched him in a friendly way fancied he might do still better if forced to make the effort.

Walter Gordon was filled with disgust and dismay.

"He's having great luck," muttered Gordon. "Why, I don't see how I missed a ball I struck at. Every one was a dead easy thing, and I should have killed any of them."

He squirmed as he heard Burn Putnam--familiarly called Old Put--the manager of the team, compliment Merriwell on his skillful work.

"I fancy I'll be able to use you more than I thought I should at first, Merriwell," said Putnam. "We can tell more about that in the future."

"I've got to strike that fellow out," thought Gordon as he went into the box.

But he did not. Merriwell came first to bat in the second inning, and he sent a safe single into right field, deliberately placing it, as was evident to every ball player present.

Gordon turned green with anger, and then he became nervous. To add to his nervousness, Merriwell obtained a lead from first and stole second on his delivery, getting it easily.

But that was not the end of Gordon's woes, for Merriwell seemed in a reckless mood, and he made for third on the next pitch, getting it on a beautiful slide, although the catcher made an attempt to throw him out.

The catcher came down scowling, and Gordon went to meet him, asking as he did so:

"What's the matter with you? You ought to have stopped him at second and held him there."

"I ought to have stopped him!" came derisively from the disgusted backstop. "I came down to ask you if this was the way you were going to pitch in a regular game. Why, that fellow is getting a long start on your delivery, and he does it every time. You've got to stop that kind of business."

For some moments they talked, and then Gordon sulkily walked back to the box. He tried to catch Frank playing off third, but simply wasted time. Then he made a snap delivery and hit the batter, who went down to first.

By this time Gordon was rattled, and he sent the next ball over the heart of the plate. The batter nailed it for two bags, and two men came home.

Gordon walked out of the box and up to the bench where Old Put was sitting.

"I am sick," he declared.

He looked as if he spoke the truth.

"I thought something was the matter with you," said the manager. "You're white as a sheet. It's folly for you to practice while you are in this condition."

Gordon put on his sweater and then drew his coat over that. He wandered off by himself and sat down.

"Hang that fellow Merriwell!" he whispered to himself. "I never thought he would bother me so much. I am beginning to hate him. He is too cool and easy to suit me."

The practice was continued, and Merriwell showed up finely, so that Old Put was pleased.

The sophomores quit trying to have sport with the freshmen, as it happened that two of the professors had wandered into the park and were looking on from a distance.

Browning saw them.

"Why are they out here?" he snapped. "Never knew 'em to come before. I won't even get a chance to talk to Merriwell."

"Better keep away from him this afternoon," cautioned Hartwick. "He can't escape you, and there is plenty of time."

"That's so," agreed Bruce. "But I hate to think how he is crowing to himself over the way the freshies got into the park. I'd like to take the starch out of him at once."

Hartwick induced Browning to leave the park, and the departure of the king caused the sophomores to wander away in small groups.

As a general thing they were discussing Merriwell, his position with the freshmen, and his pitching. Some insisted that he was not a pitcher and would never make one, while others were equally confident that he was bound to become a great twirler some day.

Some of the groups discussed the antagonism between Merriwell and Browning, and all were confident that the king would do the freshman when he got himself into condition. It was not strange that they believed so, for they remembered how Bruce had knocked out Kid Lajoie, who was a professional.

Browning himself proceeded directly to his rooms, where he sat himself down and fell to thinking. Twice had he been up against Merriwell, and he had found out that the leader of the freshmen was no easy thing. In neither struggle had he obtained an advantage through his own unaided efforts, and in this last affair he had felt that he was losing his wind, while Merriwell seemed as fresh as ever till he was thrown by a third party.

"That's where I am not yet his match," Bruce soberly decided. "If I were fortunate enough to land a knockout blow with my left at the outset I'd finish him easily; but if he should play me and keep out of my reach he might get me winded so he could finally get the best of it. I must work off more flesh."

Having arrived at this conclusion, Browning was decidedly glad that his friends had kept him from closing in on Merriwell and forcing a fight on

the ball field.

"Another week will do it," Bruce thought. "No matter what is said, I'll not meet that fellow till I am his match--till I am more than his match, for I must do him. If I do not my days as king of the sophs are numbered. I can see now that some of the fellows sympathize secretly with Merriwell, although they do not dare do so openly. It must be stopped. He may be a first-class fellow, but when he treads on my corns I kick."

Hartwick tried to talk to Bruce, but the latter would say very little, and it was not long before he left the room.

Browning stepped out briskly, and a stranger who saw him could not have believed that he had the reputation of being the laziest lad in college.

In one line Bruce was thoroughly aroused, but he was neglecting his studies in a shameful manner, and more than once a warning voice told him that while he was putting himself in condition to dispose of Merriwell he was getting into trouble in another quarter.

He did not heed that warning, however. His one thought was to retain his position as king of the sophomores, and in order to do that he must not let any freshman triumph over him.

In town he went directly to a certain saloon and stopped at the bar, although he did not order a drink.

"Is the professor in?" he asked.

"I think he is," replied the barkeeper.

Then Browning passed through into a back room and climbed some dirty stairs, finally rapping at a door.

"Come in!" called a harsh voice.

Bruce pushed open the door and entered. The room was quite large, but was not very clean. The walls were pasted over with sporting pictures taken from illustrated papers. There was a bed, some old chairs, one of which had a broken back, a center table, a cracked mirror, and two cuspidors. A door opened into another room beyond.

Lounging in a chair, with his feet on the table beside an empty beer bottle and dirty glass, was a ruffianly-looking chap, who had a thick neck that ran straight up with the back of his head. His hair was close cropped and his forehead low. There was a bulldog look about his mouth and jaw, and his forehead was strangely narrow.

The man was smoking a black, foul-smelling pipe, while the hands which held a pink-tinted illustrated paper were enormous, with huge knuckles and joints. His hand when closed looked formidable enough to knock down an ox.

"How do you do, professor?" saluted Bruce.

"Waryer," growled the man, still keeping his feet on the table. "So it's you, is it? Dis ain't your day."

"I know it, but I decided to come around just the same. I am not getting the flesh off as fast as I ought."

"Hey?" roared the man, letting his feet fall with a crash. "Wot's dat? D'yer men ter say I ain't doin' a good job wid yer? Wot der blazes!"

"Oh, you are doing all right, professor, but I find I must be in condition sooner than I thought. My gymnasium exercise doesn't seem to--"

"Dat gymnasium work is no good--see? I knows wot I'm givin' yer, too. I told yer in der first place ter stick ter me, an' I'd put yer in shape. It'll cost more, but--"

"I don't mind that. No matter what it costs, I must be in condition to lick that fellow I was telling you about, and I must be in condition one week from to-day."

"Dat's business. I'll put yer dere. An' yer know wot I told yer--I'll show yer a trick dat'll finish him dead sure ef de mug is gittin' de best of yer. It'll cost yer twenty-five extra ter learn dat trick, but it never fails."

Browning showed sudden interest.

"I had forgotten about that," he said. "What will it do?"

"It'll do der bloke what ye're after, dat's wot."

"Yes, but how--how?"

"T'ink I'm goin' ter give der hull t'ing erway? Well, I should say nit! I tells yer it'll fix him, and it'll fix him so dere won't be no more fight in him. It'll paralyze him der first t'ing, an' he won't be no better dan a stiff."

"How bad will it hurt him?"

The man paused a moment and then added:

"Well, I don't mind sayin' dat it'll break his wrist. Yer can do it de first crack arter I shows yer how, but it'll cost twenty-five plunks ter learn der trick."

After a few moments of hesitation Browning drew forth his pocketbook and counted out twenty-five dollars.

CHAPTER XVI.

TO BREAK AN ENEMY'S WRIST.

Buster Kelley was a character. Professor Kelley he called himself. He claimed to be a great pugilist, and he was forever telling of the men he had put to sleep. But he couldn't produce the papers to show for it. The public had to take his word, if they took anything.

In fact, he had never fought a battle in his life, unless it was with a boy half his size. He made a bluff, and it went. The youngsters who came to Yale and desired to be instructed in the manly art were always recommended to Kelley.

To give Kelley his due, he was really a fairly good boxer, and he might have made a decent sort of a fight if he had possessed the courage to accept a match and the self denial and energy to go through a regular course of training.

But Kelley was making an easy living "catching suckers," and there was

no real reason why he should go through the hardships of training and actually fighting so long as he could fool the youngsters who regarded him as a one-time great and shining light of the prize ring.

He was too shrewd to stand up with any pupil who might get the best of him and permit that pupil to hammer away at him. He kept them at work on certain kinds of blows, so he always knew exactly what was coming. In this manner of training them he never betrayed just how much he really knew about fighting.

Some of the young fellows who became Kelley's pupils were the sons of wealthy parents, and then it happened that the professor worked his little game for all there was in it. He sold them "secrets," and they paid dearly for what they learned. Some of the secrets were of no value at all, and some were actually worth knowing.

It happened that he did know how to break a man's wrist in a very simple manner, providing he could find just the right opportunity. It was a simple trick, but the opportunity to practice it could seldom be found in a fight.

Kelley's eyes, which were somewhat bleary, bulged with greed as he saw Browning count out the money.

"It's givin' yer der trick dirt cheap--see?" said the professor. "I never sold it less dan twice dat ermount before. Dat's straight. I'll have ter make yer promise not ter tell it ter der odder chaps before I instructs yer."

"If I buy it it is mine," said Bruce.

"Come off der roof! You enters inter an' agreement wid me dat yer don't blow dis t'ing, ur I don't tell yer."

"What if I want to tell a particular friend?"

"Yer don't tell him. Dat's all. I had ter pay t'ree hunderd dollars ter learn dis, an' sign a 'greement dat I wouldn't give it erway. Jem Mace tort me dis trick w'en I sparred wid him in Liverpool. He says ter me, says he: 'Buster, ye're a boid, dat's wot ye are. If you knowed der trick of breakin' a bloke's wrist dere ain't no duffer in der woild dat can do yer. I'll show yer der crack fer sixty pound.' He wouldn't come down a little bit, an' I paid him wot he asked. Since dat time I've knocked roun' all over der woild, an' it's saved me life fife times. Dat was a cheap trick wot I got from old Jem, dat were. A dago pulled a knife on me oncet fer ter cut me wide open, but I broke der dago's wrist quicker dan yer can spit."

"Well, here is your money, and now I want to know that trick."

"Yer 'grees not ter tell it ter anybody?"

"Yes, I agree."

"Dat settles it."

Kelley took the money and carefully stowed it away in his clothes.

"Strip up an' git inter yer trainin' rig," he directed.

Bruce went into the back room, and Buster poked himself in the ribs with his thumb, grinning and winking at his own reflection in the cracked mirror.

"Oh, say! but I'm a peach!" he told himself in a confidential whisper.

"If der college perfessers don't git arter me ergin I'll make me forchune right yere."

Kelley had originally hung out a sign and advertised to instruct young gentlemen in boxing, but the faculty had made it rather warm for him, and it was generally supposed that he had been forced to leave New Haven. He had not left, but he had changed his quarters to the rooms he now occupied, one flight up at the back of a saloon.

In a short time Bruce called that he was ready, and the professor leisurely strolled into the back room, where there was a punching bag, a striking machine, all kinds of boxing gloves, and other paraphernalia such as a man in Kelley's business might need.

At one side of the room were several small closets, in which Kelley's pupils kept their training suits while they were not wearing them. The door of one closet was open, and Browning's street clothes were hanging on some hooks inside.

Browning had got into trunks, stockings, and light, soft-bottomed shoes. He was stripped to the waist.

Buster walked around the lad, inspecting him with a critical eye, punching here and there with his fingers, feeling of certain muscles and some points where there seemed to be a superabundance of flesh.

"Well, say!" cried the professor. "I'd like ter know wot yer kickin' erbout! I never seen a feller work off fat no faster dan wot youse has, an' dat's on der dead. Why, w'en yer comes yere yer didn't have a muscle dat weren't buried in fat, an' now dey're comin' out hard all over yer. You'd kick ef yer wuz playin' football!"

"That's all right," said Bruce, rather impatiently. "I know what I want, and I am paying you to give it to me. Go ahead."

"Don't be so touchy," scowled Kelley. "Tackle der bag a while, an' let's see how yer work."

Browning went at the punching bag while the professor stood by and called the changes. He thumped it up against the ceiling and caught it on the rebound thirty times in succession, first with his right and then with his left. Then he went at it with both hands and fairly made it hum. Then, at the word, with remarkable swiftness, he gave it fist and elbow, first right and then left. Then he did some fancy work at a combination hit and butt.

By the time Buster called him off Browning was streaming with perspiration and breathing heavily.

"Dat's first rate," complimented the professor. "Yer does dat like yer wuz a professional."

"Great Scott!" gasped Bruce. "I'd never torture myself in this way if I didn't have to! It is awful!"

He looked around for a chair, but Buster grinned and said:

"Dat's right, set right down--nit. Youse don't do dat no more in dis joint. Wen I gits yer yere, yer works till yer t'rough--see? Dat's der way ter pull der meat off er man."

"Well, what's next?"

"See if yer can raise yer record anoder pound on der striker."

Bruce went at the striking machine, which registered the exact number of pounds of force in each blow it received.

"Has any one beaten me yet?" he asked.

"Naw. Dere ain't nobody come within ninety pound of yer."

Bruce looked satisfied, but he made up his mind to raise his record if possible, and he succeeded in adding twelve pounds to it.

"Say!" exclaimed Buster, "if dat cove wot yer arter does you he's a boid!"

"That's just what he is," nodded Bruce, streaming with perspiration. "He is a bad man to go against."

"If yer ever gits at him wid dat left ye'll knock him out, sure."

"He is like a panther on his feet, and I shall be in great luck if I find him with my left."

"Yer don't want ter t'ink dat. Yer wants ter t'ink yer goin' ter find him anyhow. Dat's der way."

"I have thought so before, and I have discovered that he is a wonderfully hard man to find."

"Wen yer goin' ter fight him?"

"I am going to try to make him meet me one week from to-day."

"Where?"

"I don't know yet."

"Is he a squealer?"

"I don't believe you could drag anything out of him with horses."

"If dat's right yer might make it yere, an' it could be kept quiet. I'd charge a little somet'ing fer der use of der room, but dat wouldn't come out of eder of youse, fer we'd make der fellers pay wot come in ter see it."

"We'll see about that," said Bruce. "But now I want to know that trick."

"Oh, yes. I near fergot dat."

"Well, I didn't."

"Say, if yer use dat on him I don't t'ink we can have der scrap here."

"Why not?"

"If one of dem freshies got injuries in dis place so bad it might git out, an' dat would fix me."

"I don't intend to use it on him unless I have to. Go ahead and explain your trick. If it isn't straight I want my money back."

"Dere won't be any money back, fer der trick is all right, all right. Now stan' up here an' I'll show yer how it's did."

Kelley then showed Bruce how to bring the edge of his open hand down on the upper side of an enemy's wrist just back of the joint.

"Yer wants ter snap it like dis," Buster explained, illustrating with a sharp, rebounding motion. "If yer strikes him right dere wid der cushion meat on der lower edge of yer hand an' snaps yer hand erway like dis, it's dead sure ter break der bone. Jes' try it on yer own wrist, but be careful not ter try it too hard."

Bruce did as directed, and he found that he hurt himself severely, although he struck a very light blow.

"Dat's ter trick," said Kelley, "an' it's a dandy. Don't yer ever use it 'less yer dead sure yer wants ter break der odder feller's wrist."

Then the professor called up a colored boy, who rubbed Bruce down, and the king of the sophomores finally departed.

As he walked back toward his room in the dusk of early evening, Browning began to feel sorry that he had learned the trick at all.

"It would be a dirty game to play on Merriwell," he muttered, "but now that I know it, I may get mad and do it in a huff, especially if I see Merriwell is getting the best of me."

The more Browning thought the matter over the greater became his regret that he had learned the trick of breaking an opponent's wrist. For all that he had a strong feeling against Merriwell, he could see that the leader of the freshmen was square and manly, and he did not believe Frank would take an unfair advantage of a foe.

Bruce became quite unlike his old jovial self. He was strangely downcast and moody, and he saw that he was fast losing prestige with those who had once regarded him as their leader.

Hartwick, Browning's roommate, was more bitter against Merriwell.

"The confounded upstart!" he would growl. "Think of his coming here and carrying things on with such a high hand! When we were freshmen the sophomores had everything their own way. They Lambda Chied us till they became sick of it, and all our attempts to get even proved failures. Now the freshmen who are following the lead of this fellow Merriwell seem to think that they are cocks of the walk. I tell you what it is, Bruce, you must do that fellow, and you must do him so he will stay done."

"Oh, I don't believe he is such a bad fellow at heart, It wouldn't be right to injure him permanently."

"Wouldn't it? Give me the chance and see if I don't fix him."

Hartwick began to regard his roommate with disdain.

"For goodness' sake, don't get soft," he implored. "The fellows will say you are chicken-hearted, and that will settle your case. You'll never get back to your old position if you once lose it."

"I'd rather be thought chicken-hearted than hold my position by dirty play."

Hartwick made no retort, but it was plain to see that he entertained a different view of a case like the one in question.

Browning worked like a beaver to get himself in shape for the coming struggle, but he promised himself over and over that he would never do such a thing again. It was pride and hope that sustained him through his severe course of training.

"No fresh mug can do youse now," Buster Kelley finally declared. "I'll put me dough on you, an' I'll win, too."

Bruce was really in very good form, and he felt that he stood more than an even chance with Merriwell.

He had seen the freshman fight, however, and he realized that he would not have a walkover.

The freshmen began to think that Browning feared to meet Merriwell, and they openly told him as much. They taunted him to such an extent that it was with the utmost difficulty he held himself in check till the expiration of the time he had set for getting himself in condition.

"What if I should see the freshman getting the best of me and should break his wrist?" he thought. "I might make it appear to be an accident, but I would know better myself. I'd get the best of Merriwell, and the fellows would still hail me as King Browning, but I would be ashamed of myself all the while."

It was that thought which troubled him so much and made him appear so grouchy.

"Browning is in a blue funk whenever he thinks of stacking up against the freshman," one sophomore confidentially told another. "I believe he has lost his nerve."

"It looks that way," admitted the other.

Thus it came about that Bruce's appearance led his former admirers to misjudge him, and he saw a growing coolness toward him.

"I'll meet Merriwell on the level," he finally decided, "and I will whip him on the level or I'll not whip him at all."

Then he instructed Hartwick to carry a challenge to Frank.

"I will fight him with hard gloves," said Bruce.

He had decided that with a glove on his hand he could not easily perform the trick of breaking his enemy's wrist in case he was seized by an impulse to do so.

"Gloves?" cried Hartwick. "Why, man, why don't you challenge him to meet you with bare fists?"

"Because I have decided that gloves are all right."

"The fellows will say you are afraid."

"Let them say so if they like," returned Bruce, but he winced a bit, as if a tender spot had been touched.

Hartwick did his best to induce his friend to challenge Merriwell to a fight with bare fists, but Bruce had made up his mind and he was obstinate.

So it came about that Hartwick carried the challenge just as Browning desired, and it was promptly accepted. Merriwell was not a fellow who sought trouble, but he knew he must meet Browning or be called a coward, and he did not dally. He quietly told Hartwick that any arrangements Mr. Browning saw fit to make would be agreeable to him. In that way he put Browning on his honor to give him a square deal.

The matter was kept very quiet. It was decided that the match should

come off in Kelley's back room, and a few of Merriwell's and Browning's friends should be invited. Bruce paid for the room and firmly "sat on" the professor's scheme to charge admission.

"This is no prize fight," he rather warmly declared. "We are not putting ourselves on exhibition, like two pugilists. It is a matter of honor."

"Well, if youse college chaps don't git der demdest ideas inter yer nuts!" muttered Kelley, who could not understand Browning's view of an affair of honor. "Youse takes der cream, dat's wot yer do!"

On Saturday afternoon one week after the rush at the park certain students might have been seen to stroll, one at a time, into the saloon over which were the headquarters of Professor Kelley. It was three in the afternoon that about twenty lads were gathered in Buster's training-room to witness the meeting between Merriwell and Browning.

Tad Homer was chosen referee.

"Look here," he said before the first round, "if any man here isn't satisfied with my decisions, let him meet me after the match is over, and I will satisfy him or fight him."

This was said in all earnestness, and it brought a round of applause and laughter.

It was agreed that it should be a six-round contest, not more and no less, unless one side threw up the sponge or one of the men was knocked out.

Rattleton was Frank's second, and Hartwick represented Bruce. A regular ring had been roped off, and the men entered from opposite sides at a signal. Much to his disgust, Kelley was not allowed to take any part in the affair.

Both lads were stripped to the waist. Merriwell was clean limbed, but muscular, while Browning was stocky and solid. The sophomore had gotten rid of his superfluous flesh in a wonderful manner, and he looked to be a hard man to tackle.

The gloves were put on, and then the rivals advanced and shook hands. An instant later they were at it, and the decisive struggle between them had begun.

Their movements were so rapid that it was difficult for the eyes of the eager spectators to follow them. Both got in some sharp blows, and the round ended with a clean knock-down for Browning, who planted a terrific blow between Merriwell's eyes and sent the freshman to the floor.

The sops were jubilant and the freshmen were downcast. Merriwell simply laughed as he sat on Rattleton's knee.

"Whee jiz--I mean jee whiz!" spluttered Harry. "Are you going to let that fellow do you. The sops will never get over it if you do. Hear 'em laugh!"

"Don't worry," smiled Frank. "This is the beginning. There must be an ending."

"Do him--do him, Bruce!" fiercely whispered Hartwick in the ear of his principal. "It's plain enough that you can."

"I think I can," said Bruce, confidently.

The sops offered three to two on Browning, and many bets were made.

Then time was called and the rivals advanced once more.

The second round was hotter than the first, if possible, and Merriwell drew first blood by giving Browning a heavy one on the nose. It ended with both sparring, and neither seeming to have a decided advantage.

Now the freshmen were encouraged, and they expressed their confidence in their man. More bets were made, the sophomores still giving odds.

The third round filled the freshmen with delight, for Merriwell knocked Browning off his feet twice, while he seemed to get no heavy blows himself.

The sops became quieter, and no money at odds was in sight. In fact, the freshmen tried to get even money, but could not.

The fourth and fifth rounds were filled with good, sharp, scientific work, but toward the close of the fifth both men seemed a trifle groggy. Neither had a decided advantage.

"Dat Merriwell is a boid!" declared Buster Kelley enthusiastically. "Why, dat chap could be der champeen of der woild if he went inter der business fer fair. Dat's on der level, too."

Both lads were battered and bruised, and there was blood on their faces when they retired to their corners at the command from Horner.

"He's a nut," confessed Frank. "He has given me some soakers, and he takes his medicine as if he liked it."

"You'll finish him next round, sure," fluttered Harry. "I shall buck the kickit--I mean kick the bucket if you don't."

"How is it?" Hartwick eagerly asked as he wiped the blood from Browning's face. "Can you finish him next round?"

"I shall try, but I don't believe the fellow can be licked unless he is killed. That's what I think of him."

"Didn't I hear you say you knew a trick that would do him?"

"Yes, but it is not a square deal, although no referee could call it foul if this were a fight with bare fists. As it is, I'd have to get my glove off."

"Do it! do it! You're a fool if you don't!"

"Then I'm a fool. That man has trusted this entire affair to our honor, and if I can't whip him fair I won't whip him at all."

"You make me sick!" sneered Hartwick.

At the call the two men promptly faced each other for the final round. At first they were a bit wary, but then, as if by mutual agreement, they went at each other like tigers. Blow followed blow, but it was plain that one man was getting quite as much as the other. Browning got in one of his terrific drives, but it was not a knockout, and Merriwell had the sophomore up up against the rope three times.

"Time! Break away!" yelled Tad Horner, forcing himself over between the combatants. "It's all over."

"What's the decision?" shouted a dozen voices.

"A draw," was the distinct answer. "I declare it an even thing between them."

There was a moment of silence, and then, bruised and smiling, Frank Merriwell tore off his glove and extended his hand. Off came Browning's glove, and he accepted the hand of the freshman.

CHAPTER XVII.

TALKING IT OVER.

Before night nearly every student knew that Merriwell and Browning had fought a six-round, hard-glove contest to a draw, and it was generally said that the decision was fair. Evan Hartwick seemed to be the only witness of the fight who was dissatisfied. Roland Ditson had not been invited to see it, but he expressed a belief that Browning would prove the better man in a fight to a finish.

Several weeks slipped by.

After the glove contest Browning had very little to say about the freshman leader. Whenever he did say anything, it was exactly what he thought, and it was noted that he admitted Merriwell to be a comer.

Evan Hartwick could not crush down his powerful dislike for Merriwell. He admitted to Bruce that he felt an almost irresistible desire to strike the cool freshman whenever they met.

"I wouldn't advise you to do it, my boy," lazily smiled Browning, who was growing fat again, now that he was no longer in training. "He is a bad man to hit."

"It depends on what he is hit with," returned Hartwick, grimly. "You made a fool of yourself when you failed to break his wrist, after paying twenty-five toadskins to learn the trick. That would have made you the victor."

"And it would have made me feel like a contemptible sneak. I have been well satisfied with myself that I did not try the trick. It is a good thing to know, but it should be used on no one but a ruffian."

"It's surprising to me how soft you're getting. This Merriwell is dangerous in many directions, and his career would have been stopped short if you had broken his wrist. He has shown that he is a baseball pitcher, but no man can pitch with a broken wrist. He is one of the best freshmen half-backs ever seen at Yale, according to the general acknowledgment. And now he is pulling an oar and coaching the freshmen crew at the same time--something never attempted before--something said to be impossible. Where would he be if you had broken his wrist?"

"He could coach the freshmen just the same, and the very fact that he can do all these things makes me well satisfied that I did not fix him so he couldn't."

"Wait! wait! What if the freshmen beat us out at Lake Saltonstall? What if they come out ahead of us?"

"They won't."

"I know the fellows are saying they will not, but I tell you this Merriwell is full of tricks, and there is no telling what he may do with

the fresh crew. He is working them secretly, and our spies report that he seems to know his business."

"Well, if he makes them winners he will deserve the credit he will receive. But he can't do it. No man can coach a crew and pull an oar at the same time. The very fact that he is attempting such a thing shows he isn't in the game."

"Don't be so sure. They say he has a substitute who takes his place in the boat sometimes, and that gives him a chance to see just how the crew is working."

"Rats! Who ever heard of such a thing! Merriwell is all right, but he doesn't know anything about rowing. He may think he knows, but he is fooling himself."

"Well, we will have to wait and see about that."

"I really believe you are afraid of Merriwell. Why--ha! ha! ha!--you are the only one who has an idea the freshmen will be in the race at all."

"I know it, but few have had any idea that the freshmen could do any of the things they have done. They have fooled us right along, and--"

"Oh, say! Give me a cigarette and let's drop it. From the way you talk I should say you would make a good sporting editor for a Sunday-school paper."

"That's all right," muttered Hartwick, sulkily, as he tossed Bruce a package of Turkish cigarettes. "Wait and see if I am not right."

After this Bruce went about telling all the sophomores what Hartwick thought, and urging them to "jolly him" whenever they could get a chance. As a result Evan was kept in hot water the most of the time, but he persisted in claiming that the freshmen were bound to give them a surprise.

One evening a jolly party gathered in Browning and Hartwick's rooms. Cigarettes were passed around, and soon the smoke was thick enough to cut with a knife.

"How are the eggs down where you are taking your meals now, Horner?" asked Puss Parker.

"Oh, they are birds!" chirped little Tad, who was perched on the back of a chair, with his cap on the side of his head.

This produced a general laugh, and Parker said:

"Speaking of birds makes me think that riches hath wings. I dropped seventy-five in that little game last night."

Punch Swallows groaned in a heartrending way.

"That's nothing," he said, dolefully. "I lost a hundred and ten last week, and I've been broke ever since. Wired home for money, but the gov didn't respond. After that game all I could think of was two pairs, three of a kind, bobtail flushes, and so on. I made a dead flunk at recitations for two days. The evening after I lost my roll I was to attend a swell affair up on Temple Street. I was in a rocky condition, and I took something to brace me up, for I knew there would be pretty girls there, and I wouldn't have missed it for anything. The memory of that horrible game was still with me, and whenever my mind wandered I was thinking of jack pots and kindred things. Well, I went to the party, and there were plenty of queens there, but I didn't seem to enjoy

myself, for some reason. I fancied it possible they might smell my breath, and that worried me. I thought I would go off by myself, and so I wandered into a little room where I imagined I would be alone, but hanged if I didn't run into the hostess and a stack of ladies. Then, with my mind confused, I made a fool of myself. 'Er--er--excuse me,' I stammered; 'what room is this?' 'This is the anteroom, sir,' replied the hostess. 'What's the limit?' says I, as I fumbled in my pocket. Then I took a tumble to myself and chased out in a hurry. I saw the girls staring after me as if they thought me crazy. It was awful."

"Oh, well, you mustn't mind the loss of a few dollars," said Andy Emery. "A man can make a fortune in this country picking up chips--if he puts them on the right card."

"Put a little perfumery on that before you use it again, Emery," grinned Tad Horner. "It's got whiskers."

"I think Swallows all right, but he reminds me of a man I knew once on a time. I haven't seen Swallows when he had over twenty-five at a time since he's been here, and still he says he dropped a hundred and ten in one game."

"How about this man you knew?" asked Parker.

"He was a great fellow to stretch the long bow, and it became such a habit that he could not break it. He seemed to prefer a falsehood to the truth, even when the truth would have served him better. Well, he died and was buried. One day I visited the cemetery and gazed on his tombstone. On the top of the stone was his name and on the bottom were these words: 'I am not dead, but sleeping.' Now that man was lying in his grave, for his habit--"

Parker flung a slipper at Emery, who dodged it. The slipper struck Tad Horner and knocked him off the back of the chair.

"That's all right," said Swallows, nodding at Emery, who was laughing. "I'll square that the first chance I get."

"Do! But when you get a roll, remember there are Others who are looking for you."

"Drop this persiflage and come down to business," said Browning, winking at the others and nodding toward Hartwick, who did not seem to be taking any interest in what was going on. "Let's talk about the races."

"Yas, by Jawve!" drawled Willis Paulding, who tried to be "deucedly English" in everything. "Let's talk about the races, deah boys. That's what interests me, don't yer know."

Hartwick squirmed. He knew what was coming, and still his disposition was such that he could not resist a "jolly" in case the jolliers expressed opinions that did not agree with his own.

Browning enjoyed seeing the gang get Hartwick on a string, and he was ever ready to aid anything of the kind along. By nature the king of sophomores was a practical joker. He had put up more jobs than any man who ever entered Yale. That was what had given him his reputation.

"I understand the freshmen are rapidly coming to the front," observed Hod Chadwick, with apparent seriousness.

"Is that right?" asked Parker. "Heard anything new?"

"Why, they say this Merriwell has the genuine Oxford system."

"Where'd he get it?"

"He has been abroad. It is even reported that he has studied at Oxford. He has watched the work of the Oxford coach, and he is working the freshmen eight on the same lines."

"That's right--that's right," nodded Hartwick, and the boys winked at each other.

"How do you know it is right?" asked Emery. "What do you know about Merriwell?"

"I know he has been abroad, and I have it straight that he spent considerable time at Oxford."

"That's nothing. Any lubber might watch the work at Oxford, but what would that amount to?"

"Merriwell is no lubber, as you fellows should know by this time."

"We don't seem to know much of anything about him. Who are his parents? What about them?"

"I hear his father was drowned in bed," murmured Tad Horner.

"By Jawve!" exclaimed Willis Paulding. "How could that happen?"

"There was a hole in the mattress, and he fell through into the spring," gravely assured Tad.

Willis nearly lost his breath.

"That's all wrong," said Browning. "It's true Merriwell is no lubber. Why should he be? His father was a skipper."

"What! A sea captain?" asked Hartwick.

"No, a bank cashier. He skipped to Canada."

"Wow!" whooped Tad Horner. "How that hurt! Don't do it again!"

"You fellows have things twisted," asserted Parker, with apparent seriousness. "I have private advices that Merriwell's father is a poor dentist."

"A poor dentist, eh?"

"Yes, rather poor, but he manages to pull out."

Tad Horner fell off the back of his chair and struck sprawling on the floor.

"Water!" he gasped.

"You wouldn't know it if you saw it," grinned Parker.

"Without a doubt and without any fooling, Merriwell's father is dead," said Hod Chadwick.

"Do you know this for a fact?" asked Swallows.

"Yes. It is said that he died on the field."

"Then he was a soldier?"

"No; a baseball umpire."

"This is a very dry crowd," laughed Browning.

"I should think you would say something," hinted Chadwick.

"It isn't in the house. We'll go down to Morey's after supper settles and I'll blow."

"To fizz?"

"Not this evening. Ale is good enough for this crowd."

"Oh, I don't suppose we can kick at that. But we were speaking about Merriwell and the freshman crew. How are we to escape death at their hands?"

"Have another cigarette all around," invited Parker as he passed them.

"That's too slow, but I'll take a cigarette just the same."

Hartwick got up and walked about in a corner, showing nervousness. They urged him to sit down and take things easy. He felt like making a break and getting out, but he knew they would roar with laughter if he did.

"You fellows are a lot of chumps!" he exclaimed, suddenly getting angry. "You treat this matter lightly now, but you are likely to change your tune after the race."

The boys were well satisfied, for they saw he was getting aroused.

"Oh, I don't know as we treat it so very lightly," said Emery. "We've got to have our fun, no matter what we may think."

"But every one of you is of the opinion that we are going to have a cinch with the freshmen."

"It does look easy."

"Have they been easy thus far?"

"Oh, that's different."

"You will find this is different when it is all over."

"Now, see here, Hartwick," said Parker; "you are the only soph who does not think we have a soft thing with the freshmen. What's the matter with you?"

"Why, he wants to disagree with us, that's all," said Browning. "Why, he wouldn't eat anything if he thought it would agree with him. That's the kind of a man he is."

Hartwick looked disgusted.

"Keep it up! keep it up!" he cried. "But you'll find out!"

"Now, see here, man," said Parker once more; "are you stuck on Merriwell?"

Hartwick showed still greater disgust, his eyes flashing.

"Stuck on him!" he cried. "Well, not any! You fellows ought to know that! Stuck on him! That gives me pains!"

"Well, I couldn't see what ailed you unless you were."

"It is because I am not stuck on him that I am so anxious to beat him, as you fellows ought to be able to see."

"Oh, that's it? Excuse me! Well, now, how is he going to make a lot of lubberly freshies beat us?"

"He's found some men who can pull oars all right, and he has introduced a few innovations that will be surprises."

"How do you know so much about it?"

"I have been investigating, and I am not the only one."

"Well, what are his innovations?"

"The Oxford oar, in the first place."

"What is that?"

"Two to four inches longer than our oar, with a blade five and one-half inches wide, instead of seven inches."

"For goodness' sake, what is the advantage of such an oar?"

"I'll tell you. With a short course and high stroke no set of men are strong enough to use the old oar and go the distance without weakening. You must admit that."

"Well?"

"With the narrow blades a longer oar can be used and the leverage increased. That is plain enough."

The boys were silent for some moments. Here was a matter they had not considered, and they were forced to confess that it was a point for discussion.

"But that is not enough to enable the freshmen to win, even admitting the English oar to be better, which has not been proven," said Emery.

"By Jawve! I am rather inclined to believe the English oar is superior, don't yer know," put in Willis Paulding.

"That's not surprising in your case," said Emery.

"That's not all Merriwell has done," declared Hartwick.

"What else has he done?"

"He has introduced the Oxford style of catch, finish and length of strokes, which means a longer swing, with more leg and body work."

"Well, that will cook 'em!" cried Tad Horner. "If he has done that, we'll make a show of those greenies."

"What reason have you for thinking anything of the sort?"

"Every reason. The regular Yale stroke cannot be improved upon. That is beyond question."

Hartwick smiled wearily.

"That's what I call conceit," he said. "You don't know whether it can be

improved upon or not."

There was an outburst of protests by the boys, who believed, as almost every Yale man believes, that Yale methods are correct and cannot be improved upon. Hartwick was regarded as disloyal, and all felt like giving it to him hot.

"A longer body swing is certain to make a difficult recovery," said Browning. "That is plain enough."

"Not if the men are worked right and put in proper form," declared Hartwick. "I have been told that the English long stroke and recovery is very graceful and easy, and that it does not wear on a man like the American stroke."

"By Jawve! I think that's right, don't yer know," said Paulding.

"What you think doesn't count," muttered Tad Horner.

"With such a stroke and swing the men are bound to recover on their toes," asserted Browning.

"Oh, rats!" said Punch Swallows. "What does that amount to, anyway, in a case like this? We are talking of this tub load of freshmen as if they were the 'Varsity crew. What's the use? It won't make any difference what kind of a stroke they use. They are mighty liable to use several different kinds, and they won't be in it at all, my children. Let's go down to Morey's and oil up."

"Go ahead," said Hartwick, grimly. "But you will think over what I have said after the race comes off."

The boys put on their caps and trooped out, laughing and talking as they went.

CHAPTER XVIII.

MERRIWELL AND RATTLETON.

"Harry!"

"Hello!"

"You've got to stop smoking those confounded cigarettes."

Harry Rattleton let his feet fall with a thump from the table on which they had been comfortably resting and turned about to stare at Merriwell, his roommate. His face expressed astonishment, not unmingled with anger.

"Will you be good enough to repeat that remark?" he said, exhaling a cloud of smoke and holding his roll daintily poised in his fingers.

"I said that you must stop smoking cigarettes."

"Well, what did you mean?"

"I am in the habit of saying what I mean," was the quiet answer as Frank scanned the paper over which he had been pondering for some time.

Harry got upon his feet, shoved one hand into his trousers pocket, and

stared in silence for some seconds at Merriwell. That stare was most expressive.

"Well, may I be jtotally tiggered--I mean totally jiggered!" he finally exclaimed.

"You'll be worse than that if you keep on with those things," asserted Frank. "You'll be totally wrecked."

"This is the first time you have had the crust to deliberately tell me that I must do anything," growled Harry, resentfully. "And I feel free to say that I don't like it much. It is carrying the thing altogether too far. I have never told you that you must do this thing or you mustn't do that. I should have considered that I was bedding with something that was none of my misness--er--meddling with something that was none of my business."

Frank perceived that his roommate was quite heated, so he dropped the paper and said:

"Don't fly off the handle so quick, old man. I am speaking for your own good, and you should know it."

"Thank you!" sarcastically.

"But I am in earnest."

"Really?" and Rattleton elevated his eyebrows.

"Come now," said Frank, "sit down and we will talk it over."

"Talk it over, eh? I don't know why we should talk over a matter that concerns me alone."

"Your dinner did not set well. I never saw you so touchy in all my life. You know I am your friend, old man, and there is no reason why you should show such a spirit toward me."

"I don't like to be told what I must do and what I mustn't by anybody. That's all there is about it."

Harry did sit down, but he lighted a fresh cigarette.

"Well, I suppose you will have your own way, but I want to explain why I said what I did. You know we are out to beat the sophs in the boat race."

"Sure."

"Well, in order to do it every man of us must be in the pink of condition. You are not drinking, and Old Put doesn't know how much you are smoking. If he did he would call you down or drop you. It is pretty certain that Gordon would take your place."

"Well, I suppose you are going to tell Old Put all about it? Is that what you mean?"

"Not exactly. But you know I have as much interest in the makeup of our crew as Old Put, although he is the man who really has charge of us."

"Well?"

"If I were to say so, you would be taken out and some one else would fill your place."

"And would you do that?"

"Not unless forced to do so. You should know, Harry, that I am ready to stick by you in anything--if I can."

"If you can! I don't understand that--hang me, if I do! If I have a friend I am going to stick to him through anything, right or wrong!"

"That's first rate and it is all right. If you get into any trouble, I fancy you will not find anybody who will stand by you any longer. But this matter is different. You are in training, and you are not supposed to smoke at all, but you get here in this room and puff away by the hour."

"What harm does it do?"

"A great deal."

"Get out! It doesn't make a dit of bifference."

"That's what you think, but I know better. At Fardale I had a chum who smoked cigarettes by the stack. He was a natural-born athlete, but he never seemed quite able to take the lead in anything. It was his wind. I talked to him, but he thought I didn't know. Finally I induced him to leave off smoking entirely. He did it, though it was like taking his teeth. It was not long before he showed an improvement in his work. The improvement continued and he went up to the very top. He acknowledged that he could not have accomplished it if he had kept on with his cigarettes.

"Now, old man," continued Frank, coming over and putting a hand on Harry's shoulder in a friendly way, "I am interested in you and I want to see you stay on our crew. You must know that I am giving it to you straight."

Harry was silent, gazing down at the floor, while his cigarette was going out, still held between his fingers.

"I am going to tell you something that you do not know," Frank went on. "Old Put has been asking me to give Gordon more of a show. He thinks Gordon is a better man than you, but I know better. If you will leave cigarettes alone you are the man for the place. Gordon has a beautiful back and splendid shoulders, but he lacks heart, or I am much mistaken. It takes nerve to pull an oar in a race. A man has got to keep at it for all there is in him till he drops--and he mustn't drop till the race is over. That's why I want you. I am confident that you will pull your arms out before you give up. But you won't have the wind for the race unless you quit cigarettes, and quit them immediately."

Harry was still silent, but his head was lower and he was biting his lips. The cigarette in his fingers had quite gone out.

"Come now, Harry," came earnestly from Frank. "Just cut clear from the things. They never did any man any good, and they have taken the wind and nerve out of hundreds. You don't want me to keep you on the crew and lose the race by doing so. You don't want it said that I have been partial to you because you are my roommate and particular friend. That's what will be said if things go wrong. The fellows will declare I was prejudiced against Gordon, and they will not be to blame unless you can prove yourself the best man. I have nothing against Gordon, and I am bound to use him as white as I can. I have explained why I don't want him on the crew, and I have tried to make it clear why I'll have to let him come on at once, unless you drop cigarettes. How is it, my boy? What do you say?"

Harry got up and went into the bedroom. A moment later he came out with a big package of cigarettes in his hands. He opened the window and flung them as far as possible.

"There!" he cried. "By the mumping Joses—I mean the jumping Moses! I'm done with 'em. I'm not going to smoke them any more!"

"Good boy!" laughed Frank, his face full of satisfaction. "Shake!"

They clasped hands.

Rat-tat-tat! A knock at the door.

"Come in."

The door opened and Dismal Jones, his face longer and sadder than usual, came slouching into the room.

"Hello, Jones, old boy!" cried Frank, cheerfully. "What is troubling you now? You look like a funeral."

"I'm mad," said Dismal in a spiritless way.

"Is that what ails you? I'd never suspected it from your appearance."

"Appearances are oftentimes deceitful," croaked Jones. "Whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise."

"Well, sit down and tell us all about it," invited Frank, offering a chair. "My boy, it must be that you are studying too hard. You have the outward appearance of a greasy grind."

"What's that I just told you about appearances? You are too hasty in your judgments. The trouble with me this evening is that I have found out something."

"I never supposed it would trouble you like this."

"Wait. You do not know what it is."

"That's right. What is it?"

Frank was familiar with Dismal's queer ways, and he knew it was not easy to tell when this son of a "shouting Methodist" was jolly and when he was in earnest; but now he was convinced that Jones was really serious, and he felt that there must be some cause for it.

Harry, strangely sobered and silent, sat listening. He could not understand Jones, and he was on his guard, knowing how often the fellow turned into a farce what seemed a serious matter.

Dismal locked his fingers and twiddled his thumbs. He cleared his throat and then said:

"Merry, what would you say if I were to tell everything I could find out about our crew to the sops?"

"I should say you were a confounded sneak!"

"Hum! I kinder thought you'd say something like that."

"But you do not know too much about the crew."

"I know something, and I could know more if I had a mind to. All I would have to do would be to play the spy a little."

"Well, I suppose that is right. What about it?"

"Somebody is playing the spy."

"How do you know?"

"I've got it straight enough, for the sops know all about what our crew is doing. They are laughing over the Oxford stroke and the English oars."

"How do you know this?"

"Heard 'em."

"When?"

"To-night."

"Where?"

"On the street. Browning and a party were going down to Morey's, and they were having a high old time with Hartwick, who was explaining the advantages of the stroke and the oars our crew has adopted."

"That's not proof that somebody has played the spy. It may have slipped out through the carelessness of some of our men."

"It may. But I don't think so. I heard Emery ask Hartwick how he knew so much about us."

"What did Hartwick say?" Frank eagerly asked.

"He said he had a nice fresh flat who thought it a fine thing to play the spy and blab all he found out."

"Blay blues—I mean blue blazes!" cried Harry, banging his fist down on the table. "That's what makes me cot under the hollar! A man who would do a thing like that will steal a sheep! I'd like to have the pleasure of thumping him a few times—just a few!"

Merriwell was silent, a dark look on his face.

"It will not be healthy for the spy if I catch him," he finally declared. "I'll make it pretty hot for him around here!"

"Which would be a highly commendable action," bowed Dismal.

"Have you any idea who would do such a low-down thing?" asked Harry.

"Sometimes we have ideas which we do not care to express."

"That's right; but in a case like this—confidentially—to us, you know--"

"Well, if I say anything, it is to be strictly confidential."

"Sure!" cried Frank and Harry in a breath.

"You both give me your word for it?"

"We do."

"If I knew, I would not hesitate to come out openly and accuse the fellow," said Dismal; "but this is merely a case of suspicion, and I

will tell you who I suspect."

"Go ahead."

"Well, there is a certain fellow who has not been above playing into the hands of the sophs in the past, and it is natural for me to suspect him. His name is--"

The door opened, and Roland Ditson came in without knocking.

CHAPTER XIX.

WHO IS THE TRAITOR?

"Hello, fellows!" cried Ditson. "How are yer, Jones! I am surprised to see you here. Is it possible you have let up cramming long enough to make a call? Why, I have even heard that you had your eye on some classical scholarship prize as soon as this. Everybody who knows you says you're a regular hard-working old dig."

"There are fools who know other people's business a great deal better than their own," said Dismal stiffly.

"That's right," nodded Ditson, who made a great effort to be rakish in his appearance, but always appeared rather foxy instead. "But I tell you this matter of burning the midnight oil and grinding is not what it's cracked up to be. It makes a man old before his time, and it doesn't amount to much after he has been all through it. Goodness knows we freshmen have to cram hard enough to get through! I am tired of it already. And then we have to live outside the pale, as it were. When we become sophs we'll be able to give up boarding houses and live in the dormitories. That's what I am anxious for."

"It strikes me that you are very partial to sophs," said Dismal, giving Roll a piercing look.

Ditson was not fazed.

"They're a rather clever gang of fellows," he said. "Freshmen are very new, as a rule. Of course there are exceptions, and--"

"I suppose you consider yourself one?"

"Oh, I can't tell about that. But supposing I am; by the time I become a soph some of the newness will have worn off."

"I am not particularly impressed with any freshman who seems to think so much of sophomores. You ought to stay with them all the time."

"Oh, I don't know. They have treated me rather well, and I have found the most of them easy people."

"They seem to have found some freshman easy fruit. Somebody has been blowing to them about our crew."

"I know it," was Ditson's surprising confession, "and that's why I dropped in here. I wanted to tell Merriwell about it."

Jones gasped for breath. He was too surprised to speak for some minutes.

Ditson took out a package of cigarettes, offering them first to Harry,

who shook his head.

"What?" cried Roll, amazed. "You won't smoke?"

"No."

"What's that mean?"

"I have left off," said Harry, with an effort.

"Left off? Oh, say! that's too good! You leave off!"

A bit of color came to Rattleton's face, and he gave Ditson a look that was not exactly pleasant; but Roll was too occupied with his merriment to observe it.

Frank was studying Ditson. He watched the fellow's every movement and expression.

Roll knew it was useless to offer cigarettes to Merriwell or Jones, so he selected one from the package, kneaded it daintily, pulled a little tobacco from the ends, moistened the paper with his lips, and then lighted it with a wax match.

"Say, Harry, old man, I pity you," he said, with a taunting laugh, looking at Harry. "I've tried it. It's no use. You'll break over before two days are up--yes, before one day is up. It's no use."

Rattleton bit his lips.

"Why, you are dying for a whiff now!" chuckled Ditson. "I know you are. I got along a whole day, but it was a day of the most intense torture."

"There may be others with more stamina than you, Ditson," snapped Rattleton. "Just because you couldn't leave off a bad habit, it's no sign that nobody can."

"Oh, I suppose not. But what's the use? Don't get hot, old man. You ought to know my way by this time."

"I do."

"What is it that you came to tell me?" asked Frank.

"Eh? Oh, about the sophs. Those fellows seem to know more about our crew than I do."

"What do they know?"

"Why, they know our men are using English oars, have adopted a new stroke, and have done several other things. Now, those are matters on which I was not informed myself."

"How do you know the sophs know so much?"

"I've just come from Morey's. Went in there with Cressy. Fine fellow, he is. While I was in there Browning and his crowd wandered in. They were drinking ale and discussing the race. I heard what they were saying. Couldn't help hearing, you know. They were talking about our crew and the new methods you had introduced. It was mighty interesting to me, as I didn't know about those new methods myself."

"How innocent!" muttered Jones.

Ditson elevated his eyebrows.

"What's that?" he demanded. "Why shouldn't I be innocent? I am not on the crew, and the men are training and practicing secretly. I have had no way of finding out what they were doing."

"But some sneak has!" cried Rattleton, fiercely, "and he's been and blowed all he found out!"

"Unless somebody on the crew has done the blowing," suggested Roll, exhaling a great puff of smoke. "That is barely possible, you understand."

"Possible! No!" cried Frank. "There's not a man on the crew who would do such a thing!"

"Oh, well, I suppose you know. But I understand there are two who are kept in form as substitutes. One of them thinks he should be on the crew. He is rather jealous of somebody who fills his place. He might be the one who has talked too much."

"You don't mean--"

"Rattleton ought to be able to guess who I mean," craftily said Ditson as he arose. "I'm not calling names, for I don't know anything certain. If I had proof--but I haven't. Never mind. You ought to know enough to watch a certain fellow who thinks his place is filled by a person not his equal. He says there is favoritism in the matter. I rather think I have spoken plainly enough. Wish you success, Merry, old man. Evening, fellows."

Ditson departed.

Our hero, Rattleton and Jones sat and looked at each other in grim silence for several minutes.

"Well?"

Frank broke the spell, looking keenly at Jones as he spoke.

"I dunno," mumbled Dismal, falling into the manner of speaking that had been habitual with him from his childhood. "I dunno--hanged if I do!"

"You thought you knew when you came in, my boy."

"That's right; but I dunno but I was off my trolley. And still--"

"Still what?"

"I don't like the man I suspected, but I never thought the fellow shrewd enough to play a double game."

"Perhaps it is because you do not like him that you suspected him."

"Oh, it may be--it may be. And I don't suppose that is a square deal. I didn't have absolute proof."

"You were going to name him when Ditson came in."

"I was, but I will not call any names now. I propose to look into this matter somewhat. Likely it's too late to prevent the traitor from completing the damage, but he can be exposed. It will be some satisfaction to see him held up to public scorn."

"That is true, Dismal, and I want you to do your best to find out who the man is. Make a sure thing of it. Get positive proof, if possible."

"Whoever he is his sin is sure to find him out."

There were footsteps on the stairs and the sound of laughing voices. The door burst open and several freshmen came trooping in, as if they felt quite at home there. Lucy Little was at their head, and his face showed excitement.

"I say, Merriwell!" he cried, "are you out for a little sport to-night?"

"That depends on what sort of sport it is."

"Sh!" said Little, mysteriously. "Close the door, uncle."

A fellow by the name of Silas Blossom, who was familiarly called "uncle," obeyed.

Little looked at Rattleton and then stared hard at Jones, who had the face of a parson.

"I don't know about you," he said, "but I think you are all right. Even if you have scruples I don't believe you will blow."

"Very kind!" grunted Dismal.

"The rest of the gang is all right," said Little.

"Then give us your scheme," spluttered Harry, whose curiosity was thoroughly aroused. "Don't bush around the beat—I mean beat around the bush."

"What do you fellows say to a turkey chase?" asked Little.

"A turkey chase?"

"Yes. Out around West Rock way. There are plenty of old farmers who have good fat turkeys out that way. It is a good cool night, and we can capture two turkeys without trouble. Then we'll take 'em in here and have a roast. Are you wid us?"

"Those who are not wid us are agin' us!" fiercely declared Bandy Robinson.

"And that is dead right, me b'hoys," nodded Arthur Street, who was known at Yale as Easy Street, on account of his free-and-easy way.

Merriwell hesitated. He was in for any kind of honest sport, but he did not quite fancy the idea of stealing turkeys.

"Why don't we buy our turkeys at the markets?" he asked.

The other lads stared at him in astonishment.

"Buy them!" they shouted. "Say, are you dafty, man? Where would the fun come in? You know better than to propose such a thing."

"Stolen fruit is ever the sweetest," quoth Uncle Blossom. "It's not many fellows we would take into such a scheme, but you were just the man we wanted, Merriwell. If we bought a turkey we wouldn't have any appetite for it. Now, the run out into the country and back will give us an appetite. One fellow will have to stay here and get the fire ready, while the rest of us chase turks. Come on, man—it's what you need to start your blood circulating."

Merriwell seemed to suddenly make up his mind.

"I am with you," he said as he arose. "Who stays and looks after the fire? We don't want anybody along that can't run."

"Well, I'm no sprinter," confessed Dismal. "I'd like to go along, but I'm afraid I'd peg out. I'll have things ready when you show up. But what time will you be back?"

Frank looked at his watch and then made a mental calculation.

"It will be about eleven," he said.

"All right."

"Say, Jones," said Street, "just go down to Billy's and get a few bottles of beer. We'll need it to wash the turk down."

"And cigars," cried Blossom. "Don't forget cigars. What would a turkey feast be without a smoke afterward?"

Matters were soon arranged, and it was not long before five freshmen left Mrs. Harrington's "quiet house" for freshmen, and started along York Street at a brisk, steady jog.

Merriwell took the lead, and the others came after him at regular distances. The night air was rather sharp, and there was a bright moon.

Along the streets of New Haven the five freshmen ran, and those who observed them supposed they were some crew in training.

Merriwell set a moderate pace, for he knew it was likely they would need all their wind on the return. There was no telling what sort of a scrape they might get into.

Rattleton was behind, taking things as easy as possible. He filled his lungs with the crisp, clear air, and it made him feel like a young race horse, but he held himself in check.

Street actually loafed along, although he managed to keep his place.

"If one of us is caught, he'll be like the gangplank of a steamer," called Harry as they left the main part of the city and entered the suburbs.

"How's that?" asked Blossom.

"Pulled in," chirped Rattleton. "Don't stop to throw anything this way. Keep right on."

"They say Browning was caught swiping turks in his freshman year," said Lewis, "and it cost his old man a round sum to settle and keep the thing quiet, so Bruce wouldn't be expelled. Dad Browning has got money to burn."

"Well, his son's a good match for him," Merriwell tossed over his shoulder.

"A good match for him! Oh, say!" gasped Robinson, exhibiting signs of sudden weakness.

Away they went, laughing and jesting, finally leaving the city behind and getting out into the country. Up hill and down dale they steadily jogged, covering mile after mile in a rather surprising manner.

At length Merriwell called a halt, and they held a council of war.

Blossom said he knew where they were certain to find turkeys, and so they gave him the lead. He confessed that there was a chance of getting into trouble, as the owner of the turkeys had been robbed before, and he might be on the watch. That simply added zest to the adventure, and there was not one of the party who would have consented to look elsewhere for their turkeys.

They finally came in sight of a farmhouse that sat on the side of a hill. Near the house was a stable and sheds. A large orchard lay back of the sheds.

"There," said Blossom. "That is where old Baldwin lives, and his turks are in one of those sheds."

"Crumping jickets--I mean jumping crickets!" exclaimed Harry. "How bright the moon shines! If he's on the watch we can't get anywhere near those sheds without being seen."

The boys began to realize that they were engaged in a decidedly perilous adventure. If one of them should be caught it would mean almost certain expulsion from college, besides a heavy fine if the case were carried to court.

"We'll have to approach by way of the orchard," said Frank. "Does Baldwin keep a dog?"

"Sure--a big half-blood bull."

"That's nice. We are liable to find plenty of fun here. Every man must provide himself with a stout and heavy club to use on that dog in case of emergency. That is important. The lights are out, and it looks as if the farmer and his family were sleeping soundly, but, as Jones says, appearances are sometimes deceptive. We'll have to take our chances. Three of us will go through the orchard. The other two must get near the house in front and be ready to create a diversion in case we are discovered. Harry, you and Bandy take the front. You are both good runners. If Mr. Baldwin and his dog get after us, attract his attention in some manner."

"And get him after us?"

"That's the idea."

"Jupiter! I wish I had brought a gun for that dog! Bandy, you are liable to have to use those crooked legs of yours in a decidedly lively manner before the night is over."

When everything was arranged Harry and Bandy advanced along the road, going forward slowly, while Frank, Blossom and Little made a detour and came into the orchard.

The hearts of the boys were in their throats, and still there was something about the adventure that filled them with the keenest delight.

Each one had secured a club, and they were ready to give the dog a warm reception if he came for them.

Little watched beneath a tree, while Merriwell and Blossom slipped up to one of the sheds which had a favorable look.

In the meantime Rattleton and Robinson had got near the front of the house and were hiding in a ditch, waiting and listening.

"I am surprised that Merriwell should agree to take a hand in this," whispered Harry. "He is a queer chap--has scruples about doing certain

things. I thought he would object to hooking out a turk."

"Oh, such a thing as this isn't really stealing," protested Robinson.
"It is different."

"In our minds, but not in the mind of Farmer Baldwin, by a long shot. If we're caught it will be called stealing."

"Oh, well, a fellow who won't do anything like this is too good for this world. He's got wings sprouting."

"You know well enough that Merriwell is no softie," returned Harry, rather warmly. "He's proved that. Any man has a right to his ideas, and if he thinks a thing wrong he's justified in refusing to have anything to do with it."

"Perhaps so; but Merriwell is right on the limit now."

"How?"

"He will not drink, he does not smoke, and I never have heard him cuss."

"Does it make a fellow a man to drink and smoke and swear? I tell you you'll go a long distance before you find a fellow who is any more of a man than Frank Merriwell. I was dead lucky when I got him for a roommate."

"You're stuck on him. I say he is all right, but he is on the limit. I believe the fellows would like him better if he would break over once in a while."

"I doubt it. But it is awful still around here. I wonder where that dog can be? It would be a surprise if the fellows got away with the turks without making any noise at--"

There was a sudden hubbub, a terrible squalling and squawking, the barking of a dog, and the report of a gun!

CHAPTER XX.

A HOT CHASE.

"My stars!" gasped Harry. "There's trouble, sure enough!"

"I should remark!" palpitated Robinson. "I'll bet a dollar one of the fellows is full of shot!"

"And somebody is in danger of being full of teeth directly. Come, this is our time to create a diversion."

Then Harry let himself out. He whooped like a wild Indian and pranced right up toward the house. Robinson followed the good example, but they did not seem very successful in attracting attention to themselves.

Two dark figures were seen scudding through the orchard, and then a man came out of the house, slamming the door and shouting:

"Sick 'em, Tige--sick the pesky rascals! Chaw 'em up! Don't let 'em git erway! Take 'em, dorg!"

The dog was doing his duty in the vicinity of one of the sheds, but his

barking suddenly turned to howls of pain, and several blows were distinctly heard.

Despite the two yelling and dancing lads in the road, the old farmer made for the shed, and it was seen that he had a gun in his hands.

"He's going to shoot somebody!" cried Harry, wildly. "We must hake a tand--er--take a hand in this! Come on!"

With all the speed he could command Rattleton dashed after the farmer. The barking of the dog had suddenly ceased, and a third dark figure was seen scudding through the orchard.

"Stop, you pesky thief!" yelled the farmer. "If you don't stop I'll shoot! I'll fire ye full of lead!"

Then he halted and raised his gun to his shoulder. He was quite unaware that Harry was now quite close upon him.

When Rattleton saw the man raise the gun he swung back the hand that held the heavy stick. With all his strength he hurled the stick at the farmer.

Whiz! It sped through the air and struck the man fairly between the shoulders. At the same instant the gun spoke, but the farmer went down in a heap, and his aim was spoiled.

"Had to do it to save some one of the fellows from carrying off a load of buckshot," muttered Rattleton, who was desperate. "I don't want to see anybody shot to-night."

He did not stop running, but he dashed straight up to the man, snatched up the gun, and fled onward.

"Hey! hey!" cried the man, as he scrambled to his feet. "Consam you! Drop that gun! Bring it back!"

"Come get it!" invited Harry, with a defiant laugh.

The farmer started after the boy, who led him a merry chase across the fields and over the fences. Harry kept just far enough ahead to lure the panting man on.

"If I ever git my hands on ye you'll go to jail!" declared the farmer. "I'll learn you pesky rascals a lesson!"

"Teach--not learn, uncle," Harry flung back. "You should be more careful about your grammar."

"I believe you are one of them consamed student fellers."

"You are a wonderful guesser."

"If I can't ketch ye I'll report ye."

When he had lead the man far enough so that he was sure the other fellows had plenty of start, Harry tossed aside the gun, which was an old muzzle-loading, single-barreled affair.

The panting farmer stopped and picked up the gun, then he stood and shook his fist at Rattleton, who was speeding away like a deer.

"Oh, I'll report ye--I will, by jee!" he vowed over and over.

In the meantime Merriwell had had a most exciting adventure. He had

found the turkey roost and had selected the biggest old gobbler of them all. But the gobbler was a hard customer and he showed fight, whereupon there was a general squawking and squalling.

Clinging to his capture, Frank made a dash for the door. He tripped and fell, and it is certain that by falling he saved himself from carrying off a charge of shot, if not from death. He had tripped over a rope that connected with a spring gun, which was discharged, and some of the shot tore through his coat sleeve.

Then he heard the dog, and he knew he was in for a hot time. He gave the old gobbler's neck a fierce wring, then dropped the turkey just in time to meet the dog.

The creature sprang for Frank's throat, and the boy struck him with the club which he had brought along. The dog dropped to the ground, but immediately made another dash. Frank was fortunate in getting in a lick that stretched the animal quivering on the ground.

He could hear Rattleton and Robinson whooping wildly, but he knew no time was to be lost in getting away, so he caught up the gobbler and ran.

Frank heard the farmer calling for him to stop, but, with Mr. Gobbler dangling on his back, he fled the faster.

The gun spoke, but he was not touched, and he did not stop to look around, so he did not know how Harry had saved him.

Three-quarters of an hour later the five fellows who had started out on the turkey chase met on the outskirts of New Haven. They came up one at a time, Rattleton being the last to appear. There was a general feeling of relief when it was found that all were there safe and sound.

It was decided that they should go into the city one at a time, taking different routes. Frank believed he could reach the house without being stopped, although it would be no very easy job.

He was remarkably successful until he was on York Street and close to Mrs. Harrington's. The street seemed clear, and he wondered where all the fellows could be, when of a sudden a tall form in dark clothes stepped right out before him. He gave a gasp, for at a glance he seemed to recognize one of the professors.

"Young man," sternly said a familiar voice, "what have you there?"

"It's Professor Grant!" thought Frank, aghast.

The professor blocked his way. What could he do?

Quick as a flash he swung the gobbler around and struck his challenger a smashing blow with it, knocking him sprawling.

Then he took to his heels, still holding fast to his capture.

In a moment he heard the sound of feet in pursuit, and he knew the outraged professor was after him.

Frank's heart was in his mouth, and he felt scared for the first time that night. He was certain it would mean expulsion to be caught.

For all of the running he had done that night, he fled like a frightened deer, occasionally glancing over his shoulder. He had never dreamed that Professor Grant was a sprinter, but the man was running at great speed—seemed to be gaining.

"Stop, sir!" cried the pursuer. "I tell you to stop!"

"Not much!" thought Frank. "I won't stop! If you catch me your wind is better than I think it is."

He did not dare go into his house, so he dashed past, cut into another street, turned corner after corner, and still he found himself pursued. It seemed marvelous that Professor Grant could keep up such a pace.

Finally the pursuer called:

"Merriwell, is that you?"

No answer.

"I know you," declared the pursuer, and now Frank perceived that that voice did not sound like Professor Grant. "You are a crackajack runner. I wanted to give you a try to see what you could do. I'll see you to-morrow. Good-night."

The pursuer gave up the chase.

"As I live, I believe it was Pierson, manager of the ball team!" muttered Frank when he was sure it was no trick and he was no longer followed. "He looks something like Professor Grant, and he is a great mimic. That's just who it was."

A short time later he was in his room, where a jovial party of freshmen was gathered.

CHAPTER XXI

ROAST TURKEY.

Frank's appearance, with the turkey still in his possession, was hailed with shouts of delight.

"We didn't know as you would get in," said Jones. "I invited some more of the fellows up here, as you see, and we found out that some of the sophs seemed to know something unusual was going on."

"That's right," nodded Rattleton. "They were laying for us. Two of them stopped me when I reached York Street. They told me to give up what I had, but I didn't have anything to give up, so they let me go."

Then Frank told of his adventure with a person who looked like Professor Grant.

"That's it!" cried Little. "That was their game! They were after our turkey."

"But how did they know we were after turkey?" asked Robinson.

"They must have been told by somebody," said Street.

"And that means we have a tattler among us," declared Burnham Putnam--Old Put--looking keenly around.

The boys looked at each other suspiciously, wondering if there was one of the number who would carry to the sophs.

To Frank's surprise he saw that Walter Gordon was there. Jack Diamond was also present.

Frank found an opportunity to get close to Dismal and whisper in his ear:

"Great Caesar, old man! why did you invite Gordon here?"

"I did not."

"Then how does he happen to be here? He didn't come without an invitation, I am sure of that."

"He was in Billy's when I asked Put to come up. I knew you would like to have Put here."

"That's all right."

"Well, Put asked Gordon to come along before I could prevent it. Of course I didn't have the crust to make any objection after that."

"I should say not! It's all right, but you want to remember that the sophs found out something was going on. Did Gordon come right along with you?"

"No. He said he'd have to go to his room, but he showed up a few minutes after we arrived here."

"Lots of mischief can be done in a few minutes. Did he know just what was going on here?"

"Well, he knew somebody had gone out into the country to swipe something for a feast."

"And it is pretty plain that the sophs became aware of the same fact. Here is food for reflection, Dismal."

"You are right."

The foragers told of their adventures in capturing the turkey, and there was a great deal of laughter over it. Merriwell showed how near he came to getting shot, and it was universally agreed that he was remarkably lucky.

Harry told how he had bowled the old farmer over just as the man was about to shoot at Frank, and then he convulsed them with laughter by relating the capture of the gun and the chase he had led the hayseed.

Robinson said he thought Harry was crazy when he rushed after the farmer in the way he did.

"I couldn't understand what sort of a game he was up to," said Bandy, "and I didn't feel like following him into the jaws of the lion, so I held aloof. I saw him fling his club at the old duffer and saw it knock him down. Then, when I was sure Harry was all right, I legged it."

"Farmer Baldwin's dog will have a sore head in the morning," smiled Frank. "The last crack I gave him stretched him quivering on the ground. Hope it didn't kill the brute."

"Hope it didn't?" shouted Little. "I hope it did!"

"But I don't want to pay for his old dog."

"Pay for it! Are you dopy, daft, or what's the matter with you? Why,

that man had a spring gun set, and it would have filled you full of shot if you hadn't tripped!"

"He had a right to set a spring gun in his own shed to protect his turkey roost from marauders."

The boys stared at Frank in amazement.

"Say, Merriwell," said Uncle Blossom, gravely, "you're an enigma. Great poker! The idea of calling us marauders!"

"What else were we?"

"Boys, it is our duty to take him out and hold him under under the hose!"

"Gentlemen," said Jack Diamond, who was present, "you will have a real lively time if you try to do it. I fully agree with Mr. Merriwell that the farmer had a right to protect his property."

"Whe-e-ew!" whistled several lads, and then they all cried together: "Goodness, how the wind blows!"

The boys had come to understand in a measure Diamond's chivalric nature and sentiments, and it did not seem strange that he should see something improper in stealing turkeys from a farmer; but it did appear rather remarkable that Merriwell should maintain such an idea after he had taken a hand in the game.

"It must be that you chaps intend to become parsons after you leave college," said Walter Gordon, rather derisively.

"And Merriwell would pay for the dog if he killed the beast!" exclaimed Uncle Blossom. "How about the turkey? I should have thought you'd paid for that."

"I did."

"What!"

That word was a roar, and it seemed to leap from the lips of every lad in the room, with the exception of Diamond and Merriwell. The boys were all on their feet, and they stared at Frank with bulging eyes, as if they beheld a great curiosity.

Merriwell simply smiled. He was quite cool and unruffled.

"You--you paid--for--the--turkey!" gasped Lucy Little, as if it cost him a mighty effort to get the words out.

"Exactly," bowed Frank.

"How? When? Where?"

"I pinned a five-dollar bill to the roost before I laid violent hands on the old gobbler. Baldwin will find it there in the morning."

"Water!" panted Robinson as he flopped down on a chair. "I think I am going to faint!"

"Oh, think of the beautiful beers that V would have paid for!" sighed Robinson, with a doleful shake of his head.

"This is a disgrace on the famous class of 'Umpty-eight!'" shouted Lewis Little. "We can never wipe it out!"

"I fear not," said Easy Street. "It is really awful!"

"And to think Merriwell should have done it. It would have served him right if that spring gun had filled him with shot!"

"Excuse these few tears!" exclaimed Blossom, who had secretly opened a bottle of beer and saturated his handkerchief with the contents.

He now proceeded to wring the handkerchief in a highly dramatic manner.

"Go ahead," laughed Frank. "Have all the sport you like over it, but I feel easy in my mind."

Some one proposed not to eat the turkey at all, but there was a dissenting shout at that. Then the bird was taken down into the cellar by three of them and stripped of its feathers. A pan and necessary dishes had been borrowed of Mrs. Harrington, and there was a roaring hard-wood fire in the open grate.

Harry officiated as cook, and set about his duties in a manner that showed he was not a novice, while the other lads looked on with great interest, telling stories and cracking jokes.

Merriwell offered to bet Robinson that woman was created before man, but Bandy was shy, scenting a sell. However, Frank kept at him, finally offering to let Robinson himself decide. At length Robinson "bit," and a small wager was made.

"Now," cried Bandy, "go ahead and prove that woman was made before man. You can't do it."

"That's dead easy," smiled Frank. "I know you will readily acknowledge that Eve was the first maid."

"No, I'll be hanged if--"

Then Robinson stopped short, for he saw the point, and the others were laughing heartily and applauding.

"The first maid!" he muttered. "Oh, thunder! What a soft thing I am! You have won, Merriwell."

The turkey began to give out a most delicious odor, and the boys snuffed the air with the keenest delight. How hungry they were! How jolly everything seemed! There was not one of the party who did not feel very grateful to think he was living that night.

At last the turkey was done. Harry pronounced it done, and it was certainly browned and basted in beautiful style. It was a monster, but there would be none too much for that famished crowd.

Frank and Blossom assisted Harry in serving. There were not enough plates for all, but that did not matter. They managed to get along all right. Some were forced to drink their beer out of the bottle, but nobody murmured.

The turkey was white and tender, and it was certainly very well cooked. It had a most delicious flavor. And how good the beer was with it! How those fellows jollied Merriwell because he would not even taste the beer. And still they secretly admired him for it. He had the nerve to say no and stick to it, which they could not help admiring.

When the turkey was all gone cigars were passed, and nearly every one "fired up." Then Harry and Frank got out a banjo and mandolin and gave

the party some lively music. It was long after two o'clock, but who cared for that? Nobody thought of the hour. If Mrs. Harrington complained in the morning, she must be pacified with a peace offering.

They sang "Old Man Moses," "Solomon Levi," "Bingo," and a dozen more. There were some fine voices among them. Finally a quartet was formed, consisting of Merriwell, Rattleton, Diamond and Blossom. It positively was a treat to hear them sing "Good-by, My Little Lady."

"The boats are pushing from the shore,
Good-by, my little lady!
With brawny arm and trusty oar,
Each man is up and ready;
I see our colors dancing
Where sunlit waves are glancing;
A fond adieu I'll say to you,
My lady true and fair.

"Good-by, good-by, my lady sweet!
Good-by, my little lady!
Good-by, good-by, again we'll meet,
So here's farewell, my lady!"

Oh, those old college songs! How they linger in the memory! How the sound of them in after years stirs the blood and quickens the pulse! And never can other songs seem half so beautiful as those!

It was after two when the party broke up, but it was a night long to be remembered.

CHAPTER XXII.

A SURPRISE FOR FRANK.

On the following morning Merriwell arose with a headache.

"The smoke was too much for me last night," he said. "It was thick enough to chop in this room."

"And you don't know how I wanted to have a whiff with the fellows," said Harry, dolefully. "It was awful to see them enjoying cigars and cigarettes and not touch one myself!"

"But you didn't," smiled Frank. "Good boy! Stick to that just as long as you wish to keep a place in athletics."

"I don't know which is the worst, smoking or midnight suppers."

"Midnight suppers are bad things, and you will observe that I seldom indulge in them. If I was on one of the regular teams I could not indulge at all. I'll not have any part in another affair like that of last night till after the race. From now till it is over I am going to live right."

"Well, I'll do my best to stick with you. If you see me up to anything improper, just call me down."

"Agreed."

There was no time for a cold bath before chapel, although Frank would have given something to indulge in one. As it was, he dipped his head in

cold water, opened the window wide, and filled his lungs with fresh air, then hustled into his clothes and rushed away, with the chapel bell clanging and his temples still throbbing.

The whole forenoon was a drag, but he managed to get through the recitations fairly well. Over and over he promised himself that he would not indulge in another midnight feast until the time came when such dissipation was not likely to do him any particular harm physically.

At noon as he was crossing the campus he was astonished to see Paul Pierson, a junior and the manager of the regular ball team, stop and bow. Unless it was Pierson who had pursued him on the previous night, Frank had never spoken a word to the fellow in his life. And this public recognition of a freshman on the campus by a man like Pierson was almost unprecedented.

"Ah, Mr. Merriwell, I would like to speak with you," said Pierson in a manner that was not exactly unfriendly.

Frank remembered that the fellow who chased him the night before had promised to see him again, but he had thought at the time that the man did not mean it. Now he wondered what in the world Pierson could want.

"Yes, sir," said Merriwell, stopping and bowing respectfully.

"I understand that you are something of a sprinter," said Pierson as he surveyed the freshman critically. "A--ah--friend of mine told me so."

"Well, I don't know, but I believe I can run fairly well," replied Frank, with an air of modesty.

"My friend is a very good judge of runners, and he says you're all right. In doing so he settled a point in my mind. I have been watching your ball playing in practice this fall, and I have arrived at the conclusion that you have good stuff in you if you do not get the swelled head. Young man, the swelled head is one of the worst things with which a youth can be afflicted. When he gets it for fair it is likely to be his ruin."

Pierson addressed Frank as if he were a father speaking to a boy. Frank felt that the junior was patronizing to a certain extent, but the fellow's manner of stopping him on the campus was so remarkable that it more than overbalanced his air of superiority.

Wondering what Pierson could be driving at, Frank kept silent and listened.

"Now, I have a fancy," said the baseball magnate, "that you are rather level headed. Still, the best of them get it sometimes, and that is why I am warning you."

Pierson spoke deliberately, still looking hard at the freshman, who waited quietly.

"He'll come to the point if he is given time," thought Frank.

"I have seen you pitch," said Pierson, "and I have watched your delivery and your curves. You are very good. More than that, you bat properly and your judgment is excellent."

He paused again, as if to note what impression this praise made upon the other. Frank felt his cheeks grow warm, but his voice was perfectly steady as he said:

"Thank you, sir."

"I did not know just what you would do when it came to running till my friend saw you run," Pierson went on. "He says you are all right. Now, if you will look out for yourself and keep yourself in condition, it is quite possible that you may be given a trial on the regular ball team in the spring."

Frank felt his heart give a great jump. On the regular team! Why, he had not dreamed of getting there the very first season. Was Pierson giving him a jolly?

"Are you serious, sir?" he asked.

"Most certainly, Mr. Merriwell," answered the junior. "I can assure you that you stand an excellent chance of having a trial. What the result of the trial is will depend entirely upon yourself."

"What position, Mr. Pierson?"

"Well, there is but one position that is not well filled. We've got men to burn for every other place. If you are tried at all, it will be in the box. Heffner is the only man we have, and he can't do all the work. There will come times when he will be out of condition."

To pitch on the regular ball team! To be given an opportunity when the great Heffner proved out of condition! That was glory indeed. No wonder Frank Merriwell tingled with excitement in every part of his body; but it was a wonder that he appeared so cool and self contained.

Pierson was surprised by the freshman's manner, for he had expected Frank to show excitement and delight.

"What sort of a fellow is this?" he thought. "Does he really understand me, or is he a little thick?"

Then he saw by Frank's fine and highly sensitive face that he could not be thick, and he began to perceive that the freshman had nerve. That was one of the great requirements for a successful pitcher.

"I have spoken of this to you, Mr. Merriwell, so you may be keeping yourself in condition through the winter, as you will then stand all the better show of making a favorable impression when you are given a trial."

"Thank you, sir."

"If I were in your place I would not make any talk about it, for something may happen that you will not be given a trial, in which case it would be very humiliating if you had publicly stated that you were to have a show."

"You may be sure I will say nothing about it, Mr. Pierson."

"That is all. Good-day, sir."

"Good-day, sir."

Pierson passed on, quite aware that a number of students were regarding him with the utmost amazement, plainly wondering that he should have stopped to talk with a freshman on the campus.

Walter Gordon had seen the two speaking together, and he hastened to call the attention of some friends to it.

"Look there!" he cried. "As I live, Merriwell is talking with Pierson!"

What'll you bet the fellow's not making a try to get on the regular ball team? Ha! ha! ha! He's got crust enough for it."

"And I am not sure he hasn't the ability for it," said Easy Street.

"Oh, rats!" snapped Walter. "He'd go to pieces in the first inning. He'll never make a pitcher in his life."

"There are others," murmured Lucy Little.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE YALE SPIRIT.

Frank went to his room with his head in a whirl. He had dreamed of working hard to secure a place on the freshman team, but he had not dreamed there was a possibility that he would be given a trial in the regular Yale nine during his first year in college.

Merriwell knew well enough that Phillips men were given the preference in everything at Yale as a rule, for they had friends to pull them through, while the fellows who had been prepared by private tutors lacked such an advantage.

But Frank had likewise discovered that in most cases a man was judged fairly at Yale, and he could become whatever he chose to make himself, in case he had the ability.

The Phillips man might have the advantage at the start, but he could not hold the advantage unless he proved himself worthy. If the unknown student had nerve and determination he could win his way for all of the wire pulling of the friends of some rival who was not so capable.

Frank had heard the cry which had been raised at that time that the old spirit of democracy was dying out at Yale, and that great changes had taken place there. He had heard that Yale was getting to be more like another college, where the swell set are strongly in evidence and the senior likely to be very exclusive, having but a small circle of speaking acquaintances.

It was said that in the old days the Yale junior or senior knew everybody worth knowing. But this had changed. The blue-blooded aristocrat had appeared at Yale, and he had chosen his circle of acquaintances with great care. To all outward appearances, this man believed that outside his limited circle there was nobody at Yale worth knowing.

Professor Scotch, Frank's guardian, had read this in certain newspaper articles relating to Yale, and had expressed his regret that such should be the case.

After coming to Yale Frank kept his eyes open to see to what extent such a state of affairs obtained. At first it had seemed that the newspapers were right, but he came to see that his position as freshman did not give him the proper opportunity to judge.

In the course of time Frank came to believe that the old spirit was still powerful at Yale. There were a limited number of young gentlemen who plainly considered themselves superior beings, and who positively refused to make acquaintances outside a certain limit; but those men held no positions in athletics, were seldom of prominence in the

societies, and were regarded as cads by the men most worth knowing. They were to be pitied, not envied.

At Yale the old democratic spirit still prevailed. The young men were drawn from different social conditions, and in their homes they kept to their own set; but they seemed to leave this aside, and they mingled and submerged their natural differences under that one broad generalization, "the Yale man."

And Merriwell was to find that this extended even to their social life, their dances, their secret societies, where all who showed themselves to have the proper dispositions and qualifications were admitted without distinction of previous condition or rank in their own homes.

Each class associated with itself, it is true, the members making no close friendships with members of other classes, with the possible exception of the juniors and seniors, where class feeling did not seem to run so high. A man might know men of other classes, but he never took them for chums.

The democratic spirit at Yale came mainly from athletics, as Frank soon discovered. Every class had half a dozen teams--tennis, baseball, football, the crew and so on. Everybody, even the "greasy" grinds, seemed interested in the something, and so one or more of these organization had some sort of a claim on everybody.

Besides this, there was the general work in the gymnasium, almost every member of every class appearing there at some time or other, taking exercise as a pastime or a necessity.

The 'Varsity athletic organization drew men from every class, not excepting the professional and graduate schools, and, counting the trials and everything, brought together hundreds of men.

In athletics strength and skill win, regardless of money or family; so it happened that the poorest man in the university stood a show of becoming the lion and idol of the whole body of young men.

Compulsory chapel every morning brought together the entire college, and had its effect in making everybody acquainted with everybody else.

A great fosterer of the democratic spirit was the old Yale fence, over the departure of which "old grads" are forever shedding bitter tears. The student who had not known the old fence was inclined to smile wearily over the expressions of regret at its loss, but still the "old grad" continued to insist that the fence was one of the crowning beauties of Yale, and that nothing can ever replace it.

On the old fence men read the newspapers, crammed for recitation, gossiped, told stories, talked athletics, sung songs, flirted with passing girls, and got acquainted. Oh, yes, it was a great fosterer of the democratic spirit.

In the promotion of this spirit the drinking places at Yale are important factors. At Harvard the men drink in their clubs, the most of which are very expensive places, and in the Boston cafes. The Yale men drink at Morey's, and Traeger's, and Billy's. Traeger's, where from a score to fifty students may be seen any afternoon or evening, is furnished in exact imitation of German students' drinking places. In the back room is heavy furniture, quaint paintings, and woodwork and carvings. It had a sort of subdued cathedral light, which fell softly on the mugs which decorated the shelves and mantel.

Frank had proven that it was not necessary for a man to drink at Yale in order to be esteemed as a good fellow. Frank was a total abstainer, and

his friends had found that nothing would induce him to drink or smoke. At first they ridiculed him, but they came to secretly admire him, and it is certain that his example was productive of no small amount of good.

Frank's acquaintances declared he had a mighty nerve, for he was able to travel with a crowd that drank and smoked, and still refrained from doing either. That was something difficult for them to understand.

It was apparent to everybody that Merriwell's popularity did not depend on his ability to absorb beer or his generosity in opening fizz. It came from his sterling qualities, his ability as an athlete, his natural magnetism, and his genial, sunny nature. Although he was refined and gentlemanly, there was not the least suggestion of anything soft or effeminate about him.

It is not strange that Merriwell could scarcely believe it possible that Paul Pierson had been in earnest. Such a thing seemed altogether too good to be true.

"If it's a jolly, he'll not have the satisfaction of knowing that I spread it," Frank decided. "Mum is the word with me, and I'll keep right on working for a place with the freshmen. Oh, if we can win the race at Saltonstall!"

Frank knew that he stood well with Old Put, who was to manage the freshman team in the spring. If the freshman crew could defeat the sophs, Put would have more confidence than ever in Merriwell.

Frank was thinking these things over, when Harry came in with a rush, slamming the door and tripping over a rug in his haste.

"Say! say! say!" he spluttered, staring at Frank.

"Well, what is it?"

"Is it true?"

"Is what true?"

"I heard Paul Pierson was seen talking to you on the campus."

"Well, what of that?"

"Then it is true?"

"Yes."

"Gracious! Pierson was never known to thing a do--er--do a thing like that before!"

"Is that so?"

"Is it so! Why, you know it is so! Think of Pierson--the great and only Pierson--talking to a freshman on the campus in the middle of the day! Wow!"

"You are excited, Harry. Sit down and cool off."

"I'll sit down, but you must tell me what he was saying to you."

"Must I?"

"Must you? I should say yes! I am dying to know what he could be saying to a freshman!"

Frank was troubled, for he saw his roommate's curiosity was aroused to the highest notch, and he knew it would be no easy thing to satisfy Harry without telling the truth.

"Go ahead," urged Rattleton. "What did Pierson say to you?"

"Oh, he said a number of things," replied Frank, awkwardly.

Harry lifted his eyebrows.

"Haven't a doubt of it," he returned; "but what are they?"

Frank hesitated, and a cloud came to his friend's face.

"You see, it is a private matter," Merriwell explained.

"Oh!"

There was infinite sarcasm in that ejaculation.

"You know I would tell you if I could, Harry," said Frank, rising; "but this is a matter which I--"

"Oh, you needn't trouble yourself!" Rattleton cut in, sharply. "I'll live just as long and be just as happy."

"Now don't be angry, old man; that is foolish. You know I would tell you if I could do so without--"

"Oh, I don't know about that! You are getting so you have secrets lately, and you don't seem to trust me. Say, if you think I am a sneak and a tattler, say so, for I want to know it. I don't care to room with any fellow who doesn't trust me."

Harry was angry, and Frank felt very sorry.

"Old man," said Merriwell, meeting Rattleton's sullen glance with a frank, open look, "I do trust you, and you should know it. There is no fellow in college I would as soon room with. Still, you should know there are some things a man cannot honorably tell even his chum."

Harry was silent.

"Perhaps there are some things about yourself or some friend that you would not care to tell me," Frank went on. "I am not going to be offended at that. It is your right to tell what you like and keep what you like to yourself. A thing like that should not create feeling between us."

"But this seems different."

"Does it? Well, I will explain that I told Pierson I would say nothing of the matter to anybody. I do not believe in lying. Do you want me to break my word in this case?"

"No!" cried Harry. "You are all right again, Frank! You are always right! Don't you mind me when I get cranky. I'm a fundering thool--I mean a thundering fool! But I do hope Pierson is not working a jolly on you."

"He may have tried to work a jolly on me, but he is not succeeding," smiled Frank, whose face had cleared. "And the quieter I keep the smaller will be the chance of success, if that is his little game."

CHAPTER XXIV.

GORDON EXPRESSES HIMSELF.

At the first opportunity Frank had a talk with Burnham Putnam, who had charge of the freshman crew. He told Put all that had been learned about the traitor, and Burn listened with interest and growing anger.

"Who do you think the traitor is?" he asked at last.

"Well, there is a doubt in my mind, and I do not want to accuse anybody."

"We have conducted our work with great secrecy."

"We have that."

"And I have repeatedly cautioned the men about talking."

"Yes."

"I have warned them that it might mean the ruin of our plans."

"You have."

"And still everything we have done seems to be known."

"That's right."

"The man who has spread this matter has the very best means for obtaining information, as he has made no mistake."

"Well, what do you think?"

"The traitor may be the last man we would suspect. He must have some cause for playing crooked, though."

"That is the way I regarded it."

Old Put thought the matter over for a few moments. He finally said:

"I don't want to do any man injustice, but the turn affairs have taken leads me to think it would be a good plan to drop our spare men entirely and put full dependence on a settled crew."

Frank was silent, and so Putnam asked:

"What do you think of that?"

"I think it is a very good plan, and I approve of it."

"Then it is settled. They shall be dropped at once, although it seems that the mischief is done now."

"There may be no mischief in it, for the sophs ridicule the innovations introduced, and they are surer than ever that they will have a soft thing of it."

"They have been fooled several times this fall. I am sorry we shall not be able to spring our innovations as a surprise, but we may give them a warm time just the same."

That day Putnam informed the spare men that he did not think they would be needed any more in training, but asked them to keep in condition till after the race, in case anything might happen that they were wanted.

Gordon was enraged immediately, for he had held on and worked through everything with the belief that he would finally be given a place on the crew.

"So I am dropped, am I?" he said, bitterly. "Well, I rather think I understand how it comes about."

Putnam did not like this, and a dark look came to his rugged face.

"What do you mean?" he demanded, sharply.

"Never mind," returned Walter, with a toss of his head. "It's no use to talk it over, but I know a few things."

He turned as if he would go away, but Put put out a hand and stopped him, whirling him sharply about.

"See here," said the sturdy manager of the freshman ball team and crew, "I want to know just what you mean, Gordon."

"Oh, you do?"

Walter flung to the winds all hope of getting on the crew. He sneered in Putnam's face.

"Yes, sir, I do! You talk as if you had not been treated right."

"Have I?"

"I think you have, sir."

"I know I have not!"

Putnam was angry, and his face betrayed it.

"You must prove that, Gordon!"

"I can."

"Do so."

"I may not prove it to your satisfaction, but I can prove it just as hard. You have told me that I am in fine form, and I know that you have said I have as fine back and shoulders as may be found in the whole college."

"I did say that," calmly acknowledged Old Put.

"Well, that counts for something."

"But it does not make you suitable for the crew. There is something more needed, as you should know. You must be able to row."

"Is there a man on the crew who pulls a prettier stroke than I? Just answer me that, Burn Putnam?"

"You do pull a pretty stroke, but I have been convinced that the men on the crew now will hold out, and it is not best to take you in place of any of them."

"Who convinced you? I know! It was Merriwell! He is holding Rattleton on the crew simply because they are chums, and you are letting him twist you around his finger! Ha! ha! ha!"

Gordon's laugh was sarcastic and cutting and it brought a hot flush to the face of Old Put.

"You are insolent, Gordon!" he said. "This is an open insult!"

"Is it? Well, I notice you do not deny that Merriwell has held Rattleton on the crew in my place."

"I deny that he has held any one on the crew that is not fully capable of remaining there on his own merit."

"That sounds first rate! Oh, well, I don't care, anyway! Your crew is bound to make a show of itself, and it will be beaten hands down by the sophs."

"So that is the opinion you hold, is it?"

"It is."

"And I suppose you have held it all along?"

"I have."

"Then I have made no mistake in dropping you from the crew. You have quite satisfied me on that point, Gordon. No man is suitable to hold a place on any kind of a crew or team if he holds it in contempt and has no confidence in it. He will not work, and his feeling of contempt will communicate itself to others, thus demoralizing the whole lot of them. Even if he kept his contempt to himself, he is not the man to work his heart out in the effort to win. He thinks it is no use to kill himself, and he will not make his best effort at any time. It is my policy to drop such a man, in case I find him out, and drop him hard. Yes, I am quite satisfied, Gordon."

Walter bit his tongue to keep back the fierce words which arose to his lips. He felt himself quivering with anger.

"All right! all right!" he said, his voice unsteady. "I am glad you are satisfied! But wait till the race is over. Rattleton's glory will be gone then. Don't think that he will pull his heart out. A man who smokes as much as he does can't pull."

"Smokes! Rattleton does not smoke at all. I observed him at the turkey roast. He absolutely refused to smoke."

"Because you were present; but I know for a fact that he smokes behind your back, and he smokes almost constantly."

"I cannot believe it. Merriwell would tell me."

"Would he? Ha! ha! ha! You don't know Frank Merriwell yet, but you will find him out. That fellow will go to any extreme to injure me, and so it is not likely he would tell anything on his chum that would cause you to give me his place."

"I am sure you do Merriwell an injustice. He is a man who does not smoke himself, and he would not allow his roommate to injure himself smoking. However, I will find out about this."

"Do so; but I have found out about it already. I have certain means of obtaining information."

"So have the sops, and they have obtained a great deal," Putnam shot at Walter as he turned away.

Putnam collared Merriwell at the first opportunity and demanded to know the truth about Rattleton's smoking.

"I know you will tell me the truth, Merry," said Burnham, "and it is important that you should."

"Some one has been telling you he is smoking?"

"Yes."

"Well, he is not smoking now. I had a talk with him and he swore off. He is not touching tobacco in any form, and I give you my word on that."

"That's all I want," said Putnam, quite satisfied.

After this the freshman crew took to practicing nights, and it was said that they worked as no crew of freshies every worked before. One night they ran up against the regular Varsity crew, and gave it a hot pull, but finally seemed to be beaten.

The report of this brush spread abroad, and the men on the regular crew were rather complimentary toward the freshmen. They said the youngsters worked together in a most surprising way, and it was predicted that they would give their rivals a hard pull.

The sops were inclined to regard this as a jolly, and they continued confident of winning over the freshmen with the greatest ease.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE TRAITOR DISCOVERED.

"I say, Merry," said Rattleton, the day before the race was to come off, "you can't guess who Gordon is chumming with lately."

"I don't know as I can. Who is it?"

"Ditson."

"Get out!"

"That's on the level."

"But Ditson the same as suggested outright that Gordon was the traitor who had told the sops so much."

"That is true, but Gordon doesn't know it."

"Well, he ought to. What do you think Ditson is doing?"

"Oh, he is working Gordon, who has been drinking like a fish since Old Put dropped him."

Frank was troubled. He did not approve of Ditson, and he feared that Gordon had a weak nature, so that he could be easily influenced. Walter had greatly taken to heart being dropped by Putnam, and he seemed utterly reckless and careless about himself. If he did not look out, he

was almost sure to get into trouble and find himself "rusticated" or sent home for good.

Merriwell could not help thinking it possible that Gordon had been innocent and that a mistake had been made in dropping him, as it might discourage him so that he would go to the bad. This worried Frank not a little.

"I'll have to make Ditson call a halt," he said to Harry. "He must be told to let up on Gordon."

"Now, that is dead right," nodded Harry, who was inclined to be generous and kindly toward the fellow who might have filled his place on the freshman crew. "I tell you that Ditson is a bad man, and I would not trust him as far as I can fling a cow by the tail."

"I'll get after him at the first opportunity," promised Frank.

Harry went out and had a talk with Bandy Robinson about the matter. Robinson admitted that he did not have much use for either Gordon or Ditson, but he was inclined to think Gordon the better fellow of the two.

That night Merriwell and Rattleton retired early, but they were not allowed to go to sleep. Barely were they in bed before there was a knock on the door, and they found Robinson and one of the fellows who lived in the house were there.

"Say," said Bandy, "Ditson and Gordon are down at Billy's, and Gordon has a great load on. I have told Ditson to let him alone, but was advised to mind my own business. Ditson is deliberately getting Gordon stiff."

"Is that so?" cried Frank as he made a jump for his clothes. "Well, I think I will have a talk with Mr. Ditson."

Frank and Harry dressed quickly, and away they went with Robinson and his companion toward Billy's.

On arriving at Billy's they were told that Ditson and Gordon were in the little corner behind the screen. Gordon was opening champagne, and both fellows were pretty well intoxicated.

Harry slipped up behind the screen, stood on a chair, and peered over. As he did so he heard Ditson say:

"That's right, Walter. Merriwell rubbed dirt all over you. He is trying to become another king, like Browning, but you can bet I don't lose any opportunity to throw him down."

"Throw him down! throw him down!" echoed Gordon, thickly. "That's right; but you can't throw him down hard enough to keep him down."

"I don't know about that," declared Roll, with drunken sobriety. "If we were to work together, Gordon, old man, we could hurt him. As it is, you've helped me out wonderfully in what I've done."

"Have I? How?"

Harry looked around and saw Merriwell preparing to go into the corner behind the screen. Then Rattleton made a few violent gestures, which plainly told his roommate to refrain.

Frank looked astonished. What could Harry be up to that he appeared so excited? He was motioning for Frank to come forward cautiously and join

him.

Now, Merriwell did not believe in playing the eavesdropper on any one, but he fancied Harry saw something he wished to show him, so he went forward lightly, placed another chair, got upon it, and looked over the screen.

In the meantime Ditson was saying:

"Yes, you've helped me. You know Merriwell is coaching the freshman crew--or has been--for the race to-morrow. Well, I don't let any chance go to get a jab at him."

"I don't see what that has to do with my helping you," mumbled Gordon, vainly trying to light a cigarette with a broken match on which no brimstone was left.

"Course yer don't," laughed Ditson, who was almost as full as his companion. "This isn't the first time we have been out together, eh, old boy?"

"No."

"Only we had to be quiet about it when you were on the crew--or when you thought you were on it."

"That's right."

"We have been pretty full once or twice."

"I thought so when we got up the next morning."

"Well, you have told me lots of things about Merriwell and what he was doing with the crew. You're a great talker when you're loaded."

Gordon stiffened up a bit and tried to give his companion a sober stare, but the effort was a ludicrous failure.

"Wazzyer mean?" he asked. "'Fi told you anything it was in strictest confidence."

"Cert; but then, you know, anything to knife Merriwell."

Gordon braced off, his hands on the table before him. Ditson laughed and went on:

"Now, if we make a combine against him we can do him bad."

"Wazzyer mean?" Gordon again demanded. "Mean that you repeated anything I tol' you in confidence when I was full?"

"Not publicly," grinned Ditson. "I may have used it to injure Merriwell, but I was careful how I used it."

Walter thumped the table with his fist, growing angry suddenly.

"You're a hanged two-faced fraud!" he huskily cried. "That's jusht what you are, Ditson! Somebody's been telling things to the sophs. They found out everything. It was you! And you pumped your points out of me when I was full."

"That didn't hurt you," Ditson hastened to declare. "It was entirely to hurt Merriwell, and he is our common enemy."

"Don't care a continental if he is!" cried Walter. "I don't like him,

but you have hurt me. Bet anything Merriwell and Old Put thought I had blown! I didn't have any confidence in Merriwell's methods, but I didn't blow to the sophs! Still I was to blame for lettin' you get me full and pump me. And the fellows think I'm a tattler! Well, I'll be hanged if I don't even up with you by hammering the face off you right now!"

Walter stood up and attempted to grasp Ditson's arm, but he was so full that he made a miscalculation and caught nothing but empty air. Then he struck across the table at Roll.

"Oh, you would hit me, would you!" grated Ditson, who saw that his companion was much the drunker. "You would hammer my face! Well, perhaps I'll do some hammering myself!"

Then he caught up an empty champagne bottle and swung it over his head as if to strike Gordon.

Like a flash Merriwell's hand darted down over the top of the screen and snatched the bottle from Roll's grasp.

A moment later Frank went around the screen and confronted the two lads, still holding the bottle in his hand.

"I saved you from having a cracked head that time, Gordon," he said as he collared Ditson. "And I have found out who the traitor is. I am glad you are not the man. As for this thing"--he gave Ditson a shake that caused the fellow's teeth to click together--"he has shown to-night that he is a most contemptible cur! I hated to think him as dirty as he has shown himself to be."

Frank's face was full of unutterable disgust for Ditson.

Other freshmen came crowding into the corner, and Ditson saw himself regarded with scorn and contempt by everybody. He cowed like a whipped cur and whined:

"I was simply fooling; it was all a jolly. I never did anything of the sort. I was simply trying to get Gordon on the string by telling him so."

"Well, you got yourself on a string, and pretty well tangled up. Gentlemen"--turning to the freshmen present--"here is the traitor who has been giving our secrets away to the sophs. Both Rattleton and myself heard him acknowledge it. Take a good look at him, so you will know him in the future."

"Oh, we'll know him!" cried many voices.

"It's a mistake--" Roll began.

"That's right," agreed Frank. "The worst mistake you ever made. At last you have shown just what you are, and everybody is dead onto you. Get out of this!"

"Tar and feather him!" shouted a voice.

"Let him go," advised Merriwell. "He is covered with a coating of disgrace that will not come off as easily as tar and feathers."

Ditson sneaked away, the hisses of his classmates sounding in his ears. The look on his face as he rolled his eyes toward Merriwell before leaving the room was malicious in the extreme.

Frank turned to Walter, who did not seem to know what to do.

"Gordon, you have found that fellow out, which is a lucky thing for you," he said. "He would have ruined you. At the same time, I have found out that you had no hand in the sneaking work that has been going on of late. You were simply an unconscious and unwilling tool, and it did me good to see you resent it when you found out what Ditson had been doing."

Walter tried to say something, but he choked and stammered. Then he muttered something about having a drink all around, but Frank assured him that he had taken quite enough.

Rattleton and Robinson led the crowd away from the corner, and Merriwell had a brief talk with Gordon. Then Harry and Frank took Gordon out and did not leave him till he was safely in his room. As they were going away Walter thickly said:

"Merriwell!"

"What is it?"

"I want to 'pologize."

"What for?"

"Things I've said 'bout you."

"I don't know about them."

"'Cause I've said 'em behind your back. Sneakin' thing to do! Merriwell, I'm 'shamed--I am, by thunder! I guess you're all right. Don't b'lieve you ever done me dirt. Is it all right, old man?"

"Yes, it's all right."

"Say, that makes me feel better. It does, by thunder! You're a good fellow, Merriwell, and I'm--I'm a fool! I talk too much! Drink too much, too. You don't talk and you don't drink. You're all right. Good-night, Merriwell."

"Good-night, Gordon."

When Frank retired the second time that night it was with a feeling of intense relief, for the perplexing problem as to the identity of the traitor had been settled, and he felt that he had done Gordon a good turn by getting him away from Ditson.

And Ditson? Well, he deserved to pass a wretched night, and he did. He felt that he was forever disgraced at Yale, but he did not seem to consider it his own fault. He blamed Merriwell for it all, and his heart was hot with almost murderous rage. Over and over he swore that he would get square some way--any way.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE RACE.

The day for the race came at last--a sunny day, with the air clear and cold. Just the right sort of a day for the best of work.

Everybody seemed bound for Lake Saltonstall. They were going out in

carriages, hacks, coaches, on foot, by train, and in many other ways. The road to the lake was lined with people. The students were shouting, singing and blowing horns. One crowd of freshmen had a big banner, on which was lettered:

"Umpty-eight, she is great,
She will win sure as fate."

Evidently the sophomores had been informed about this banner in advance, for they carried one which declared:

"Umpty-eight isn't in it,
She'll be beaten in a minute."

How they shouted and taunted each other! How they raced along the road!
How sure everybody was that he could pick the winner!

The scene at the lake was beautiful and inspiring, for the shore was lined with people and there were flags and bright colors everywhere. On the point there was a great mob, composed mostly of students, who were yelling and cheering and flaunting their flags. The boats on the lake were well filled and gay with colors. New Haven swell society was fairly represented, and it certainly was an occasion to stir youthful blood.

The freshman-sophomore-junior race came fourth on the list, and it was to be the event of the day. Strangely enough, the juniors were not reckoned as dangerous by either freshmen or sophomores. Between the last two classes was to come the real tug of war.

In the boathouse the great Bob Collingwood, of the "Varsity crew, gave the freshmen some advice, and they listened to him with positive awe. He had heard of Merriwell's attempt to introduce the English stroke, and he did not approve of it.

After he had got through Merriwell took his men aside into another part of the boathouse and warned them against thinking of anything Collingwood had said.

"He is all right when he is talking to men who use his style of oar and the regular American stroke, but you will be broke up sure as fate if you think of what he has said that disagrees with my instructions. It is too late now to make any change, and we must win or lose as we have practiced."

"That's right," agreed every man.

"We'll win," said Rattleton, resolutely.

They could hear the cheering as the other races took place, and at last it came their turn. How their hearts thumped! And it was Merriwell that quieted their unsteady nerves with a few low, calm words, which seemed to give them the bracer which they needed before going into the race.

"Umpty-eight yelled like a whole tribe of Indians, wildly waving flags, hats and handkerchiefs, as the freshman boat shot out upon the lake, with Merriwell at the stroke. They did not row in the buff, as the weather was too cold, but all wore thin white shirts, with "Umpty-eight" lettered in blue on the breast.

Old rowers looked the freshmen over with astonishment, for they gave the appearance of well-drilled amateurs, and not greenhorns. There were a few expressions of approval. The novel stroke was watched and criticised, and an old grad who was regarded as authority declared that the man who set the stroke for that crew was a comer, providing he was built of the right kind of stuff.

Then came the sophs and juniors, both pulling prettily and gracefully, and both being cheered by their classes. The juniors were light, but they expected to walk away from the freshmen, as they had an expert at the stroke and had been coached by Collingwood.

Soon the three crews lined up, and the voice of the referee was heard:

"Are you ready?"

Dead silence.

"Go!"

Away shot the boats, and the sophs took the lead directly, their short, snappy stroke giving the boat the required impetus in short order. The juniors held close on to them, while the freshmen seemed to take altogether too much time to get away, striking a regular, long, swinging stroke that seemed to be "overdone," as a jubilant sophomore spectator characterized it.

The sophs along the shore and on the point were wild with delight. They danced and howled, confident of victory at the very outset. The juniors were enthusiastic, but not so demonstrative as the sophomores. The freshmen cheered, but there seemed to be disappointment in the sound.

"Whoop 'er up for 'Umpty-seven!" howled the sophs. "Whoop 'er up! 'Rah! 'rah! 'rah! This is a cinch!"

"'Umpty-eight is in it; she will catch 'em in a minute," sang the freshmen. "She is crawling on them!"

"All she can do is crawl!" yelled a soph, but his remark was drowned in the wild tumult of noise.

"'Umpty-six is up to tricks!" shouted the juniors. "'Umpty-six, they are bricks! Whoop 'er up! 'Rah! 'rah! 'rah!"

The yelling of the freshmen became louder, for their crew was holding its own--was beginning to gain.

"That is the best freshman crew that ever appeared at Saltonstall," declared a spectator. "Every man seems to be a worker. There's no one shirking."

"And look at the stroke oar," urged another. "That fellow is the winner! He is working like a veteran, and he is setting a stroke that is bound to tell before the race is over."

This was true enough. The strong, long stroke of the freshmen kept their boat going steadily at high speed once it was in motion, and they steadily overhauled the juniors, who had fallen away from the sophs. At the stake the freshman crew passed the juniors, and the freshmen witnesses had fits.

But that was not the end of the excitement. The speed of the freshman boat was something wonderful, and it was overhauling the sophs, despite the fact that they were pulling for dear life to hold the lead.

And now the shouting for 'Umpty-eight was heard on every side. The sophs were encouraging their men to hold the advantage to the finish, but still the freshmen were gaining.

The nose of the freshman boat crept alongside the sophs, whose faces wore a do-or-die look. The suspense was awful, the excitement was

intense:

Then Rattleton was heard talking:

"Well, this is the greatest snap we ever struck! I wonder how the sophs like the Oxford stroke? Oh, my! what guys we are making of them! It don't make a dit of bifference how hard they pull, they're not in the race at all. Poor sophs! Why don't they get out and walk? They could get along faster."

That seemed to break the sophs up, and then a great shout went up as the freshman boat forged into the lead. They soon led the sophs by a length, and crossed the line thirty feet in advance.

Then Rattleton keeled over, completely done up, but supremely happy.

How the freshmen spectators did cheer!

"'Umpty-eight! 'Umpty-eight! Whoop 'er up! 'Rah! 'rah! 'rah!"

It was another great victory for the freshmen--and Frank Merriwell, and that night a great bonfire blazed on the campus and the students made merry. They blew horns, sang, cheered and had a high old time.

The freshmen made the most noise, and they were very proud and aggressive. Never had Yale College freshmen seemed happier.

"Where is Merriwell?" was the question that went around.

A committee was sent to search for him, and they returned with him on their shoulders. He tried to get down, but he could not.

Uncle Blossom climbed on a box and shouted:

"Three cheers for 'Umpty-eight, the winners!"

The cheers were given.

Easy Street leaped on another box and yelled:

"Three cheers for Frank Merriwell, the winning oar!"

It seemed that the freshmen were trying to split their throats. And not a few juniors joined with them, showing how much admiration Merriwell had won outside his own class.

Walter Gordon cheered with the others, but Roland Ditson stood at a distance, beating his heart out with rage and jealousy. He was all alone, for at Yale not one man was left who cared to acknowledge Ditson as a friend.

CHAPTER XXVII.

A CHANGE OF PITCHERS.

"The game is lost!"

"Sure."

"Yale has not scored since the second inning."

"That's right. She made one in the first and three in the second, and then comes four beautiful whitewashes. Harvard hasn't missed a trick, and the score is eleven to four in her favor."

"Lewis, this is awful!"

"Right you are, Jones. Hear those Harvard rooters whoop up! It gives me nervous prostration."

The Yale freshmen were playing the Harvard freshmen on the grounds of the latter team, and quite a large delegation had come on from New Haven to witness the game, which was the second of the series of three arranged between the freshmen teams of the two colleges. The first had been played at New Haven, and the third was to be played on neutral ground.

Yale had won the first game by heavy batting, the final score being twelve to eleven. As the regular 'Varsity nine had likewise won the first of their series with Harvard, the "Sons of Eli" began to think they had a sure thing, and those who came on from New Haven were dead sure in their minds that they would bring back the scalps of the Harvard freshmen. They said over and over that there would be no need of a third game to settle the matter; Yale would settle it in the second.

Walter Gordon had pitched the whole of the first Harvard game. He had been hammered for thirteen singles, two two-baggers, and a three-bagger, and still Yale had pulled out, which was rather remarkable. But Walter had managed to keep Harvard's hits scattered, while Yale bunched their hits in two innings, which was just enough to give them the winning score.

It was said that Frank Merriwell was to be given a show in the second game, and a large number of Yale men who were not freshmen had come on to see what he would do. Pierson had been particularly anxious to see Merriwell work, and he had taken a great deal of trouble to come on. The "great and only" Bob Collingwood, of the 'Varsity crew, had accompanied Pierson, and both were much disappointed, not to say disgusted, when Old Put put in Gordon and kept him in the box, despite the fact that he was being freely batted.

"What's the matter with Putnam?" growled Pierson. "Has he got a grudge against Merriwell, or does he intend to lose this game anyway?"

"He's asleep," said Collingwood, wearily. "He's stuck on Gordon."

"He must be thick if he can't see Gordon is rapidly losing his nerve. Why, the fellow is liable to go to pieces at any minute and let those Willies run in a score that will be an absolute disgrace."

"Go down and talk to him, Pierson."

"Not much! I am too well known to the Harvard gang. They wouldn't do a thing to me--not a thing!"

"Then let's get out of here. It makes me sick to hear that Harvard yell. I can't stand it, Pierson."

"Wait. I want to see Merriwell go into the box, if they will let him at all. That's what I came for."

"But he can't save the game now. The Yale crowd is not doing any batting. All Harvard has to do is to hold them down, and they scarcely have touched Coulter since the second inning."

"That's right, but the fellow is easy, Coll. If they ever should get

onto him--"

"How can they? They are not batters."

Pierson nodded.

"That is true," he admitted. "They are weak with the stick. Diamond is the only man who seems to know how to go after a ball properly. He is raw, but there is mighty good stuff in that fellow. If he sticks to baseball he will be on the regular team before he finishes his course."

"I believe Merriwell has shown up well as a batter in practice."

"He certainly has."

"Well, I should think Old Put would use him for his hitting, if for nothing else. He is needed."

"It seems to me that there is a nigger in the woodpile."

"You think Merriwell is held back for reasons not known?"

"I do."

"Say, by jingoes! I am going down and talk to Putnam. If he doesn't give Merriwell a trial he's a chump."

"Hold on."

"What for? If I wait it will be too late for Merriwell to go in on the first of the seventh."

"Perhaps Merriwell may stand on his dignity and refuse to go in at all at this late stage of the game."

"He wouldn't be to blame if he did, for he can't win out."

"Something is up. Hello! Merriwell is getting out of his sweater! I believe Putnam is going to send him out!"

There was a great satisfaction in Pierson's voice. At last it seemed that he would get a chance to see Merriwell work.

"Somebody ought to go down and rap Putnam on the coco with a big heavy club!" growled Collingwood. "He should have made the change long ago. The Harvard Willies have been piling up something every inning."

Down on the visitors' bench Merriwell was seen to peel off, while Gordon was talking rather excitedly to Burnham Putnam. It seemed evident by his manner that he was speaking of something that did not please him very much.

Merriwell was pulled out of his sweater, and then somebody tossed him a practice ball. Little Danny Griswold, the Yale shortstop, put on a catcher's mitt and prepared to catch for Frank.

Yale was making a last desperate struggle for a score in the sixth inning. With one man out and a man on first, a weak batter came up. If the batter tried to get a hit, it looked like a great opportunity for a double play by Harvard.

Old Put, who was in uniform, ran down to first, and sent in the coacher, whose place he took on the line. Then he signaled the batter to take one, his signal being obeyed, and it proved to be a ball.

Put was a great coacher, and now he opened up in a lively way, with Robinson rattling away over by third. Put was not talking simply to rattle the pitcher; he was giving signals at the same time, and he signed for the man on first to go down on the next pitch, at the same time giving the batter the tip to make a fake swing at the ball to bother the catcher.

This programme was carried out, and it worked, for the runner got second on a slide and a close decision.

Then the Yale rooters opened their throats, and blue banners fluttered in a bunch over on the bleachers where the New Haven gang was packed together.

"Yell, you suckers, yell!" cried Dickson, Harvard's first baseman. "It's the only chance you'll get."

His words were drowned in the tumult and noise.

Up in the grand stand there was a waving of blue flags and white handkerchiefs, telling that there were not a few of the fair spectators who sympathized with the boys from New Haven.

Then the man at the bat reached first on a scratch hit and a fumble, and there seemed to be a small rift in the clouds which had lowered over the heads of the Yale freshmen so long.

But the next man up promptly fouled out, and the clouds seemed to close in again as dark as ever.

In the meantime Frank was warming up with the aid of Danny Griswold, and Walter Gordon sat on the bench, looking sulky and downcast.

"Gordon is a regular pig," said one of the freshman players to a companion. "He doesn't know when he has enough."

"Well, we know we have had enough of him this game," said the other, sourly. "If we had played a rotten fielding game Harvard would have a hundred now."

"Well, nearly that," grinned the first speaker. "Gordon hasn't struck out a man."

"And still he is sore because Putnam is going to put Merriwell in! I suppose that is natural, but—Hi, there! look a' that! Great Scott! what sloppy work! Did you see Newton get caught playing off second? Well, that gives me cramps! Come on; he's the last man, and we'll have to go out."

So, to the delight of the Harvard crowd, Yale was whitewashed again, and there seemed no show for the New Haven boys to win.

Walter Gordon remained on the bench, and Frank walked down into the box. Then came positive proof of Merriwell's popularity, for the New Haven spectators arose as one man, wildly waving hats and flags, and gave three cheers and a tiger for Frank.

"That's what kills him!" exclaimed Pierson in disgust. "It is sure to rattle any green man."

"That's right," yawned Collingwood. "It's plain we have wasted our time in coming here to-day."

"It looks that way from the road. Why couldn't the blamed chumps keep still, so he could show what he is made of?"

"It's ten to one he won't be able to find the plate for five minutes. I believe I can see him shaking from here."

The Harvard crowd had never heard of Merriwell, and they regarded him with no little interest as he walked into the box. When the Yale spectators were through cheering Harvard took it up in a derisive way, and it certainly was enough to rattle any fellow with ordinary nerves.

But Frank did not seem to hear all the howling. He paid no attention to the cheers of his friends or the jeers of the other party. He seemed in no great hurry. He made sure that every man was in position, felt of the pitcher's plate with his foot, kicked aside a small pebble, and then took any amount of time in preparing to deliver.

Collingwood began to show some interest. He punched Pierson in the ribs with his elbow and observed:

"Hanged if he acts as if he is badly rattled!"

"That's so. He doesn't seem to be in a hurry," admitted Paul. "He is using his head at the very start, for he is giving himself time to become cool and steady."

"He has Gibson, the best batter on the Harvard team, facing him. Gibson is bound to get a safe hit."

"He is pretty sure to, and that is right."

Merriwell knew that Nort Gibson was the heaviest and surest batter on the Harvard team, but he had been watching the fellow all through the game, trying to "get his alley." He had seen Gibson light on a drop and smash it fiercely, and then he had seen him get a safe hit off a rise, while an outcurve did not fool him at all, as he would bang it if it came over the plate or let it alone when it went outside.

Frank's mind was made up, and he had resolved to give Gibson everything in close to his fingers. Then, if he did hit it, he was not liable to knock it very far.

The first ball Merriwell delivered looked like a pretty one, and Gibson went after it. It was an inshoot, and the batter afterward declared it grazed his knuckles as it passed.

"One strike!" called the umpire.

"What's this! what's this!" exclaimed Collingwood, sitting up and rubbing his eyes. "What did he do, anyway?"

"Fooled the batter with a high inshoot," replied Pierson.

"Well, he doesn't seem to be so very rattled after all."

"Can't tell yet. He did all right that time, but Gibson has two more chances. If he gets a drop or an outcurve that is within reach, he will kill it."

Ben Halliday was catching for Yale. Rattleton, the change catcher and first baseman, was laid off with a bad finger. He was rooting with the New Haven gang.

Halliday returned the ball and signaled for a rise, but Merriwell shook his head and took a position that meant that he wished to try the same thing over again. Halliday accepted, and then Frank sent the ball like a shot.

This time it seemed a certain thing that Frank had depended on a high straight ball, and Gibson could not let it pass. He came near breaking his back trying to start the cover on the ball, but once more he fanned the air.

"Great Jupiter!" gasped Collingwood, who was now aroused. "What did he do then, Pierson?"

"Fooled the fellow on the same thing exactly!" chuckled Paul. "Gibson wasn't looking for two in the same place."

Now the freshmen spectators from Yale let themselves out. They couldn't wait for the third strike, but they cheered, blew horns and whistles, and waved flags and hats.

Merriwell had a trick of taking up lots of time in a busy way without pitching the ball while the excitement was too high, and his appearance seemed to indicate that he was totally deaf to all the tumult.

"That's right, Merry, old boy!" yelled an enthusiastic New Haven lad. "Trim his whiskers with them."

"Wind them around his neck, Frank!" cried Harry Rattleton. "You can do it!"

Rattleton had the utmost confidence in his chum, and he had offered to bet that not one of the first three men up would get a safe hit off him. Sport Harris, who was always looking for a chance to risk something, promptly took Harry up, and each placed a "sawbuck" in the hands of Deacon Dunning.

"I am sorry for you, Harris," laughed Rattleton after Gibson had missed the second time, "but he's going to use them all that way."

"Wait, my boy," returned Sport, coolly. "I am inclined to think this man will get a hit yet."

"I'll go you ten to five he doesn't."

"Done!"

They had no time to put up the money, for Merriwell was at work again, and they were eager to watch him.

The very next ball was an outcurve, but it was beyond Gibson's reach and he calmly let it pass. Then followed a straight one that was on the level with the top of the batter's head, and Gibson afterward expressed regret that he did not try it. The third one was low and close to Gibson's knees.

Three balls had been called in succession, and the next one settled the matter, for it stood three to two.

"Has he gone to pieces?" anxiously asked Collingwood.

"I don't think so," answered Pierson, "but he has wasted good opportunities trying to pull Gibson. He is in a bad place now."

"You have him in a hole, Gibson," cried a voice. "The next one must be right over, and he can't put it there."

"It looks as if you would win, Rattleton," said Harris in mild disgust. "Merriwell is going to give the batter his base, and so, of course, he will not get a hit."

Harry was nettled, and quick as a flash returned:

"Four balls hits for a go--I mean goes for a hit in this case."

Harris laughed.

"Now I have you sure," he chuckled.

"In your mind, Sport, old boy."

Merriwell seemed to be examining the pitcher's plate, then he looked up like a flash, his eyes seeming to sparkle, and with wonderful quickness delivered the ball.

"It's an outcurve," was the thought which flashed through Gibson's mind as he saw the sphere had been started almost directly at him.

If it was an outcurve it seemed certain to pass over the center of the plate, and it would not do to let it pass. It was speedy, and the batter was forced to make up his mind in a fraction of a second.

He struck at it--and missed!

"Three strikes--batter out!" called the umpire, sharply.

Gibson dropped his stick in a dazed way, muttering:

"Great Scott! it was a straight ball and close to my fingers!"

He might have shouted the words and not been heard, for the Yale rooters were getting in their work for fair. They gave one great roar of delight, and then came the college yell, followed by the freshman cheer. At last they were given an opportunity to use their lungs, after having been comparatively silent for several innings.

"Whoop 'er up for 'Umpty-eight!" howled a fellow with a heavy voice.

"What's the matter with 'Umpty-eight?"

"She's all right!" went up the hoarse roar.

"What's the matter with Merriwell?"

"He's all right!" again came that roar.

When the shouting had subsided, Rattleton touched Harris on the shoulder and laughingly asked:

"Do I win?"

"Not yet. There are two more coming."

"But I win just as hard, my boy."

"Hope you do."

The next Harvard batter came up, determined to do something, although he was a trifle uncertain. He let the first one pass and heard a strike called, which did not please him much. The second one was a coxer, and he let that ball go by. The umpire called a ball. The third was a high one, but it looked good, and he tried for it. It proved to be a rise, and he struck under it at least a foot.

Bob Collingwood was growing enthusiastic.

"That Merriwell is full of tricks," he declared. "Think how he secretly coached the freshman crew up on the Oxford stroke last fall and won the race at Saltonstall. If it hadn't been for a traitor nobody would have known what he was doing with the crew, for he wouldn't let them practice at the machines."

"I have had my eye on him ever since he entered Yale," confessed Pierson. "I have seen that he is destined to come to the front."

The batter seemed angry because he had been deceived so easily, and this gave Frank satisfaction, for an angry man can be deceived much easier than one who keeps cool.

Merriwell held them close in on the batter, who made four fouls in succession, getting angrier each moment. By this time an outdrop was the thing to fool him, and it worked nicely.

"Three strikes and out!" called the umpire.

Frank had struck out two men, and the Yale crowd could not cheer loud enough to express their delight.

Old Put was delighted beyond measure, but he was keeping pretty still, for he knew what he was sure to hear if Yale did not pull the game out some way. He knew everybody would be asking him why he did not put Merriwell in the box before.

Lewis Little was hugging himself with satisfaction, while Dismal Jones' long face actually wore something suggestive of a smile.

Rattleton felt like standing on his head and kicking up his heels with the delight he could not express.

"Oh, perhaps they will give Frank a show after this!" he thought. "Didn't I tell Put, the blooming idiot? It took him a long time to get out of his trance."

Sport Harris coolly puffed away at a black cigar, seemingly perfectly unconcerned, like a born gambler. He had black hair and a faint line of a mustache. He was rather handsome in a way, but he had a pronounced taste for loud neckties.

The next batter to come up was nervous, as could be seen at a glance. He did not wish to strike out, but he was far too eager to hit the ball, and he went after a bad one at the very start, which led him to get a mild call down from the bench.

Then the fellow let a good one pass, which rattled him worse than ever. The next looked good and he swung at it.

He hit it, and it went up into the air, dropping into Merriwell's hands, who did not have to step out of his tracks to get it.

Yale had whitewashed Harvard for the first time in that game.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE GAME GROWS HOTTER.

By the noise the Yale crowd made one might have fancied the game was theirs beyond a doubt.

"Poor fellows!" said one languid Harvardite to an equally languid companion. "It's the only chance they have had to cheer. Do let them make a little noise."

"Yas," said his companion, "do. It isn't at all likely they will get another opportunity during this game."

There were cheers for Merriwell, but Frank walked to the bench and put on his sweater as if utterly unconscious of the excitement he had created. His unconcerned manner won fresh admiration for him.

Old Put congratulated Frank as soon as the bench was reached.

"That was great work, Merriwell. Keep it up! Keep it up!"

"That kind of work will not win the game as the score stands," returned Frank. "Some batting must be done, and there must be some score getting."

"You are right, and you are the second man up this inning. See what you can do."

"If I had known I came so soon I wouldn't have put on my sweater."

"Keep it on. You must not get chilly. We can't tell what may happen. Harder games than this have been pulled out. They lead us but five scores."

"Blossom bats ahead of me, does he? Well, he never got a hit when one was wanted in all his life; but he's got a trick that is just as good, if he will try to work it."

"Getting hit by the ball? He is clever at that. Tell him to work the dodge this time if he can. Get him onto first some way. We must have some scores, if we steal them."

"I wish we might steal a few."

"If I get first and Blossom is ahead of me on second, let us try the double steal. I may be caught at second or he may be caught at third, and there is a bare possibility that we'll both make our bags. At any rate, but one of us is liable to be caught, and if it is Blossom it will leave us scarcely any worse off than before. If it is myself, why, Blossom will be on third, we'll have one man out, and stand a good show of scoring once at least."

Merriwell said this in a quiet manner, not at all as if he were trying to dictate, and Putnam made no reply. However, he spoke to Blossom, who was picking out his bat.

"Look here, Uncle," he said, "I want you to get first base in some way. Do you understand?—in some way. If you can't make a hit or get it on balls, get hit."

Blossom made a wry face.

"Coulter's got speed to burn," he said, "but I'll try to get hit if he gives me an in, even though it kills me."

"That's what I want," returned Old Put, grimly. "Never mind if it does kill you. We are after scores, and a life or two is of small consequence."

"That's a pleasant way of looking at it," muttered Blossom as he

advanced to the plate. "Here goes nothing!"

The very first ball was an inshoot, and Blossom pretended to dodge and slip. The ball took him in the side and keeled him over instantly. He was given a little water, whereupon he got up and trotted down to first, his hand clinging to his side, but grinning a bit in a sly way.

There was a brief discussion about giving Blossom a runner, but when one was chosen who could not run as well as he could himself, he suddenly found himself in condition to get along all right.

Merriwell took his place at the bat, having selected a bat that was a trifle over regulation length, if anything.

Frank saw a hole in right field, and he hoped to be able to place a hit right there. If he could do it, there was a chance for Blossom to get around to third on a single.

Coulter knew nothing of Merriwell's batting, so he was forced to experiment on the man. He tried a drop that almost hit the plate, but Frank did not bite. Then Coulter sent over a high one, and still Merriwell refused to swing, and two balls had been called.

Coulter had a trick of holding a man close on first, and so Blossom had not obtained lead enough to attempt to steal second.

Frank felt that Coulter would make an attempt to get the next one over the outside or inside corner of the plate, as it would not do to have three balls in succession called without a single strike.

Merriwell was right. Coulter sent one over the inside corner, using a straight ball. Still Merriwell did not offer at it, for he could not have placed it in the right field if he had tried.

"One strike!" called the umpire.

Although he seemed quite unconcerned, Sport Harris had been nettled when Rattleton won the ten-dollar bet, and he now said:

"I will go you even money, Rattleton, that Merriwell does not get a hit. If he goes down on four balls the bet is off."

"I'll stand you," nodded Harry, laughingly. "Why, Harris, I never dreamed you were such an easy mark! Merriwell is bound to get a hit."

"Ha! ha!" mocked Harris. "Is that so? And he just let a good one pass without wiggling his bat!"

"It wasn't where he wanted it."

"And Coulter will not give him one where he wants it."

"Coulter doesn't know anything about Merriwell's batting, and so he is liable to make a break at any moment."

This proved right, for Coulter tried to fool Frank with an outcurve on the next delivery. He started the ball exactly as he had the one before it, to all appearances as if he meant to send another straight one over the inside corner. He believed Merriwell would bite at it, and he was right.

But right there Coulter received a shock, for Merriwell leaned forward as he swung, assuming such a position that the ball must have hit him if it had been a straight one. It had a sharp, wide curve, and passed at least ten inches beyond the plate.

Passed? Not much! Merriwell hit it, and sent a "daisy cutter" down into right field, exactly where he wished to place it.

Down on the coach line near first little Danny Griswold had convulsions. He whooped like a wild Indian.

"Spring, ye snails! Tear up the dust, ye sons of Eli! Two--make it two, Blos, old boy! Why, this game is easy now! We've just got started! Whoop! Whoopee!"

In going over second Blossom tripped and fell heavily. When he scrambled to his feet he was somewhat dazed, and it was too late for him to try for third. He saw Halliday down by third motioning wildly for him to get back and hold second, but there was such a roar of voices that he could not hear a word the coaches were saying. However, the signals were enough, and he got back.

Now the "Sons of Eli" were all on their feet, and they were making the air quiver. It was enough to inspire any man to do or die, and it is doubtful if there was not a man on the Yale team who did not feel at that moment that he was willing to lay down his life, if necessary, to win that game.

When the shouting had subsided in a measure, Rattleton was heard to shout from his perch on the shoulders of a companion, to which position he had shinned in his excitement:

"Right here is where we trick our little do, gentlemen--er--I mean we do our little trick. Ready to the air of 'Oh, Give Us a Drink, Bartender.' Let her go!"

Then the Yale crowd broke into an original song, the words of which were:

"Oh, hammer it out, Old Eli, Old Eli,
As you always have, you know;
For it's sure that we're all behind you, behind you,
And we will cheer you as you go.
We're in the game to stay, my lads, my lads,
We will win it easily, too;
So give three cheers for old 'Umpty-eight--
Three cheers for the boys in blue!
Breka Co ax, Co ax, Co ax!
Breka Co ax, Co ax, Co ax!
O--up! O--up!
Parabaloo--
Yale! Yale! Yale!
'Rah! 'rah! 'rah!
Yale!"

The enthusiasm which this created was immense, and the next man walked up to the plate filled with determination. However, Old Put was shrewd enough to know the man might be too eager, and so he gave the signal for him to take one anyway.

Coulter was decidedly nervous, as was apparent to everybody, and it seemed that there was a chance of getting him badly rattled. That was exactly what the Yale crowd was doing its best to accomplish.

Merriwell crept away from first for a long lead, but it was not easy to get, as Coulter drove him back with sharp throws each time. Then Blossom came near being caught napping off second, but was given "safe" on a close decision.

Suddenly Coulter delivered, and the batter obeyed Old Put and did not offer, although it was right over the heart of the plate.

"One strike!" was called.

Now came the time for the attempted double steal that Frank had suggested. Putnam decided to try it on, and he signaled for it. At the same time he signaled the batter to make a swing to bother the catcher, but not to touch the ball.

Frank pretended to cling close to first, but he was watching for Coulter's slightest preliminary motion in the way of delivery. It came, and Old Put yelled from the coach line, where he had replaced Griswold:

"Gear!"

Frank got a beautiful start, and Blossom made a break for third. If Blossom had secured a lead equal to Merriwell's he would have made third easily. As it was, the catcher snapped the ball down with a short-arm throw, and Blossom was caught by a foot.

Then it was Harvard's turn, and the Cambridge lads made the most of it. A great roar went up, and the crimson seemed to be fluttering everywhere.

"Har-vard! Har-vard! Har-vard! 'Rah! 'rah! 'rah! 'Rah! 'rah! 'rah! 'Rah! 'rah! 'rah! Harvard!"

One strike and one ball had been called on the batter, and Merriwell was on second, with one man out. Yale was still longing vainly for scores. It began to look as if they would still be held down, and Coulter was regaining his confidence.

Frank was aware that something sensational must be done to keep Coulter on the string. He longed for an opportunity to steal third, but knew he would receive a severe call down from Old Put if he failed. Still he was ready to try if he found the opportunity.

Frank took all the lead he could secure, going up with the shortstop every time the second baseman played off to fill the right field gap. He was so lively on his feet that he could go back ahead of the baseman every time, and Coulter gave up trying to catch him after two attempts.

Frank took all the ground he could, and seeing the next ball was an outdrop he legged it for third.

"Slide! slide! slide!" howled the astonished Halliday, who was still on the coach line at third.

Frank obeyed, and he went over the ground as if he had been greased for the occasion. He made the steal with safety, having a second to spare.

Rattleton lost his breath yelling, and the entire Yale crowd howled as one man. The excitement was at fever pitch.

Bob Collingwood was gasping for breath, and he caught hold of Paul Pierson, shouting in his ear:

"What do you think of that?"

"Think of it?" returned Pierson. "It was a reckless piece of work, and Merriwell would have got fits if he'd failed."

"But he didn't fail."

"No; that lets him out. He is working to rattle Coulter, but he took desperate chances. I don't know but it's the only way to win this game."

"Of course it is."

"Merriwell is a wonderful runner. I found that out last fall, when I made up as Professor Grant and attempted to relieve him of a turkey he had captured somewhere out in the country. I blocked his road at the start, but he slugged me with the turk and then skipped. I got after him, and you know I can run some. Thought I was going to run him down easily or make him drop the bird; but I didn't do either and he got away. Oh, he is a sprinter, and it is plain he knows how to steal bases. I believe he is the best base runner on the freshman team, if he is not too reckless."

"He is a dandy!" exclaimed Collingwood. "I have thought the fellow was given too much credit, but I've changed my mind. Pierson, I believe he is swift enough for the regular team. What do you think of it?"

"I want to see more of his work before I express myself."

Merriwell's steal had indeed rattled Coulter, who became so nervous that he sent the batter down to first on four balls.

Then, with the first ball delivered to the next man up, the fellow on first struck out for second.

Merriwell was playing off third, and pretended to make a break for home as the catcher made a short throw to the shortstop, who ran in behind Coulter, took the ball and lined it back to the plate.

But Frank had whirled about and returned to third, so the play was wasted, and the runner reached second safely.

Then there was more Yale enthusiasm, and Coulter was so broken up that he gave little Danny Griswold a shoulder ball right over the heart of the plate.

Griswold "ate" high balls, as the Harvard pitcher very well knew. He did not fail to make connection with this one, and drove it to deep left for two bags, bringing in two runs.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE END OF THE GAME.

Now the New Haven crowd took their turn, and took it in earnest. Rattleton stood upon the shoulders of a friend, and fell off upon the heads of the crowd as he was cheering. He didn't mind that, for he kept right on cheering.

"Merriwell, I believe you have broken the streak!" cried Old Put, with inexpressible satisfaction.

"Well, I sincerely hope so," returned Frank. "I rather think we are all right now, but we've got a hard pull ahead of us. Harvard is still five in the lead, you know."

"If you can hold them down--"

"I am going to do my best."

"If you save this game the boys won't do a thing when we get back to New Haven—not a thing!"

The next batter flied out to shortstop, and Griswold remained on second.

Now there was suspense, for Yale had two men out. A sudden hush fell on the field, broken only by the voices of the two coaches.

Coulter had not recovered his nerve, and the next batter got a safe hit into right field, while Danny Griswold's short legs fairly twinkled as he scudded down to third and then tore up the dust in a mighty effort to get home on a single.

Every Yale man was on his feet cheering again, and Danny certainly covered ground in a remarkable manner. Head first he went for the plate.

The right fielder secured the ball and tried to stop Danny at the plate by a long throw. The throw was all right, but Griswold was making too much speed to be caught.

The instant Old Put, who had returned to the coach line, saw that the fielder meant to throw home, he howled for the batter to keep right on for second.

Griswold scored safely, and the catcher lost little time in throwing to second.

"Slide!" howled a hundred voices.

The runner obeyed, and he got in under the baseman, who had been forced to take a high throw.

It is impossible to describe what followed. The most of the Yale spectators acted as if they had gone crazy, and those in sympathy with Harvard showed positive alarm.

Two or three men got around the captain of the Harvard team and asked him to take out Coulter.

"Put in Peck!" they urged. "They've got Coulter going, and he will lose the game right here if you do not change."

At this the captain got angry and told them to get out. When he got ready to change he would do it without anybody's advice.

Coulter continued to pitch, and the next batter got first on an error by the shortstop.

"The whole team is going to pieces!" laughed Paul Pierson. "I wouldn't be surprised to see Old Put's boys pull the game out in this inning, for all that two men are out."

"If they do so, Merriwell is the man who will deserve the credit," said Collingwood. "That is dead right."

"Yes, it is right, for he restored confidence and started the work of rattling Coulter."

"Paul," said the great man of the "Varsity crew, "that fellow is fast enough for the regular team."

"You said so before."

"And I say so again."

Now it became evident to everybody that Coulter was in a pitiful state, for he could not find the plate at all, and the next man went down on four balls, filling the bases.

But that was not the end of it. The next batter got four balls, and a score was forced in.

Then it was seen that Peck, Harvard's change pitcher, was warming up, and it became evident that the captain had decided to put him into the box.

If the next Yale man had not been altogether too eager to get a hit, there is no telling when the inning would have stopped. He sent a high-fly foul straight into the air, and the catcher succeeded in gathering it in.

The inning closed with quite a change in the score, Harvard having a lead of but three, where it had been seven in the lead at the end of the sixth.

"I am afraid they will get on to Merriwell this time," said Sport Harris, with a shake of his head.

"Hey!" squealed Rattleton, who was quivering all over. "I'll give you a chance to even up with me. I'll bet you twenty that Harvard doesn't score."

"Oh, well, I'll have to stand you, just for fun," murmured Harris as he extracted a twenty-dollar bill from the roll it was said he always carried and handed it to Deacon Dunning. "Shove up your dough, Rattle."

Harry covered the money promptly, and then he laughed.

"This cakes the take—I mean takes the cake! I never struck such an easy way of making money! I say, fellows, we'll open something after the game, and I'll pay for it with what I win off Harris."

"That will be nice," smiled Harris; "but you may not be loaded with my money after the game."

The very first batter up, got first on an error by the second baseman who let an easy one go through him.

"The money is beginning to look my way as soon as this," said Harris.

"It is looking your way to bid you good-by," chuckled Harry, not in the least disturbed or anxious.

Merriwell had a way of snapping his left foot out of the box for a throw to first, and it kept the runner hugging the bag all the time.

Frank also had another trick of holding the ball in his hand and appearing to give his trousers a hitch, upon which he would deliver the ball when neither runner nor batter was expecting him to do so, and yet his delivery was perfectly proper.

He struck the next man out, and the batter to follow hit a weak one to third, who stopped the runner at second.

Two men were out, and still there was a man on first. Now it looked dark for Harvard that inning, and not a safe hit had been made off Merriwell thus far.

The Harvard crowd was getting anxious. Was it possible that Merriwell

would hold them down so they could not score, and Yale would yet pull out by good work at the bat?

The captain said a few words to the next batter before the man went up to the plate, and Frank felt sure the fellow had been advised to take his time.

Having made up his mind to this, Frank sent a swift straight one directly over, and, as he had expected, the batter let it pass, which caused the umpire to call a strike.

Still keeping the runner hugging first, Frank seemed to start another ball in exactly the same manner. It was not a straight one, but it was a very slow drop, as the batter discovered after he had commenced to swing. Finding he could not recover, the fellow went after the ball with a scooping movement, and then did not come within several inches of it, greatly to the delight of the Yale crowd.

"Oh, Merry has every blooming one of them on a string!" cried Rattleton. "He thon't do a wing to 'em—I mean he won't do a thing to 'em."

The Yale men were singing songs of victory already, and the Harvard crowd was doing its best to keep up the courage of its team by rooting hard.

It was a most exciting game.

"The hottest game I ever saw played by freshmen," commented Collingwood.

"It is a corker," confessed Pierson. "We weren't looking for anything of the sort a short time ago."

"I should say not. Up to the time Merriwell went in it looked as if Harvard had a walkover."

"Gordon feels bad enough about it, that is plain. He is trying to appear cheerful on the bench, but--"

"He can't stand it any longer; he's leaving."

That was right. Gordon had left the players' bench and was walking away. He tried to look pleased at the way things were going, but the attempt was a failure.

"Merriwell is the luckiest fellow alive," he thought. "If I had stayed in another inning the game might have changed. He is pitching good ball, but I'm hanged if I can understand why they do not hit him. It looks easy."

Neither could the Harvard lads thoroughly understand it, although there were some who realized that Merriwell was using his head, as well as speed and curves. And he did not use speed all the time. He had a fine change of pace, sandwiching in his slow balls at irregular intervals, but delivering them with what seemed to be exactly the same motion that he used on the speedy ones.

The fourth batter up struck out, and again Harvard was retired without a score, which caused the Yale crowd to cheer so that some of the lads got almost black in the face.

"Well! well! well!" laughed Rattleton, as Deacon Dunning passed over the money he had been holding. "This is like chicking perries—I mean picking cherries. All I have to do is to reach out and take what I want."

"If the boys will capture the game I'll be perfectly satisfied to lose," declared Harris, who did not tell the truth, however, for he was chagrined, although he showed not a sign of it.

"How can we lose? how can we lose?" chuckled Harry. "Things are coming our way, as the country editor said when he was rotten-egged by the mob."

It really seemed that Yale was out for the game at last, for they kept up their work at the bat, although Peck replaced Coulter in the box for Harvard.

Merriwell had his turn with the first batter up. One man was out, and there was a man on second. Coulter had warned Peck against giving Merriwell an outcurve. At the same time, knowing Frank had batted to right field before, the fielders played over toward right.

"So you are on to that, are you?" thought Frank. "Well, it comes full easier for me to crack 'em into left field if I am given an inshoot."

Two strikes were called on him before he found anything that suited him. Harris was on the point of betting Rattleton odds that Merriwell did not get a hit, when Frank found what he was looking for and sent it sailing into left. It was not a rainbow, so it did not give the fielder time to get under it, although he made a sharp run for it.

Then it was that Merriwell seemed to fly around the bases, while the man ahead of him came in and scored. At first the hit had looked like a two-bagger, but there seemed to be a chance of making three out of it as Frank reached second, and the coaches sent him along. He reached third ahead of the ball, and then the Yale crowd on the bleachers did their duty.

"How do you Harvard chaps like Merriwell's style?" yelled a Yale enthusiast as the cheering subsided.

Then there was more cheering, and the freshmen of 'Umpty-eight were entirely happy.

The man who followed Frank promptly flied out to first, which quenched the enthusiasm of the Yale gang somewhat and gave Harvard's admirers an opportunity to make a noise.

Frank longed to get in his score, which would leave Harvard with a lead of but one. He felt that he must get home some way.

Danny Griswold came to the bat.

"Get me home some way, Danny," urged Frank.

The little shortstop said not a word, but there was determination in his eyes. He grasped his stick firmly and prayed for one of his favorite high balls.

But Peck kept them low on Danny, who took a strike, and then was pulled on a bad one.

With two strikes on him and only one ball, the case looked desperate for Danny. Still he did not lose his nerve. He did not think he could not hit the ball, but he made himself believe that he was bound to hit it. To himself he kept saying:

"I'll meet it next time—I'll meet it sure."

He knew the folly of trying to kill the ball in such a case, and so when

he did swing, his only attempt was to meet it squarely. In this he succeeded, and he sent it over the second baseman's head, but it fell short of the fielder.

Merriwell came home while Griswold was going down to first.

And now it needed but one score for Yale to tie Harvard.

The man who followed Griswold dashed all their hopes by hitting a weak one to short and forcing Danny out at second.

Harvard cheered their men as they came in from the field.

"We must make some scores this time, boys," said the Harvard captain. "A margin of one will never do, with those fellows hitting anything and everything."

"That's exactly what they are doing," said Peck. "They are getting hits off balls they have no business to strike at."

"Oh, you are having your troubles," grinned a friend.

"Any one is bound to have when batters are picking them off the clouds or out of the dirt. It doesn't make much difference where they are."

"This man Merriwell can't hold us down as he has done," asserted Dickson, Harvard's first baseman.

"I don't know; he is pretty cagey," admitted Nort Gibson.

"I believe he is the best pitcher we'll strike this season," said another.

"Here, here, you fellows!" broke in the captain. "You are getting down-hearted, and that won't do. We've got this game and we are going to hold it; but we want to go in to clinch it right here."

They didn't do much clinching, for although the first man up hit the ball, he got to first on an error by the third baseman, who fumbled in trying to pick it up.

Blossom was the third baseman, and he was confused by his awkwardness, expecting to get a call down.

"Steady, Bloss, old boy!" said Frank, gently. "You are all right. The best of us do those things occasionally. It is nothing at all."

These words relieved Blossom's feelings and made him vow that he would not let another ball play chase around his feet.

Frank struck the next man out, and held the runner on first while he was doing it. The third man sent an easy pop-fly to Blossom, who got hold of it and clung to it for dear life.

Then the runner got second on a passed ball, but he advanced no farther, for the following batter rolled a weak one down to Frank, who gathered it in and threw the man out at first.

In three innings not a safe hit had been made off Merriwell, and he had struck out five men. No wonder his admirers cheered him wildly as he went to the bench.

Yale started in to make some scores. The very first man up got a hit and stole second. The next man went to the bat with the determination to slug the ball, but Old Put signaled for a sacrifice, as the man was a

good bunt hitter.

The sacrifice was tried, and it worked, for the man on second got third, although the batter was thrown out at first.

"Now we need a hit!" cried Put. "It takes one to tie and two to win. A hit ties the game."

Rattleton offered to bet Harris two to one that Yale would win, but Sport declined the offer.

"It's our game fast enough," he said. "You are welcome to what you have won off me. I am satisfied."

But the game was not won. Amid the most intense excitement the next man fouled out.

Then Peck seemed to gather himself to save the game for Harvard. He got some queer quirks into his delivery, and, almost before the Yale crowd could realize it, two strikes were called on the batter.

The Yale rooters tried to rattle Peck, but they succeeded in rattling the batter instead, and, to their unutterable dismay and horror, he fanned at a third one, missed it, and—

"Batter is out!" cried the umpire.

Then a great roar for Harvard went up, and the dazed freshmen from New Haven realized they were defeated after all.

CHAPTER XXX.

RATTLETON IS EXCITED.

"It wasn't Merriwell's fault that the freshies didn't win," said Bob Collingwood to Paul Pierson as they were riding back to New Haven on the train that night.

"Not a bit of it," agreed Pierson. "I was expecting a great deal of Merriwell, but I believe he is a better man than I thought he could be."

"Then you have arrived at the conclusion that he is fast enough for the regular team?"

"I rather think he is."

"Will you give him a trial?"

"We may. It is a bad thing for any freshman to get an exalted opinion of himself and his abilities, for it is likely to spoil him. I don't want to spoil Merriwell--"

"Look here," interrupted Collingwood, impulsively. "I am inclined to doubt if it is an easy thing to spoil that fellow. He hasn't put on airs since coming to Yale, has he?"

"No."

"Instead of that, he has lived rather simply—far more so than most fellows would if they could afford anything better. He has made friends with everybody who appeared to be white, no matter whether their parents

possessed boodle or were poor."

"That is one secret of Merriwell's popularity. He hasn't shown signs of thinking himself too good to be living."

"Yet I have it straight that he has a fortune in his own right, and he may live as swell as he likes while he is here. What do you think of that?"

"It may be true," admitted Pierson. "He is an original sort of chap--"

"But they say there isn't anything small or mean about him," put in Collingwood, swiftly. "He isn't living cheap for economy's sake. You know he doesn't drink."

"Yes. I have made inquiries about his habits."

"Still they say he opens wine for his friends now and then, drinking ginger ale, or something of that sort, while they are surrounding fizz, for which he settles. And he is liberal in other ways."

"He is an enigma in some ways."

"I have heard a wild sort of story about him, but I don't take much stock in it. It is the invention of some fertile brain."

"What is it?"

"Oh, a lot of trash about his having traveled all over the world, been captured by pirates and cannibals, fought gorillas and tigers, shot elephants and so forth. Of course that's all rot."

"Of course. What does he say about it?"

"Oh, he simply laughs at the stories. If a fellow asks him point-blank if they are true he tells him not to let anybody string him. He seems to regard the whole business as a weak sort of joke that some fellow is trying to work."

"Without doubt that's what it is, for he's too young to have had such adventures. Besides that, there's no fellow modest enough to deny it if he had had them."

"Of course there isn't."

In this way that point was settled in their minds, for the time, at least.

There was no band to welcome 'Umpty-eight back to New Haven. No crowd of cheering freshmen was at the station, and those who had gone on to Cambridge to play and to see the game got off quietly--very quietly--and hurried to their rooms.

Merriwell was in his room ahead of Rattleton. Harry finally appeared, wearing a sad and doleful countenance.

"What's the matter, old man?" asked Frank as Harry came in and flung his hat on the floor, after which he dropped upon a chair. "You do not seem to feel well."

"I should think you would eel felegant--I mean feel elegant!" snapped Harry, glaring at Frank.

"Oh, what's the use to be all broken up over a little thing?"

"Wow! Little thing!" whooped Harry. "I'd like to know what you call a little thing—I would, by jee!"

"You are excited, my boy. Calm down somewhat."

"Oh, I am calm!" shouted Harry as he jumped up and kicked the chair flying into a corner. "I am perfectly calm!" he roared, tearing up and down the room. "I never was calmer in all my life!"

"You look it!" came in an amused manner from Frank's lips. "You are so very calm that it is absolutely soothing and restful to the nerves to observe you!"

Harry stopped short before Frank, thrust his hands deep into his pockets, hunched his shoulders, thrust his head forward, and glared fiercely into Merriwell's face.

"There are times when it positively is a crime not to swear," he hoarsely said. "It seems to me that this is one of the times. If you will cuss a little it will relieve my feelings immensely."

"Why don't you swear?" laughed Frank.

"Why don't I? Poly hoker--no, holy poker! I have been swearing all the way from Cambridge to New Haven, and I have completely run out of profanity."

"Well, I think you have done enough for both of us."

"Oh, indeed! Well, that is hard of me! I came in here expecting to find you breaking the furniture, and you are as calm and serene as a summer's morning. I tell you, Frank, it is an awful shock! And you are the one who should do the most swearing. I can't understand you, hanged if I can!"

"Well, you know there is an old saw that says it is useless to cry over spilled milk--"

"Confound your old saws! Crying and swearing are two different things. Don't you ever cuss, Frank?"

"Never."

"Well, I'd like to know how you can help it on an occasion like this! That is what gets me."

"Never having acquired the habit, it is very easy to get along without swearing, which is, beyond a doubt, the most foolish habit a man can get into."

Rattleton held up both hands, with a look of absolute horror on his face.

"Don't--don't preach now!" he protested. "I think the habit of swearing is a blessing sometimes--an absolute blessing. A man can relieve his feelings that way when he can't any other."

"You don't seem to have succeeded in relieving your feelings much."

"I don't? Well, you should have seen me when I got aboard the train! I was at high pressure, and there was absolute danger of an explosion. I just had to open the safety valve and blow off. And I find you as calm as a clock! Oh, Frank, it is too much--too much!" and Harry pretended to weep.

"Go it, old man," he smiled. "You will feel better pretty soon."

"I don't know whether I will or not!" snapped Harry. "It was a sheastly bame--I mean a beastly shame! That game was ours!"

"Not quite. It came very near being ours."

"It was! Why, you actually had it pulled out! You held those fellows down and never gave them a single safe hit! That was wonderful work!"

"Oh, I don't know. They are not such great batters."

"Gordon found them pretty fast. I tell you some of those fellows are batters--good ones, too."

"Well, they didn't happen to get onto my delivery."

"Happen! happen! happen! There was no happen about it. They couldn't get onto you. You had them at your mercy. It was wonderful pitching, and I can lick the gun of a son--er--son of a gun that says it wasn't!"

"I had a chance to size every man up while Gordon was pitching, and that gave me the advantage."

"That makes me tired! Of course you had time to size them up; but you couldn't have kept them without a hit if you hadn't been a dandy pitcher. Your modesty is simply sickening sometimes!"

Then Harry pranced up and down the room like an infuriated tiger, almost gnashing his teeth and foaming at the mouth.

"If I didn't think I could pitch some I wouldn't try it." said Frank, quietly. "But I am not fool enough to think I am the only one. There are others."

"Well, they are not freshmen, and I'll tell you that."

"I don't know about that."

"I do."

"All right. Have it as you like it."

"And you batted like a fiend. Twice at bat and two hits--a two-bagger and a three-bagger."

"A single and a three-bagger, if you please."

"Well, what's the matter with that? Whee jiz--mean jee whiz! Could anybody ask for anything more? You got the three-bagger just when it was needed most, and you would have saved the game if you had come to the bat in the last inning."

"You think so, but it is all guesswork. I might have struck out."

"You might, but you wouldn't. Oh, merry thunder! To think that a little single would have tied that game, and we couldn't get it! It actually makes me ill at the pit of my stomach!"

The expression on Harry's face seemed to indicate that he told the truth, for he certainly looked ill.

"Don't take it to heart so, my boy," said Frank. "The poor chaps earned that game, and they ought to have it. We'll win the last one of the series, and that's all we want. Do you want to bury poor old Harvard?"

"You can't bury her so deep that she won't crawl out, and you know that. Those fellows are decidedly soon up at Cambridge, and Yale does well to get all she can from them. You can't tell what will happen next game. They have seen you, and they may have a surprise to spring on us. If we pulled this game off the whole thing would be settled now."

"Don't think for a moment that I underestimate Harvard. She is Yale's greatest rival and is bound to do us when she can."

"We made a good bid for the game to-day, but it wasn't our luck to win, and so we may as well swallow our medicine and keep still."

"It wasn't a case of luck at all," spluttered Harry. "It was sheer bull-headedness, that's what it was! If Put had put you in long before he did the game might have been saved."

"He didn't like to pull Gordon out, you see."

"Well, if he's running this team on sentiment, the sooner he quits the better it will be for the team."

Frank said nothing, but he could not help feeling that Harry was right. Managing a ball team is purely a matter of business, and if a manager is afraid to hurt anybody's feelings he is a poor man for the position.

"Why didn't he put you in in the first place?" asked Harry.

"I don't know. I suppose he had reasons."

"Oh, yes, he had reasons! And I rather think I know what they were. I am sure I do."

"What were they?"

"Didn't you expect to pitch the game from the start to-day?"

"Yes, I did."

"I thought so."

Harry nodded, as if fully satisfied that he understood the whole matter.

"Well," said Frank, a bit sharply, "you have not explained yourself. I am curious to know why I was not put into the box at the start."

"Well, I am glad to see you show some emotion, if it is nothing more than curiosity. I had begun to think you would not show as much as that."

"Naturally I am curious."

"Do you know that Paul Pierson, manager of the 'Varsity team, went on to see this game?"

"Yes."

"Why do you suppose he did so?"

"Oh, he is acquainted with several Harvard fellows, and I presume he went to see them as much as to see the game."

"He wasn't with any Harvard fellows at the game."

"Well, what are you trying to get at?"

"Don't be in a hurry," said Harry, who was now speaking with unusual calmness. "You regard Old Put as your friend?"

"I always have."

"But you think he didn't use you just right to-day?"

"I will confess that I don't like to be used to fall back on with the hope that I may pull out a game somebody else has lost."

Harry nodded his satisfaction.

"I knew you would feel that way, unless you had suddenly grown foolish. It's natural and it's right. There is no reason why you shouldn't be the regular pitcher for our team, but still Gordon is regarded as the pitcher, while you are the change pitcher. Frank, there is a nigger in the woodpile."

"You will have to make yourself clearer than that."

"Putnam knew that Pierson was going to be present at the game."

"Well?"

"Pierson didn't go on to see any Harvard friends. He couldn't afford the time just at this season with all he has on his hands."

"Go on."

"Putnam knew Pierson was not there to see any Harvard men."

"Oh, take your time."

Harry grinned. He was speaking with such deliberation that he did not once twist his words or expressions about, as he often did when excited and in a hurry.

"That's why you wasn't put in at the start-off," he declared.

"What is why? You will have to make the whole matter plainer than you have so far. It is hazy."

"Putnam did not want Pierson to see you pitch."

"He didn't? Why not?"

"Because Pierson was there for that very purpose."

"Get out!"

"I know what I am talking about. You have kept still about it, but Pierson himself has let the cat out of the bag."

"What cat?"

"He has told--confidentially, you know--that he has thoughts of giving you a trial on the regular team. The parties he told repeated it--confidentially, you know--to others. It finally came to my ears. Old Put heard of it. Now, while Old Put seems to be your friend, he doesn't want to lose you, and he had taken every precaution to keep you in the background. He has made Gordon more prominent, and he has not let you do much pitching for Pierson to see. He permitted you to go in to-day because he was afraid Gordon would go all to pieces, and he knew what a howl would go up if he didn't do something."

Frank walked up and down the room. He did not permit himself to show any great amount of excitement, but there was a dark look on his handsome face that told he was aroused. Harry saw that his roommate was stirred up at last.

"As I have said," observed Frank, halting and speaking grimly. "I have regarded Burnham Putnam as my friend; but if he has done as you claim for the reasons you give he has not shown himself to be very friendly. There is likely to be an understanding between us."

Rattleton nodded.

"That's right," he said. "He may deny it, but I know I am not off my trolley. He didn't want Pierson to see you work because he was afraid you would show up so well that Pierson would nail you for the regular team."

"And you think that is why I have been kept in the background so much since the season opened?"

"I am dead sure of it."

"Putnam must have a grudge against me."

"No, Frank; but he has displayed selfishness in the matter. I believe he has considered you a better man than Gordon all along, and he wanted you on the team to use in case he got into a tight corner. That's why he didn't want Pierson to see you work. He didn't want to lose you. But he was forced to use you to-day, and you must have satisfied Pierson that you know your business."

"Well, Harry, you have thrown light on dark places. To-morrow I will have a little talk with Put about this matter."

"That's right," grinned Harry; "and Pierson is liable to have a little talk with you. You'll be on the regular team inside of a week."

CHAPTER XXXI.

WHAT DITSON WANTED.

On the following day the great topic of conversation for the class of 'Umpty-eight was the recent ball game. Wherever the freshmen gathered they discussed the game and the work of Gordon and Merriwell.

Gordon was a free-and-easy sort of fellow, and he had his friends and admirers, some of whom were set in their belief that he was far superior to Merriwell as a pitcher.

Roland Ditson attempted to argue on two or three occasions in favor of Gordon, but nobody paid attention to what he said, for it was known that he had tried by every possible means to injure Merriwell and had been exposed in a contemptible piece of treachery, so that no one cared to be known as his friend and associate.

Whenever Ditson would approach a group of lads and try to get in a few words he would be listened to in stony silence for some moments, and then the entire crowd would turn and walk away, without replying to his remarks or speaking to him at all.

This would have driven a fellow less sensitive than Ditson to abandon all hope of going through Yale. Of course it cut Ditson, but he would grind his teeth and mutter:

"Merriwell is to blame for it all, curse him! I won't let him triumph! The time will come when I'll get square with him! I'll have to stay here in order to get square, and stay here I will, no matter how I am treated."

Since his duplicity had been made known and his classmates had turned against him Ditson had taken to grinding in a fierce manner, and as a result he had made good progress in his studies. He was determined to stand ahead of Merriwell in that line, at least, and it really seemed that he might succeed, unless Frank gave more time to his studies and less to athletics.

This was not easy for a fellow in Merriwell's position and with his ardent love for all sorts of manly sports to do. He gave all the time he could to studies without becoming a greasy grind, but that was not as much as he would have liked.

To Ditson's disappointment and chagrin Merriwell seemed quite unaware that his enemy stood ahead of him in his classes. Frank seemed to have quite forgotten that such a person as Roll Ditson existed.

Ditson was an outcast. The fellow with whom he had roomed had left him shortly after his treachery was made public, and he was forced to room alone, as he could get no one to come in with him.

Roll did not mind this so much, however. He pretended that he was far more exclusive than the average freshman, and he tried to imitate the ways of the juniors and seniors, some of whom had swell apartments.

Ditson's parents were wealthy, and they furnished him with plenty of loose change, so that he could cut quite a dash. He had fancied that his money would buy plenty of friends for him. At first, before his real character was known, he had picked up quite a following, but he posed as a superior, which made him disliked by the very ones who helped him spend his money.

He had hoped to be a leader at Yale, but, to his dismay, he found that he did not cut much of a figure after all, and Frank Merriwell, a fellow who never drank or smoked, was far more popular. Then it was that Ditson conceived a plot to bring Merriwell into ridicule and at the same time to get in with the enemies of the freshmen--the sophomores--himself.

At last he had learned that at Yale a man is not judged so much by the money he spends and the wealth of his parents as by his own manly qualities.

But Ditson was a sneak by nature, and he could not get over it. If he started out to accomplish anything in a square way, he was likely to fancy that it could be done with less trouble in a crooked manner, and his natural instinct would switch him off from the course he should have followed.

He was not at all fond of Walter Gordon, but he liked him better than he did Merriwell, and it was gall and wormwood for him when he heard how Merriwell had replaced Gordon in the box at Cambridge and had pitched a marvelous game for three innings.

"Oh, it's just that fellow's luck!" Roll muttered to himself. "He seems to be lucky in everything he does. The next thing I'll hear is that he is going to pitch on the Varsity team."

He little thought that this was true, but it proved to be. That very day he heard some sophomores talking on the campus, and he lingered near enough to catch their words.

"Is it actually true, Parker, that Pierson has publicly stated that Merriwell is fast enough for the Varsity nine?" asked Tad Horner.

"That's what it is," nodded Puss Parker, "and I don't know but Pierson is right. I am inclined to think so."

"Rot!" exclaimed Evan Hartwick, sharply. "I don't take stock in anything of the sort. Merriwell may make a pitcher some day, but he is raw. Why, he would get his eye batted out if he were to go up against Harvard on the regular team."

"Oh, I don't know about that," said Andy Emery. "He is pretty smooth people. Is there anybody knows Pierson made such an observation concerning him?"

"Yes, there is," answered Parker.

"Who knows it?"

"I do."

"Did you hear him?"

"I did."

"That settles it."

"Yes, that settles it!" grated Roland Ditson as he walked away. "Parker didn't lie, and Pierson has intimated that Merriwell may be given a trial on the Varsity nine. If he is given a trial it will be his luck to succeed. He must not be given a trial. How can that be prevented?"

Then Ditson set himself to devise some scheme to prevent Frank from obtaining a trial on the regular nine. It was not an easy thing to think of a plan that would not involve himself in some way, and he felt that it must never be known that he had anything to do with such a plot.

That night Ditson might have been seen entering a certain saloon in New Haven, calling one of the barkeepers aside, and holding a brief whispered conversation with him.

"Is Professor Kelley in?" asked Roll.

"He is, sir," replied the barkeeper. "Do you wish to see him?"

"Well--ahem!--yes, if he is alone."

"I think he is alone. I do not think any of his pupils are with him at present, sir."

"Will you be kind enough to see?" asked Ditson. "This is a personal matter--something I want kept quiet."

The barkeeper disappeared into a back room, was gone a few minutes, and then returned and said:

"The professor is quite alone. Will you go up, sir?"

"Y-e-s," said Roll, glancing around, and then motioning for the barkeeper to lead the way.

He was taken into a back room and shown a flight of stairs.

"Knock at the door at the head of the flight," instructed the barkeeper, and after giving the man some money Ditson went up the stairs.

"Come in!" called a harsh voice when he knocked at the door.

Ditson found Kelley sitting with his feet on a table, while he smoked a strong-smelling cigar. There were illustrated sporting papers on the table, crumpled and ragged.

"Well, young feller, watcher want?" demanded the man, without removing his feet from the table or his hat from his head.

Ditson closed the door. He was very pale and somewhat agitated.

"Are we all alone?" he asked, choking a bit over the question.

"Dat's wot we are," nodded the professor.

"Is it a sure thing that our conversation cannot be overheard?"

"Dead sure."

Ditson hesitated. He seemed to find it difficult to express himself just as he desired.

"Speak right out, chummy," said Kelley in a manner intended to be reassuring. "I rudder t'inks yer wants ter lick some cove, an' yer've come ter me ter put yer in shape ter do der job. Well, you bet yer dough I'm der man ter do dat. How many lessons will yer have?"

"It is not that at all," declared Roll.

"Not dat?" cried Kelley in surprise. "Den wot do youse want?"

"Well, you see, it is like this--er, like this," faltered Roland.
"I--I've got an enemy."

"Well, ain't dat wot I said?"

"But I don't want to fight him."

"Oh, I sees! Yer wants some odder chap ter do de trick?"

"Yes, that is it. But I want them to more than lick him."

"More dan lick him? W'y, yer don't want him killed, does yer?"

"No," answered Ditson, hoarsely; "but I want his right arm broken."

"Hey?"

Down came Buster Kelley's feet from the table, upon which his knuckles fell, and then he arose from the chair, standing in a crouching position, with his hands resting on the table, across which he glared at Roland Ditson.

"Hey?" he squawked. "Just say dat ag'in, cully."

Roll was startled, and looked as if he longed to take to his heels and get away as quickly as possible; but he did not run, and he forced himself to say:

"This is a case of business, professor. I will pay liberally to have the

job done as I want it."

"An' youse wants a bloke's arm bruck?"

"Yes."

"Well, dis is a quare deal! If yer wanted his head bruck it wouldn't s'prise me; but ter want his arm bruck—jee!"

"I don't care if he gets a rap on the head at the same time, but I don't want him killed. I want his right arm broken, and that is the job I am ready to pay for."

Kelley straightened up somewhat, placed one hand on his hip, while the other rested on the table, crossed his legs, and regarded Ditson steadily with a stare that made Roll very nervous.

"I might 'a' knowed yer didn't want ter fight him yerself," the professor finally said, and Ditson did not fail to detect the contempt in his face and voice.

"No, I do not," declared Ditson, an angry flush coming to his face. "He is a scrapper, and I do not think I am his match in a brutal fight."

"Brutal is good! An' yer wants his arm bruck? Don't propose to give him no show at all, eh?"

"I don't care a continental what is done so long as he is fixed as I ask."

"I s'pose ye're one of them stujent fellers?"

"Yes, I am a student."

"An' t'other feller is a stujent?"

"Yes."

"Dem fellers is easy."

"Then you will do the job for me, will you?"

"Naw!" snorted Kelley. "Not on yer nacheral! Wot d'yer take me fer? I don't do notting of dat kind. I've got a repertation to sustain, I has."

Ditson looked disappointed.

"I am willing to pay well to have the job done," he sad.

"Well, yer can find somebody ter do it fer yer."

"But I don't know where to find anybody, professor."

Kelley sat down, relighted his cigar, restored his feet to the table, picked up a paper, seemed about to resume reading, and then observed:

"Dis is no infermation bureau, but I s'pose I might put yer ont'er a cove dat'd do der trick fer yer if yuse come down heavy wid der stuff."

"If you will I shall be ever so much obliged."

"Much erbliged don't but no whiskey. Money talks, me boy."

Ditson reached into his pocket and produced some money.

"I will give you five dollars to tell me of a man who will do the job for me," he said, pulling a five-dollar bill from the roll.

"Make it ten an' I goes yer," said Kelley, promptly.

"Done. Here is your money."

Ditson handed it over.

"I'd oughter made it twenty," grumbled the pugilist. "Dis business is outer my line entirely, an' I don't want ter be mixed up in it at all--see? I has a reperation ter sustain, an' it wouldn't do fer nobody ter know I ever hed anyt'ing ter do wid such a job as dis."

"There is no danger that anybody will ever know it," declared Ditson, impatiently. "I will not say anything about it."

"Well, yer wants ter see dat yer don't. If yer do, I'll hunt yer up meself, an' I won't do a t'ing ter youse--not a t'ing!"

"Save your threats and come to business. I am impatient to get away, as I do not care to be seen here by anybody who may drop in."

"Don't care ter be seen here! I like dat--nit! Better men dan youse has been here, an' don't yer fergit dat!"

"Oh, I don't care who has been here! You have the money. Now tell me where I can find the man I want."

"D'yer know Plug Kirby?"

"No."

"Well, he is der feller yer wants."

"Where can I find him?"

"I'll give yer his address."

Kelley took a stub of a pencil out of his vest pocket and wrote with great labor on the margin of one of the papers. This writing he tore off and handed to Ditson. Then, without another word, he once more restored his feet to the top of the table and resumed reading as if there was no one in the room.

Ditson went out without a word. When he was gone Kelley looked over the top of the paper toward the door and growled:

"Dat feller's no good! If he'd wanted ter fit der odder feller hisself I'd tole him how ter bruck der odder chap's wrist, but he ain't got der sand ter fight a baby. He makes me sad! I'd like ter t'ump him a soaker on de jaw meself."

That evening Frank went out to call on some friends. He was returning to his rooms between ten and eleven, when, as he came to a dark corner, a man suddenly stepped out and said:

"Give us a light, young feller."

"I have none," said Frank, attempting to pass.

"Den give us a match," demanded the man, blocking the road.

"As I do not smoke I never carry matches."

"Well, den, I s'pose I'll have ter go wit'out er light, but--you'll take dat!"

Like a flash the man struck straight and hard at the youth's face. It was a wicked blow, delivered with marvelous swiftiness, and must have knocked Frank down if it had landed.

But Merriwell had suspected all along that it was not a light the man was after, and he had been on the watch for just such a move as was made. For all of the man's swiftiness Frank dodged, and the blow passed over his shoulder.

When Frank ducked he also struck out with his left, which he planted in the pit of the assailant's stomach.

It was a heavy blow, and for a moment it rounded the man up. Before the ruffian could recover he received a thump under the ear that made him see stars and sent him sprawling.

But the man had a hard head, and he hastily got upon his feet, uttering fierce words. He expected to see the youth in full flight, and was astonished to perceive that Frank had not taken to his heels.

With a snarl of fury the wretch rushed at Merriwell.

Frank dodged again and came up under the man's arm, giving him another heavy blow. Then the man turned, and they sparred for a moment.

"Durned if youse ain't der liveliest kid I ever seen!" muttered the astonished ruffian. "Youse kin fight!"

"Well, I can fight enough to take care of myself," returned the lad, with something like a laugh.

Smack! smack! smash! Three blows in rapid succession caused the ruffian to reel and gasp. Then for a few moments the fight was savage and swift.

It did not last long. The ruffian had been drinking, and Frank soon had the best of it. He ended the encounter by striking the man a regular knockout blow, and the fellow went down in a heap.

When the ruffian recovered he was astonished to find Frank had not departed, but was bending over him.

"How do you feel?" the boy calmly inquired.

"Say, I'm all broke up!" was the feeble reply. "Are youse der feller wot done me?"

"I presume I am."

"Well, wot yer waitin' fer?"

"To see how badly you are hurt. Your head struck the stones with frightful force when you fell."

"Did it? Well, it feels dat way! Here's a lump as big as yer fist. But wot d'youse care?"

"I didn't know but your skull was fractured."

"Wot difference did dat make?"

"I didn't want you to remain here and suffer with a broken head."

"Didn't, eh? An' I tried ter do ye up widout givin' yer any warnin'! Dis is der quarest deal I ever struck! I was tryin' ter knock yer stiff an' den break year arm."

"Break my arm?"

"Dat's wot I was here fer."

Frank was interested.

"Then you were here on purpose to meet me?"

"Sure, Mike."

"But why were you going to break my arm?"

"Cause dat's wot I was paid fer, me boy."

Frank caught hold of the ruffian, who had arisen to a sitting posture and was holding onto his head.

"Paid for?" cried the boy, excitedly. "Do you mean to tell me that you were paid to waylay me and break my arm?"

"I didn't mean ter tell yer anyt'ing, but a feller wot kin fight like you kin an' den stay ter see if a chap wot tried ter do him was hurt--dat kind of a feller oughter be told."

"Then tell me--tell me all about it," urged Merriwell.

"Dere ain't much ter tell. Some sneak wanted yer arm broke, an' he came ter me ter do der job. He paid me twenty ter lay fer youse an' fix yer. I was hard up an' I took der job, dough I didn't like it much. Den he put me onter yer, an' I folloed yer ter der house where youse went dis evenin'. I watched till yer comes out, and den I skips roun' ter head yer off yere. I heads yer an' asks fer a light. Youse knows der rest better dan wot I does."

"Well, this is decidedly interesting! So I have an enemy who wants my arm broken?"

"Yes, yer right arm."

"That would fix me so I'd never pitch any more."

"Dat's wot's likely, if ye're a pitcher."

"Would you know the person who hired you if you were to see him again?"

"Sure."

"Did he give you his name?"

"Dat's wot he did."

"Ha! That's what I want! See here! Tell me his name, or by the gods of war I will see that you are arrested and shoved for this night's work!"

"An' you will let me off if I tells?"

"Yes."

"Swear it."

"I swear it!"

"You won't make a complaint agin' me?"

"I will not."

"Well, den, yere's his card wot he give me."

The ruffian fumbled in his pocket and took out a card, which he passed to Frank, who eagerly grasped it.

"Here's a match, me boy," said the man. "I had a pocketful w'en I braced yer for one."

He passed a match to Frank, who hastily struck it on a stone and then held it so that he could read the name that was engraved on the card in his fingers.

A cry of astonishment broke from Merriwell's lips, and both card and match fell from his fingers to the ground.

This is the name he had read upon the card:

"Mr. Burnham Putnam."

CHAPTER XXXII.

DITSON IS TRAPPED.

"It don't make a dit of bifference, Frank!" spluttered Harry Rattleton. "I don't care if you have got his card! That thug lied like blazes! Putnam may be selfish--he may have other faults, but he never hired anybody to break your arm."

"I cannot think he would do such a thing myself," said Frank; "but this Plug Kirby, as he is called, seemed honest and in earnest. He stands ready to identify the fellow at any time."

"Then why not settle it by bringing him before Putnam this very afternoon? That's the way to mix the fatter--I mean fix the matter."

"It is a good idea, Harry, and we will have to carry it out. I'll need your assistance."

"You shall have it, old man."

So Frank and Harry arranged to bring Putnam and his accuser together that afternoon, it being the day after the assault on Merriwell. Frank was to look out for Kirby while Harry brought Putnam along to the saloon over which Buster Kelley had rooms.

Frank and Kirby were there in advance, and they sat down in a corner, where they were not likely to be observed by anybody who entered.

Kirby's face was cut and scarred where he had felt Frank's hard fists, and the tough looked on the cool lad with genuine respect and admiration.

"I wants yer ter understan' dat I'd never gone inter dat game if I hadn't been hard up an' in a bad way," he said, trying to apologize for himself. "T'ings have been runnin' agin' me, an' I've been on de rocks fer a long time, an' I didn't know how I was ter make a haul any easier

dan by breakin' a kid's arm. It warn't no killin' matter nohow, an' so I took der job. I never s'pected I was ter run up agin' anyt'ing like wot you are. If I had, why, wild hosses wouldn't get me ter tried it."

"My enemy knew enough not to meet me himself."

"Dat's right, an' now I want ter git square wid him fer steerin' me up agin' anyt'ing of der sort. Wot yer goin' ter do wid him--break his neck?"

"I have not decided what I shall do, but I shall not lay a hand on him."

"Yer won't?"

"No."

"Well, I would if I was in your place. I'd t'ump der everlastin' stuffin' outer der bloke--dat's wot!"

"If it is the man whose name is on the card that was given you I shall be sorry for him, for I have always believed him to be a white man."

"An' yer'll be sorry?"

"I will."

"Well, ye're der funniest cove wot I ever saw. Arter ye hed knocked der wind outer me, ye stayed around ter see dat I wasn't hurt too bad, w'en anybody else would 'a' kicked me inter der gutter an' left me. An' now youse say dat you'll be sorry fer der feller wot hired me ter do yer! I'd like ter know jes' how ye're put up."

"I can't help being sorry to know that a fellow I have considered white and a friend is crooked and an enemy, if it is to prove that way."

"Say, young feller, I likes you, durn me ef I don't! If you ever has anyt'ing ye wants done, jes' come ter me, an' I'll do it if I kin, an' I won't charge yer nottin'."

"Thank you," smiled Frank; "but I do not fancy I shall have anything in your line. While we are talking, though, let me give you some advice. Turn over a new leaf and try to be on the level. You will find it the best policy in the long run."

"I t'ink ye're right, an' I'm goin' ter try ter do it. I allus did hate ter work, but if I kin git any kind of a job I'm goin' ter try it once more. I don't know w'y it is, but jes' bein' wid youse makes me want ter do der square t'ing."

Frank might well have felt pleased that he exercised such an influence over a man like Plug Kirby.

The door opened and Rattleton came into the saloon, followed by Old Put and Dismal Jones.

"Come on, Kirby," said Frank, quietly. "Here is the man we are waiting for."

Putnam had halted near the bar, a puzzled look on his face, and Frank heard him say to Harry:

"What in the world did you drag me in here for, old man? You know I am not drinking anything now, and--"

"As I told you," interrupted Harry, grimly, "I brought you in to see a

man. Here he is."

Frank and the rough had come up behind Putnam, who now turned, and, with still greater astonishment, cried:

"What--Merriwell? What in the world are you doing in this place?"

"Permit me to introduce you to Mr. Plug Kirby--Mr. Burnham Putnam. Have you ever met the man before."

Old Put drew back, staring at the ruffian in astonishment.

"What in blazes is this?" he gasped. "Is it a joke?"

"No joke," returned Frank, sternly. "It is a matter of business. Mr. Kirby, have you ever met Mr. Putnam before?"

"Naw!" cried the man. "Dis ain't der cove wot come ter me ter do der job. Dis is anodder feller."

"You are sure?" demanded Frank, with an expression of positive relief. "His name was on the card you gave me."

"I don't care if it was, dis ain't der feller wot give der card ter me, not by a great big lot."

"Well, I am glad of that!" cried Frank, and he grasped Putnam's hand. "It is a great relief."

"Didn't I tell you!" almost shouted Harry.

"Well, now, I want to know what all this is about," said Old Put, who was greatly puzzled. "I am all at sea."

Without hesitation Frank explained how a person had hired Plug Kirby to break his arm and what the result had been; how the person who made the bargain had given a card on which Putnam's name was engraved. Frank took the card from his pocket and Putnam said it was one of his regular visiting cards.

"Some fellow has been working on my name in order to hide his own identity!" cried Put, who was greatly angered. "Oh, I'd like to get hold of the skunk!"

At this moment the door which led to the back room opened, and Roland Ditson, who had again visited Buster Kelley, came into the saloon. He started back when he saw the little group of students, but Plug Kirby saw his face and hoarsely exclaimed:

"Dere's der mug now! Dat's der feller wot hired me an' give me der card! I'll swear ter dat!"

Seeing there was no way out of it, Roll came forward. He was rather pale, but he succeeded in putting on a front.

"Hello, fellows!" he cried. "What are you doing in here?"

Merriwell had him by the collar in a twinkling.

"Looking for you," he said, "and we have found you! So you are the chap who hired this man to break my arm in order to fix me so I couldn't pitch any more! Well, I declare I didn't think anything quite as low as that even of you!"

Ditson protested his innocence. He even called Kirby a liar, and Frank

was forced to keep the ruffian from hammering him. He swore it was some kind of a plot to injure him, and he called on the boys to know if they would take the word of a wretch like Kirby in preference to his.

"Oh, get out!" exclaimed Putnam in disgust. "Take my advice and leave Yale at once. If you do not, I'll publish the whole story, and you will find yourself run out. Go!"

Ditson sneaked away.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

"PLAY BALL!"

Before night Merriwell received an appealing letter from Ditson, in which the young scapegrace protested his sorrow and entreated Frank to do what he could to keep the matter quiet, so he would not be forced to leave Yale.

Ditson declared it would break his mother's heart if he failed to complete his course at Yale. Over and over he entreated forgiveness, telling how sorry he was that he had ever tried to injure Merriwell in any way, and declaring that, if Frank would forgive and forget, he would never cause him any further trouble.

Frank pondered over the letter so long, and with such a serious look on his face, that Harry asked him what he had struck. Then Merriwell read it to his roommate.

"Oh, what a snizerable meak--I mean miserable sneak, that fellow is!" exclaimed Harry. "He goes into a dirty piece of business like this, and then he gets down and crawls--actually crawls!"

"I have no doubt but his mother is proud of him," said Frank. "He says he is an only son. It is his mother, not Ditson, I am thinking about. I do not wish to cause her so much pain."

"Oh, come off! If a fellow is such a snake as Ditson, he must get it from his parents on one side or the other. Perhaps his mother is not so good."

"I do not wish to think that of any fellow's mother. I much prefer to think that he takes all his bad qualities from the other side of the house. I remember my own mother--the dearest, gentlest, sweetest woman in all the world! How she loved me! How proud she was of me! All the better part of my nature I owe to her, God bless her!"

Frank spoke with deep feeling, and Rattleton was touched and silenced. Merriwell arose and walked the floor, and there was an expression of the utmost tenderness and adoration on his face--a look that brought something like a mist to Harry's eyes. Frank seemed to have forgotten his companion, and he gently murmured:

"My angel mother!"

That was too much for Harry, and he coughed huskily, in an attempt to break the spell without being rude. Frank immediately turned, and said:

"I beg your pardon, old man. I forgot myself, for a moment."

"Oh, don't pard my begoner--that is, begon my pard--no, I mean peg my

bardon! Hang it all! I'm all twisted! I don't know what I am trying to say!"

In confusion Harry got up and went to look out of the window.

"Jeewhittaker! I'm glad Merry don't get this way often!" he thought. "Never knew him to do it before."

After some moments Frank declared:

"I am going to try to hush this Ditson matter up, Harry."

"You are?"

"Yes, for the sake of Ditson's mother. I want you to help me. We'll go see Putnam and Jones. If they have told anybody, we'll see the others. I am the one who has the greatest cause for complaint, and if I am willing to drop it, I am sure Putnam should be. Come on, old man. Let's not lose any time."

"Well, I suppose you are right," admitted Harry, as he reached for his cap. "But there's not another person on top of the earth who could induce me to keep still in such a case. It is a second offense, too."

So they went out together, and searched for Putnam and Jones.

At first Putnam was obstinate, and utterly refused to let Ditson off; but Frank took him aside, and talked earnestly to him for fifteen minutes, finally securing his promise to keep silent. It was not difficult to silence Jones, and so the matter was hushed up for the time. Nothing was said to Ditson, who was left in suspense as to what course would be pursued.

A day or two later came the very thing that had been anticipated and discussed, since the freshman game at Cambridge. Merriwell was selected as one of the pitchers on the 'Varsity nine, and the freshmen lost him from their team.

Putnam came out frankly and confessed that he had feared something of the kind, all along, and Frank was in no mood to kick over his past treatment, so nothing was said on that point.

In the first game against a weaker team than Harvard, Merriwell was tried in the box and pitched a superb game, which Yale won in a walk.

Big Hugh Heffner, the regular pitcher, whose arm was in a bad way, complimented Merriwell on his work, which he said was "simply great."

Of course Frank felt well, as for him there was no sport he admired so much as baseball; but he remained the same old Merriwell, and his freshmen comrades could not see the least change in his manner.

The second game of the series with Harvard came off within a week, but Frank got cold in his arm, and he was not in the best possible condition to go into the box. This he told Pierson, and as Heffner had almost entirely recovered, Frank was left on the bench.

The 'Varsity team had another pitcher, who was known as Dad Hicks. He was a man about twenty-eight years old, and looked even older, hence the nickname of Dad.

This man was most erratic and could not be relied upon. Sometimes he would do brilliant work, and at other time children could have batted him all over the lot. He was used only in desperate emergencies, and could not be counted on in a pinch.

During the whole of the second game with Harvard Frank sat on the bench, ready to go into the box if called on. At first it looked as if he would have to go in, for the Harvard boys fell upon Heffner and pounded him severely for two innings. Then Hugh braced up and pitched the game through to the end in brilliant style, Yale winning by a score of ten to seven.

Heffner, however, was forced to bathe his arm in witch hazel frequently, and as he went toward the box for the last time he said to Frank with a rueful smile:

"You'll have to get into shape to pitch the last game of the series with these chaps. My arm is the same as gone now, and I'll finish it this inning. We must win this game anyway, regardless of arms, so here goes."

He could barely get the balls over the plate, but he used his head in a wonderful manner, and the slow ball proved a complete puzzle for Harvard after they had been batting speed all through the game, so they got but one safe hit off Heffner that inning and no scores.

There was a wild jubilee at Yale that night. A bonfire was built on the campus, and the students blew horns, sang songs, cheered for "good old Yale," and had a real lively time.

One or two of the envious ones asked about Merriwell--why he was not allowed to pitch. Even Hartwick, a sophomore who had disliked Frank from the first, more than hinted that the freshman pitcher was being made sport of, and that he would not be allowed to go into the box when Yale was playing a team of any consequence.

Jack Diamond overheard the remark, and he promptly offered to bet Hartwick any sum that Merriwell would pitch the next game against Harvard.

Diamond was a freshman, and so he received a calling down from Hartwick, who told him he was altogether too new. But as Hartwick strolled away, Diamond quietly said:

"I may be new, sir, but I back up any talk I make. There are others who do not, sir."

Hartwick made no reply.

As the third and final game of the series was to be played on neutral ground, there had been some disagreement about the location, but Springfield had finally been decided upon, and accepted by Yale and Harvard.

Frank did his best to keep his arm in good condition for that game, something which Pierson approved. Hicks was used as much as possible in all other games, but Frank found it necessary to pull one or two off the coals for him.

Heffner had indeed used his arm up in the grand struggle to win the second game from Harvard--the game that it was absolutely necessary for Yale to secure. He tended that arm as if it were a baby, but it had been strained severely and it came into shape very slowly. As soon as possible he tried to do a little throwing every day, but it was some time before he could get a ball more than ten or fifteen feet.

It became generally known that Merriwell would have to pitch at Springfield, beyond a doubt, and the greatest anxiety was felt at Yale. Every man had confidence in Heffner, but it was believed by the majority that the freshman was still raw, and therefore was liable to

make a wretched fizzle of it.

Heffner did not think so. He coached Merriwell almost every day, and his confidence in Frank increased.

"The boy is all right," was all he would say about it, but that did not satisfy the anxious ones.

During the week before the deciding game was to come off Heffner's arm improved more rapidly than it had at any time before, and scores of men urged Pierson to put Old Reliable, as Hugh was sometimes called, into the box.

A big crowd went up to Springfield on the day of the great game, but the "sons of Old Eli" were far from confident, although they were determined to root for their team to the last gasp.

The most disquieting rumors had been afloat concerning Harvard. It was said her team was in a third better condition than at the opening of the season, when she took the first game from Yale; and it could not be claimed with honesty that the Yale team was apparently in any better shape. Although she had won the second game of the series with Harvard, her progress had not been satisfactory.

A monster crowd had gathered to witness the deciding game. Blue and crimson were the prevailing colors. On the bleachers at one side of the grandstand sat hundreds upon hundreds of Harvard men, cheering all together and being answered by the hundreds of Yale men on the other side of the grand stand. There were plenty of ladies and citizens present and the scene was inspiring. A band of music served to quicken the blood in the veins which were already throbbing.

There was short preliminary practice, and then at exactly three o'clock the umpire walked down behind the home plate and called: "Play ball!"

CHAPTER XXXIV.

A HOT FINISH.

Yale took the field, and as the boys in blue trotted out, the familiar Yale yell broke from hundreds of throats. Blue pennants were wildly fluttering, the band was playing a lively air, and for the moment it seemed as if the sympathy of the majority of the spectators was with Yale.

But when Hinkley, Harvard's great single hitter, who always headed the batting list, walked out with his pet "wagon tongue," a different sound swept over the multitude, and the air seemed filled with crimson pennants.

Merriwell went into the box, and the umpire broke open a pasteboard box, brought out a ball that was wrapped in tin foil, removed the covering, and tossed the snowy sphere to the freshman pitcher Yale had so audaciously stacked up against Harvard.

Frank looked the box over, examined the rubber plate, and seemed to make himself familiar with every inch of the ground in his vicinity. Then he faced Hinkley, and a moment later delivered the first ball.

Hinkley smashed it on the nose, and it was past Merriwell in a second, skipping along the ground and passing over second base just beyond the

baseman's reach, although he made a good run for it.

The center fielder secured the ball and returned it to second, but Hinkley had made a safe single off the very first ball delivered.

Harvard roared, while the Yale crowd was silent.

A great mob of freshmen was up from New Haven to see the game and watch Merriwell's work, and some of them immediately expressed disappointment and dismay.

"Here is where Merriwell meets his Waterloo," said Sport Harris. "He'll be batted out before the game is fairly begun."

That was quite enough to arouse Rattleton, who heard the remark.

"I'll bet you ten dollars he isn't batted out at all," spluttered Harry, fiercely. "Here's my money, too!"

"Make it twenty-five and I will go you," drawled Harris.

"All right, I'll make it twenty-five."

The money was staked.

Derry, also a heavy hitter, was second on Harvard's list. Derry had a bat that was as long and as large as the regulations would permit, and as heavy as lead; yet, despite the weight of the stick, the strapping Vermonter handled it as if it were a feather.

Frank sent up a coxer, but Derry refused to be coaxed. The second ball was high, but Derry cracked it for two bags, and Hinkley got around to third.

It began to seem as if Merriwell would be batted out in the first inning, and the Yale crowd looked weary and disgusted at the start.

The next batter fouled out, however, and the next one sent a red-hot liner directly at Merriwell. There was no time to get out of the way, so Frank caught it, snapped the ball to third, found Hinkley off the bag, and retired the side without a score.

This termination of the first half of the inning was so swift and unexpected that it took some seconds for the spectators to realize what had happened. When they did, however, Yale was wildly cheered.

"What do you think about it now, Harris?" demanded Harry, exultantly.

"I think Merriwell saved his neck by a dead lucky catch," was the answer. "If he had missed that ball he would have been removed within five minutes."

Pierson, who was sitting on the bench, was looking doubtful, and he held a consultation with Costigan, captain of the team, as soon as the latter came in from third base.

Costigan asked Frank how he felt, and Merriwell replied that he had never felt better in his life, so it was decided to let him see what he could do in the box the next inning.

Yedding, who was in the box for Harvard, could not have been in better condition, and the first three Yale men to face him went out in one-two-three order, making the first inning a whitewash for both sides.

As Merriwell went into the box the second time there were cries for

Heffner, who was on the bench, ready to pitch if forced to do so, for all of the fact that it might ruin his arm forever, so far as ball playing was concerned.

In trying to deceive the first man up Merriwell gave him three balls in succession. Then he was forced to put them over. He knew the batter would take one or two, and so he sent two straight, swift ones directly over, and two strikes were called.

Then came the critical moment, for the next ball pitched would settle the matter. Frank sent in a rise and the batter struck at it, missed it, and was declared out, the ball having landed with a "plunk" in the hands of the catcher.

The next batter got first on a single, but the third man sent an easy one to Frank, who gathered it in, threw the runner out at second, and the second baseman sent the ball to first in time to retire the side on a double play.

"You are all right, Merriwell, old man," enthusiastically declared Heffner, as Frank came in to the bench. "They haven't been able to score off you yet, and they won't be able to touch you at all after you get into gear."

Pierson was relieved, and Costigan looked well satisfied.

"Now we must have some scores, boys," said the captain.

But Yedding showed that he was out for blood, for he allowed but one safe hit, and again retired Yale without a score.

Surely it was a hot game, and excitement was running high. Would Harvard be able to score the next time? That was the question everybody was asking.

Yedding came to the bat in this inning, and Merriwell struck him out with ease, while not another man got a safe hit, although one got first on the shortstop's error.

The Yale crowd cheered like Indians when Harvard was shut out for the third time, the freshmen seeming to yell louder than all the others. They originated a cry which was like this:

"He is doing very well! Who? Why, Merriwell!"

Merriwell was the first man up, and Yedding did his best to get square by striking the freshman out. In this he was successful, much to his satisfaction.

But no man got a hit, and the third inning ended as had the others, neither side having made a run.

The fourth opened in breathless suspense, but it was quickly over, neither side getting a man beyond second.

It did not seem possible that this thing could continue much longer, but the fifth inning brought the same result, although Yale succeeded in getting a man to third with only one out. An attempt to sacrifice him home failed, and a double play was made, retiring the side.

Harvard opened the sixth by batting a ball straight at Yale's shortstop, who played tag with it, chasing it around his feet long enough to allow the batter to reach first. It was not a hit, but an error for short.

This seemed to break the Yale team up somewhat. The runner tried for

second on the first ball pitched, and Yale's catcher overthrew, although he had plenty of time to catch the man. The runner kept on to third and got it on a slide.

Now Harvard rejoiced. Although he had not obtained a hit, the man had reached third on two errors, and there was every prospect of scoring.

Merriwell did not seem to lose his temper or his coolness. He took plenty of time to let everybody get quieted down, and then he quickly struck out the next man. The third man, however, managed to hit the ball fairly and knocked a fly into left field. It was gathered in easily, but the man on third held the bag till the fly was caught and made a desperate dash for home.

The left fielder threw well, and the ball struck in the catcher's mitt. It did not stick, however, and the catcher lost the only opportunity to stop the score.

Harvard had scored at last!

The Harvard cheer rent the air, and crimson fluttered on all sides.

Frank struck out the next man, and then Yale came to bat, resolved to do or die. But they did not do much. Yedding was as good as ever, and the fielders gathered in anything that came their way.

At the end of the eighth inning the score remained one to nothing in Harvard's favor. It looked as if Yale would receive a shut out, and that was something awful to contemplate. The "sons of Old Eli" were ready to do anything to win a score or two.

In the first half of the ninth Harvard went at it to make some more runs. One man got a hit, stole second, and went to third on an error that allowed the batter to reach first.

Sport Harris had been disappointed when Merriwell continued to remain in the box, but now he said:

"He's rattled. Here's where they kill him."

But Frank proved that he was not rattled. He tricked the man on third into getting off the bag and then threw him out in a way that brought a yell of delight from Yale men. That fixed it so the next batter could not sacrifice with the object of letting the man on third home. Then he got down to business, and Harvard was whitewashed for the last time.

"Oh, if Yale can score now!" muttered hundreds.

The first man up flied out to center, and the next man was thrown out at first. That seemed to settle it. The spectators were making preparations to leave. The Yale bat-tender, with his face long and doleful, was gathering up the sticks.

What's that? The next man got a safe hit, a single that placed him on first. Then Frank Merriwell was seen carefully selecting a bat.

"Oh, if he were a heavy hitter!" groaned many voices.

Yedding was confident--much too confident. He laughed in Frank's face. He did not think it necessary to watch the man on first closely, and so that man found an opportunity to steal second.

Two strikes and two balls had been called. Then Yedding sent in a swift one to cut the inside corner. Merriwell swung at it.

Crack! Bat and ball met fairly, and away sailed the sphere over the head of the shortstop.

"Run!"

That word was a roar. No need to tell Frank to run. In a moment he was scudding down to first, while the left fielder was going back for the ball which had passed beyond his reach. Frank kept on for second. There was so much noise he could not hear the coachers, but he saw the fielder had not secured the ball. He made third, and the excited coacher sent him home with a furious gesture.

Every man, woman and child was standing. It seemed as if every one was shouting and waving flags, hats, or handkerchiefs. It was a moment of such thrilling, nerve-tingling excitement as is seldom experienced. If Merriwell reached home Yale won; if he failed, the score was tied, for the man in advance had scored.

The fielder had secured the ball, he drove it to the shortstop, and shortstop whirled and sent it whistling home. The catcher was ready to stop Merriwell.

"Slide!"

That word Frank heard above all the commotion. He did slide. Forward he scooted in a cloud of dust. The catcher got the ball and put it onto Frank—an instant too late!

A sudden silence.

"Safe home!" rang the voice of the umpire.

Then another roar, louder, wilder, full of unbounded joy! The Yale cheer! The band drowned by all the uproar! The sight of sturdy lads in blue, delirious with delight, hugging a dust-covered youth, lifting him to their shoulders, and bearing him away in triumph. Merriwell had won his own game, and his record was made. It was a glorious finish!

"Never saw anything better," declared Harry. "Frank, you are a wonder!"

"He is that!" declared several others. "Old Yale can't get along without him."

THE END.

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