DICK WAS DANGLING IN MIDAIR. THEN HE WAS GRABBED BY A PAIR OF HANDS AND PULLED INTO A DEEP HOLE.
TIP TOP WINTER SPORTS CONTEST.

Another Great Opportunity.

There is a good old adage among athletes that says the muscle that does not have something to do all the time grows thin and weak. Tip Top pins its faith to that adage, and, when it has trained its athletes up to a high state of physical development, Tip Top does not intend to let them go back. It is one thing to make an athlete. It is another to keep him there. Tip Top does both.

Here are the latest inducements to keep Tip Top athletes at work and improving.

FIRST.

TIP TOP BASKET BALL LEAGUE.

For the Basket Ball Team having the best average for the season Tip Top offers the following prizes:

1. A Pennant to the Championship Team.
2. A Complete Basket Ball Suit to Each Player of Winning Team, this to consist of:
   A Basket Ball.
   A Sleeveless Jersey (any color).
   A Pair of Running Trunks.
   A Pair of Ribbed Stockings (any color).
   A Pair of High Cut Canvas Shoes.

Send in your scores as soon as possible. Tip Top will publish them all.

SECOND.

TIP TOP ICE HOCKEY LEAGUE.

For the Ice Hockey Team having the best average for the season Tip Top offers the following prizes for each player of winning team.

A Spalding's Shaker Sweater (any color).
A Pair of Hockey Skates (Canadian pattern).
A Spalding's Hockey Stick.
A Skating Cap (any color).

THIRD.

TIP TOP RELAY ICE TEAM CONTEST.

To the Team of Four boys who skate in the fastest time over Four Miles on Ice, each member of the team to skate one mile of the distance. Tip Top offers the following prizes to each member of winning team:

A Pair of Spalding's Racing Skates.
A Shaker Sweater (any color).
A Skating Cap (any color).

FOURTH.

TIP TOP CHAMPIONSHIP ONE-MILE ICE RACE.

Tip Top offers three prizes for the three best records established on skates over a one-mile ice course. The skater making the best time to receive the First Prize, which comprises:

A Pair of Spalding's Racing Skates.
A Shaker Sweater (any color).
A Skating Cap (any color).

The skater making second best time to receive the Second Prize, which comprises:

A Pair of Spalding's Racing Skates.
A Shaker Sweater (any color).
A Pair of All Worsted Gloves.

COUPONS FOR ALL EVENTS WILL BE FOUND ON PAGE 32.
CHAPTER I.

AT LONE LAKE.

All Fardale was throbbing with excitement.
No wonder.

The thrilling experiences of Doris Templeton and Little Felecia, who had been captured by ruffians just beyond the boundaries of the town, together with the daring of Dick Merriwell and the academy boys who had rescued the girls, were events quite sufficient to set any country place agog.

That these things had actually taken place there was no doubt. In the hidden hut on Blue Mountain had been found the body of one of the wretches, who had been slain by his companions, who were trying to destroy Dick Merriwell in the darkness of the place after Dick dropped through a hole in the roof, and shot out the light with the pistol given him by Old Joe Crowfoot.

That was proof enough, if such proof was needed. Of course, it was decided that a coroner would have to sit on the case; but it was also known beyond a doubt that the statement of Dick Merriwell as to the manner of the man’s demise would be taken without question, and the verdict must be that the ruffian came to his death at the hands of his companions in crime.

Those companions had not escaped, it was believed, for, in rushing down the side of the steep mountain, they had been caught by a snowslide and buried beneath tons of snow, which piled into and almost filled a deep gorge far below the hidden hut.

No attempt was made on Sunday to remove the bodies from the gorge; but on Monday scores of men, armed with snow-shovels, attacked the great slide.

A request was made at an early hour at the acad-
emty that Dick Merriwell and at least one other lad concerned in the rescue of the girls be permitted to leave school and direct the work of the shovellers until the bodies were recovered.

And so it happened that Dick Merriwell and Hal Darrell prepared to depart for Blue Mountain.

Now, Brad Buckhart was filled with great and exceeding grief because he had not been chosen.

"It's onery luck, pard!" he exclaimed, as he entered Dick's room as the latter was preparing to depart. "Here you go and cover yourself all over with glory before the girls who are washed on you, and I don't even get a chance to let out a Rio Pecos whoop in the presence of the fair divinity who has won, yet spurns, my honest heart. Why didn't those pesky galoots kidnap Zona, too, and give the Unbranded Maverick a chance to paw the dust and kick up a ruction? She's beginning to forget that I am an untamed terror and a raging cyclone. I'm interesting to her only when I impress upon her my ability to slaughter and slay. And now I'm not even to be round when they dig out the corpses. Say, Dick?"

"What is it, Brad?"

"Can't you fix it so I can go along?"

"To-day?"

"Yes."

"How can I fix it?"

"Why, you might ask Old Gunn to let me off. He'd do it for you. I'd like to take this day off with you. Won't you do it, pard?"

"Why, what reasonable excuse can I give?"

"Just say you want me along with you. Of course, if he won't let me go, that will settle it."

There was such an appealing look on the Texan's face that Dick laughed and said:

"All right, old man, I'll ask. But I'm afraid it won't go."

- Professor Gunn, however, gave his consent.

Buckhart was waiting outside the professor's door when Dick appeared.

"What's the verdict?" he eagerly questioned.

"All right," smiled Dick. "You can come along."

"Pard, you're a brick! I feel like letting out a whoop as long as your arm."

"Better not do that here." Wait till we get into the country. Are you ready?"

"Be with you in two shakes."

Buckhart rushed away to his room, and soon joined Merriwell and Darrell on the steps of the academy. Then the three set out for the village, where Dick had been notified they were to find a team waiting for them at the livery stable.

In the village Dick was stared at in wondering admiration by the town boys, while the older people pointed him out one to another.

Young Merriwell seemed utterly unaware of the attention and comment he excited. The turnout was waiting at the livery stable, so the three boys lost no time in getting comfortably settled in the sleigh, and, with Dick driving, away they went.

"Where are we going to leave the horse and sleigh?" was Hal's question. "We'll have to leave the rig somewhere when we climb the mountain."

"I have an idea that the best thing to do is to drive direct to Lone Lake Inn, which is across the lake from the mountains, and leave the rig there," said Dick. "Then we can cross the lake and climb the mountain."

"But it is reported that the old inn has been closed ever since we had our trouble there with those ruffians," said Hal.

"And a right hot old time that was," put in Buckhart, with a chuckle. "That was the day I made my record with the girl who allowed I was a bluffer from way back. Say, but we did break up housekeeping in that there dining-room! Why, when we upset the table, with all the dishes on it, any one could tell by the sound that there was something doing."

"If the old inn is closed," said Dick, "I fancy we can find a way to get into the barn and take care of the horse there, which will be better than to let the animal stand out anywhere."

The others agreed with him, and they drove directly to Lone Lake Inn. When they came in sight
of the lake they were surprised to find that, instead of the ice being covered with snow, the surface was glassy and smooth, with the winter sunshine shimmering upon it.

"Well, what do you think of that?" cried Darrell. "There's some skating for you."

The sight was one to delight the eye of any boy.

"Blow me!" gasped Buckhart. "Blow me stiff! How did it happen? Everywhere else the lakes and ponds are covered with snow."

"And see how high the lake is," said Hal. "It must be five feet higher than it was when we were here before."

Dick had been looking at the beautiful sheet of ice intently.

"I think," he said, "that there must have been an overflow here. That is how it happens that the ice is not covered by snow. The water ran down over the ice since the last snowstorm, and then there was a freeze."

"Level head, pard!" cried Brad. "That's just what happened. And there was a right good lot of water ran down over the old ice to make the lake as high as it is now."

At this moment Hal caught Dick by the arm and pointed toward Lone Lake Inn, which they were approaching.

"See!" he exclaimed. "The place is not deserted! There's smoke coming from the chimney."

Sure enough, blue smoke was rising from the chimney of the old inn with the broad verandas.

"All the better," said Dick. "We'll find somebody to take care of the horse, I think."

As they drew still nearer a boy was seen running hastily from the barn to the house.

"Same boy!" laughed Dick. "The young rascal! He tried to shoot me with an old gun as I attempted to leave the barn in pursuit of Felipe Costola. I'd really enjoy shaking him."

As they swung into the yard they saw a haggish-looking face at one of the windows of the tavern.

"The old woman, I swear!" muttered Brad. "Perhaps the whole gang is back here."

Then the haggish face disappeared, to be replaced by that of the pretty girl who had befriended Dick and his friends on the occasion of their former visit to the inn.

Dick smiled, and motioned for her to come out. She accepted the invitation and appeared in the doorway, saying:

"Aunt Liz says if you are after uncle that you needn't come here, for he ain't at home, and we don't know where he is."

"We're not after any one," assured Dick; "but we wish to put this horse up here a while, and will pay for the accommodation. This is a public house, and you cannot refuse to take care of the horse. That is all we want, and we'll call for the turnout when we return. We're going across the lake."

"All right," said the girl. "I don't know what Aunt Liz will say, but I'll tell her."

Then she disappeared from the doorway.

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CHAPTER II.

CROSSING THE LAKE.

Pretty soon the girl came out and told the boys they might put the horse in the barn.

"But Aunt Liz says she won't have you in the house," she said.

"Tell Aunt Liz not to worry about that," answered Dick, with a laugh. "We're not anxious to visit her."

The girl offered to show them where to put the horse, and led the way to the barn.

"Stand him right in that stall," she said. "You can feed him some hay, and I'll see that he's watered."

"You are a good girl," declared Dick, taking her hand and looking into her eyes. "I wish to thank you for what you did for us when we were here before. But for you we would have been drugged and overcome by those ruffians. Have you seen anything of them since?"

The girl blushed furiously before his gaze, quickly
drawing her hand away and putting it behind her back, while her eyes drooped.

“What I done was for you,” she almost whispered. “I—I liked your looks, and I didn’t want to see them hurt you.”

Brad, at a little distance, nudged Hal, muttering:

“Clean case of mash, as sure as shooting! Say, all the girls seem to get struck on him. How does he do it?”

Darrell shook his head.

“There’s something attractive about him,” he returned, in a low tone; “a sort of magnetism, I fancy.”

“Well, blow me! I’d like some of it, you bet your boots! If I had some of that there magnetism I’d slam the whole bunch of it right at a certain girl I know. I’m not going to call her name, for Zona might not like it if she knew I did.”

Hal laughed, for he was amused by Buckhart’s way of “not calling any names.” The Texan made it evident to all his friends that he was badly smitten by the handsome eyes of Zona Desmond, who was regarded as the belle of Fardale.

“It was kind of you,” said Dick, speaking to the girl, “and I was sorry to see any trouble come to you after that affair; but the officers were determined to arrest your uncle for his connection with the rascals. But you have not told me if you have seen those men since that day.”

“Your hoss will be all right,” assured the girl. “You can leave him just as long as you want to.”

Then she turned quickly, ran out of the barn and hastened to the house.

“She wouldn’t answer my question about those ruffians,” muttered Dick, looking after her. “It’s plain she has seen them. But they were buried beneath tons of snow in the slide on Blue Mountain, and she’ll see them no more.”

When the horse had been cared for, the boys turned to leave the stable. Then they saw a pair of skates hanging by the heel straps to a peg in the wall. Dick was first to see them, and he had them down in a twinkling.

“Just the thing to cross the lake with!” he exclaimed. “I wonder if I can’t borrow or buy them.”

“Where do we come in?” exclaimed Brad. “I don’t see any more skates hanging around.”

When Dick approached the house with the skates in his hand, the girl appeared in the back doorway, asking what he wanted.

Dick explained, and the girl disappeared to consult somebody within. She came back to announce that the skates would be sold to Dick for two dollars. Dick promptly bought them.

Then the boys proceeded to the lake, where young Merriwell clamped and strapped the skates upon his feet.

“Hurrah!” he cried, his eyes gleaming, as he rose and cut a few figures on the ice. “Why, this is great! By George! it’s too bad we all haven’t skates! I say, Hal, you take them. I can get across all right without them.”

In a moment he was on one knee, starting to remove the skates from his feet.

But Darrell promptly made it known that he would not think of taking the skates.

Dick turned to Buckhart, whereupon the Texan laughed.

“Say! I reckoned you’d forgotten how I tried to break in a pair of those things when the first skating came? Oh, suffering tomcats! I’m black and blue now from the bumps I got—I am so!”

“But you said it was too bad there were no more skates.”

“No, you; excuse me! If I was compelled to have those things hitched to my feet I’d just get down on all fours and crawl across this pesky lake. I would, I swear!”

So it was settled that Dick should skate across, while Brad and Hal crossed as best they could on the glare ice.
Dick played round them at first, but finally decided that he would strike straight across, telling them to follow his tracks. As he skimmed away, Hal watched him some moments, finally saying:

"He's a wonder, Buckhart! I can hardly believe he learned to skate this winter. Why, he's a splendid skater now!"

"Partner," observed the Texan, "when that there boy makes up his mind to do a thing he has a way of doing it up brown, you bet your life! He doesn't go halfway and stop. He's all right, he is!"

"Yes," agreed Darrell, "Dick is a splendid fellow. We were enemies, and I would not see anything good in him; but now I know I was prejudiced and in the wrong. He was perfectly square and manly in everything, and his squareness made him do some things for me that my so-called friends might have hesitated about doing. He saved me from disgrace at Fardale, and I do not propose to forget it."

"Say, I like you for talking that way!" exclaimed Brad, giving Hal an admiring look. "I'll allow that I didn't hook up to you much of any, but I reckon you're all right. Merriwell is a chap who makes a right smart lot of enemies, for he doesn't hesitate to speak right out and say so when he thinks a fellow is doing a wrong thing."

"That's not the only way he makes enemies. There are fellows at the academy who are jealous of him and his success, and they would like to see him downed. I was jealous of him, but not from that reason."

Hal thought of Doris Templeton, and how she had seemed to admire Dick at their very first meeting. It was that which had made him the enemy of young Merriwell, and he knew it now.

In the meantime, heading directly toward a certain point at the foot of Blue Mountain, which rose bleak and rugged before him, Dick skated on.

The cold February wind whistled past his ears and stung the blood into his cheeks. There was exhilaration in the birdlike movement over the ice, and he felt his heart beat exultantly. It was good to live and be a boy at Fardale.

He noted that beneath his feet the ice gave back a strangely hollow sound, and he also observed that it seemed white and strange in color; but, being filled with that sense of exhilaration, he did not pause to think of these things.

Once or twice he looked back and waved his hand at his friends, who were progressing slowly on the glare ice. He had told them to follow his tracks, and he was confident they would do so.

Dick headed toward the mouth of a cove, into which he finally disappeared. The cove was quite narrow and winding, but it seemed to lead in the general direction he wished to pursue, so he followed it. It proved to be much longer than he had anticipated, and it finally led him to the very foot of Blue Mountain, which rose frowningly before him.

He paused in some dismay, wondering if he had not better turn back, when he was surprised to see a man approaching the cove, carrying an ice-chisel and bucket.

Dick spoke to the man, who nodded in response, saying:

"Furty good skatin', I guess."

"Fine!" said Dick.

"But it may not last long."

"Do you think it's going to snow?"

"Oh, 'tain't that; but the water is so high they're goin' to draw it off. I kinder thought I'd try an' see if they was any fishin' before they got round to do that. Where be you frum?"

"Fardale. I wish to climb the mountain here."

"Ye do?" exclaimed the man, in surprise. "What fur?"

"There is a party of men up there searching for the bodies of those men who were caught in the snowslide Saturday. I want to reach them."

The fisherman laughed shortly in a cracked way.

"Them folks that's shovelin' must be fools," he said.

"Why?"

"To believe the story told 'em by some crazy boys an' gals about bein' captured by ruffians an' all that."
“Then you do not believe the story?”
“I ain’t an idjit, youngster! We don’t hev no kidnappers round in these parts.”
“How do you account for the fact that one of the ruffians was found dead in the old hut on the mountain, where he was accidentally killed by his companion in an encounter in the dark?”
“Guess that feller must have been livin’ there alone and committed suicide. They’s been a hermit livin’ on these mountains fer two year, an’ he never would have anything to do with folks. That man must have been the one. Them boys found him there an’ jest made up that yarn to kick up some excitement. Bet they’re laffin’ in their sleeves over it now. If you take the trouble to climb that mountain, you’ll jest fool yourself, that’s all.”
Dick smiled.
“Well, I have decided to go up there,” he said.
“Can I get up over this side?”
The old fellow looked at the rugged bluffs, screwed up his face, shook his head, and answered:
“Mebbe ye kin, but I won’t swear to it. Mebbe ye’ll fall an’ break yer neck tryin’. Guess you better keep right on skatin’ an’ let it go at that.”
“Thank you,” said Dick, beginning to take off his skates. “If you see two of my friends, who are following me, just tell them to keep right on following my tracks. I think I’ll climb the mountain for exercise, even if there is nothing in the yarn those lying boys and girls told.”
“Wal,” retorted the fisherman, “all I gut to say is that you must be dinged hard up fer exercise!”
Dick laughed lightly, having removed his skates, bade the old fellow good-day, and set his face toward the mountain.

CHAPTER III.
THE FIGHT ON THE CLIFF.

Thus it happened that Dick was not waiting for them when Hal and Brad reached that side of the lake. They found the old fisherman cutting a hole in the ice and muttering to himself. He stopped his chiseling, squinted at them, and said:

“I s’pose you’re the friends of that youngster that’s in such awful need of exercise. Wal, he told me to tell you to keep right on follering his tracks.”
“Where has he gone?” asked Hal.
“On a Tom-fool’s errant arter exercise. He’s up yender somewhere, I guess,” with a wave of his hand toward the mountain.
At this moment, as they looked up, they saw Dick climbing over a slippery piece of ledge that glistened in the sunlight.
“Well, shoot me!” muttered Buckhart. “He’s in a hurry.”
“Come on,” urged Hal.
“Be you fellers lookin’ for exercise, too?” asked the fisherman.
“If we are,” returned the Texan, “you bet your boots we’ll get it following that fellow.”
Then they hurried on, and the fisherman continued his cutting, once more muttering to himself.
Dick’s tracks were plain enough, but it was no easy task to follow them in some places, for, with boyish recklessness, he had not turned aside when facing the precipitous places, unless it was absolutely impossible to ascend without seeking an easier course.
When they had climbed some distance, they looked back at the shining surface of the lake, and commented on the strange whiteness of the ice. A groaning sound ran the length of the lake, followed by a boom like musketry.
“Great Scott! Never heard ice crack as loud as that before,” said Brad.
They could see nothing of Dick, and, after resting, they hurried on again as fast as they could. Soon they were covered with perspiration, for all that it was anything but a warm day.
Once or twice Dick whistled or shouted to them from above. They answered his calls. Sometimes they caught a glimpse of him.
There were places where only with the greatest difficulty were they able to aid each other along, yet Dick had passed these places alone. Buckhart declared he must have creepers on his feet to do it.
But Blue Mountain, although the highest of the black hills that frowned down on Long Lake, was but slightly more than a thousand feet high, and they finally found themselves approaching the most difficult part of the ascent near the top.

At last they came to a place where before them frowned a perpendicular cliff, against which there, on the side of the mountain, grew a tall tree.

Dick’s tracks had led to the foot of the cliff, but they lost them there, and were puzzled to know how he had continued the ascent.

After talking it over some time, they decided to seek another course, which they proceeded at once to do, abandoning the plan of following Dick’s steps.

They left the shelf on which grew the tall tree, and, after some trouble, found a way of slowly crawling up some bare ledges.

They were halfway up these ledges, perhaps, when Buckhart, who was in advance, suddenly paused and exclaimed:

“Great rampaging long-horns! look there, pard!”

With one hand he clung to a crevice in the ledge, while with the other he pointed toward the top of the very cliff they had found it impossible to scale.

Hal looked, and what he saw made him gasp for breath.

On the edge of that cliff three persons were engaged in a desperate encounter.

Two of them were rough-looking men.

The third was Dick Merriwell!

Dick’s amazed and startled friends saw at a glance that he was engaged in a struggle for life with desperate assailants, for there could be no reason to doubt that he had been assailed.

To add to the peril of the unequal encounter, the three were fighting on the verge of the cliff, where by a slip or a false move the trio might plunge over to destruction.

The staring boys on the slippery ledge were horror-stricken.

“It’s Dick!” panted Hal.

“Sure as shooting, pard!” palpitated Buckhart; “and it’s a red-hot old scrimmage he’s in, you bet!”

“Those men—who are they?”

“Dinged if I know! You tell.”

“Why, I—I don’t know, but——”

“Let’s not stop here, chinning over it, Darrell; let’s wake up and crawl. We’ve got to hump ourselves if we get into that game. You hear me shout!”

“We can’t get there! We can’t get there!” panted Hal. “We’ll be too late to help him! See—they’ve got him down!”

Both lads saw Dick forced to his knees, and Buckhart groaned aloud in dismay.

“The devils!” came huskily from his lips. “I opine they mean to murder him!”

“He’s up!” cried Hal, in relief. “He’s at them again! He is making a great fight!”

“Is he? Well, he’s a holy terror on trucks! Give him half-a-show and he’ll wallop the stuffing out of those varmints!”

Buckhart struggled on a short distance, but nearly lost his balance, and sustained a nasty fall through his haste, being saved by Hal, whose hand caught him as he was slipping.

“I think you’ll have to go slow and sure, Buckhart,” said the dark-eyed lad. “If you slip again like that you may sweep us both off this ledge.”

The Westerner did not answer, but cast an anxious, fearful glance toward the ledge.

“They’re gone!” he shouted.

At that moment the struggling trio could not be seen.

“Here they are!” came from Hal, as the three appeared for a moment. “He’s still holding his own.”

“Oh, say! I can’t stand this!” groaned Brad, again panting over the ledge. “If I could just be in that there ruction!”

“Here they are again!” came from Hal. “Look! See! Hurrah for Dick!”

“Hooray!” bellowed Buckhart. “Wasn’t that a corker!”
For the boy had managed to break away from the men, and he was dodging them on that narrow cliff with the nimbleness of a fox, now and then darting at one or the other and getting in sharp blows. As Hal and Brad cheered they saw him strike one man a tremendous blow. The fellow flung up his arms and dropped, clutching at the air.

He fell on the very edge of the cliff, with his body hanging over.

With his hands the man tried to catch hold of something to keep himself from falling.

He failed to grasp anything to which he could cling securely.

Then, as the boys stared, with blanched cheeks and wildly pounding hearts, they saw the man topple over the brink, and to their ears came an awful shriek, as he whirled downward.

Chapter IV.

A Link in Friendship's Chain.

"Only one galoot left for him to fight against!" breathed Buckhart, exultantly, as the unfortunate wretch slipped over the edge of the cliff and disappeared from view, for, from their present position the boys could no longer see the face of the cliff.

"He may be able to hold that one good play till we get there!" exclaimed Darrell. "Hustle, Buckhart!"

"Hustle it is," said Brad.

In the desperate hope of reaching Dick in time to render aid in his struggle with the ruffian, the boys did their best to hasten along. It seemed very slow work, but really they got over the ledge with remarkable swiftness.

Beyond the ledge it was impossible to see the top of the cliff until they finally came fairly upon it.

It was bare!

No human being was in view.

Hal and Brad felt their hearts sink.

What had happened to Dick? they asked, and then looked at each other for the answer.

"He's gone!" Buckhart finally said, in a husky tone.

"Is this the place?" questioned Hal, thinking it possible they had made some mistake.

"I reckon it is."

"But sure—are you sure? There may be another cliff——"

"No—look there!"

Buckhart pointed to many tracks on the snow, and before their eyes they beheld the evidence that told them the struggle had taken place on that cliff.

Not far away lay the skates Dick had bought at Lone Lake Inn.

Hal picked the skates up, and again the boys looked into each other's eyes.

"What has happened to Dick?" asked Darrell, in a low tone.

"You tell me!" exclaimed the Texan. "He isn't here, that's plain. I'll eat my hat if it isn't funny; What do you opine has happened, Darrell?"

"I'm afraid he got the worst of that fight."

"But he was holding his own with two of them!" panted Brad. "He soaked one of the varmints a sockdolager, and then there was only one chap for him to tussle with."

"But Dick was not armed."

"No."

"And it’s likely that ruffian was."

"More than probable."

"You can see how he could get the best of Dick."

Brad began to look round, and, in a few moments, a groan escaped him.

"What’s the matter?" asked Hal, springing to his side.

"Look at that!" whispered Brad, pointing to the snow near their feet.

The snow was stained with blood.

Hal Darrell trembled violently, turning his head away.

"I was afraid of that!" he said, hoarsely. "That wretch—that brute must have used a knife on Dick! It was the only way he could conquer a boy—the only
way! What a brave thing it was! Poor Dick! Poor Dick!"

"I won't believe it!" came in a low tone from the
lips of the Texan, who cast aside his posing at once
and was his real self. "I'll not believe it till I have
to, Darrell!"

"What could have become of the body?"

They looked around again, and then, in absolute
dread, approached the edge of the cliff.

Buckhart could not bring himself to look over at
once. He put an unsteady hand on the shoulder of
his companion, saying:

"You—you look."

So Darrell peered over the edge of the cliff.

"What do you see?" questioned Brad, in dread
and suspense.

"Nothing."

The Texan drew a deep breath.

"Can't you see anything of him down there?"

"No."

"But the other fellow—the man we saw fall over
the edge of the cliff?"

"I don't see him."

Buckhart uttered an exclamation of surprise,
kneeling quickly close to the brink of the precipice
and peering over.

Below them lay the shelf on which grew the tall
tree that stood against the black face of the rock and
reached its top a few feet higher than the cliff they
were on, but nowhere on that shelf could they see the
body of a man.

"I—I don't understand it!" muttered the West-
erner, puzzled. "Why, we saw one man fall over
here, and he ought to be down there somewhere."

"If the fall killed him," nodded Hal.

"If it didn't kill him, it must have injured him se-
verely—must have broken his limbs. He ought
to be down there."

"Well, you can see that he is not."

Again both lads stared over the edge of the cliff,
seeing the grim slope of the mountain falling away
to the rim of woods at the edge of the ice-bound
lake.

"It's mighty singular," said Brad, slowly. "I don't
know what to make of it, hanged if I do! We saw
a man fall over here, and, by all rights, he should
have broken his neck, and be stretched down there
this minute. He isn't. Where is he? Dick and the
other man were left fighting on this ledge. They
are not here. Where are they?"

Hal shook his head.

"You can answer those questions as well as I," he
admitted, gloomily. "I don't like to think over
what may have happened."

At last they drew back from the edge of the cliff.
They looked at each other, and, in that moment, they
knew how dear Dick Merriwell was to them. It
seemed that words struggled for utterance in the
heart of each, yet they felt that words could not ex-
press their thoughts. Buckhart had entertained a
strong antipathy for Darrell, but this was swept away
now, as he looked into Hal's eyes and beheld there
nothing but anxiety, grief and fear. He saw that
Darrell had come to understand and appreciate Dick
Merriwell, and he was drawn to him because of that.
Of a sudden Brad held out his hand.

Without speaking, Hal took it.

It was the forging of a link in the chain of friend-
ship that should encircle Dick Merriwell in days to
come.

CHAPTER V.

THE VOICE BEYOND THE DOOR.

"That there blood is what I don't like much,
pard," said the Texan, falling into his usual style of
talk. "If it wasn't for that I wouldn't be worried."

They decided to see if they could find tracks lead-
ing from that cliff, and, to their satisfaction, they
soon found such tracks.

"It's all right!" palpitated Hal. "Here is where
they went away. It's all right, Buckhart!"

But Brad said nothing, and the expression on his
face did not indicate that he was entirely satisfied.

"The tracks are those of two persons," he said.

"Yes, that's right."
"And I don't allow that either of them was Dick Merriwell."

"Why not?"

"Because, those footprints are larger than Dick's. You can see that with half an eye."

"They—seem—to—be," admitted Hal, slowly. "I believe you are right. But still there were two persons—two who left this place. The two men came here, but one of them fell over the cliff. How could two persons go away unless one of them was Dick?"

Brad shook his head, seeming not a little puzzled himself. He slowly followed the tracks until he came to a patch of snow where he could examine them to his satisfaction.

Hal watched him with no little impatience.

"You are wasting time," he said.

"Perhaps not," said the Texan. "I opine I've made a discovery, pard."

"What is it?"

"Nobody left the cliff after that there fight—at least, not this way."

"What?"

"That's what."

"But you can't mean that! There are the tracks. I can see them myself."

"You can see them, but you don't quite understand them, Darrell."

"Understand them—how?"

"Look here; here is where the men stepped in the same tracks going both ways."

"I see."

"Now, if you'll look close, you'll see the tracks leading toward the cliff are plain and distinct, while some of those leading the other way have been partly blotted out by the fresh ones pointing down toward the cliff. Is that plain?"

"Why—ye—yes," faltered Hal. "I see that where two tracks in opposite directions have been made on the same spot the one pointing toward the cliff is the plainest."

"Exactly. Now that means that the ones pointing toward the cliff were made after the ones pointing up the mountain and away from the cliff."

"That seems reasonable."

"In that case, the men who made these tracks climbed the mountain from the cliff in the first place, returning over the same path to the cliff."

"Great Scott!" gasped Hal, as the meaning of this flashed upon him. "How can that be. We found no other tracks leading from the cliff."

"That's right," nodded Brad; "and this seemed about the only way to leave it."

"Except to descend the mountain, and we were climbing up. No one passed us going down. You must be mistaken about these tracks, Buckhart."

The Texan shook his head.

"I reckon I know something about such things," he said, "and I'll eat my hat if I'm mistaken!"

"But how came the men on the cliff in the first place? They had to reach the place in order to leave it. And, having returned to the cliff, whither have they gone?"

"We saw one of them go over the brink, pard. The other one has disappeared in a mighty mysterious manner, and he's taken Dick Merriwell with him."

Darrell's appearance indicated that he was skeptical, but he said:

"If you're right, Buckhart, we can go back there to the cliff and find tracks leading in some other direction, for, even if Dick was killed, which I pray he was not, the ruffian must have left tracks in getting away himself and carrying the body."

"Unless——" whispered Brad.

"Unless what?"

"Both of them fell from the cliff!"

Hal caught his breath.

"If that happened——" he muttered.

"It's possible we may find their mangled bodies somewhere on the side of the mountain."

"I won't think that yet!" exclaimed Hal, desperately.

"I don't want to think it," muttered Buckhart; "but I'm beginning to get afraid."

"What had we better do?"
"Follow these tracks. We can return to the cliff afterward."

This was agreed upon, so they followed the tracks, which led them finally to a place where they could look down on the opposite side of the mountain.

There they found themselves looking into a deep gorge, where scores of men, with snow-shovels, were working like beavers.

"The men who are searching for the bodies of the ruffians caught in the snowslide," said Hal.

"That's what," nodded Brad, "but somehow I don't allow they'll find many bodies down there."

"Why not?"

"Since we saw that fight on the cliff I've been thinking about something, and the more I've thought about it the more satisfied I've become that not all of the ruffians perished in that snowslide."

"Great Scott!" exclaimed Hal. "You don't mean to say you think those ruffians who attacked Dick were——"

"I opine they were," nodded the Texan, grimly.

"They were two of Felipe Costola's gang, who somehow escaped destruction in the snowslide. You bet your life I'm right about that, too! They saw Dick coming, and reckoned he had discovered them, upon which they decided to snuff him out."

Hal was overcome by this idea for a few moments, but he finally said:

"Perhaps one of them was Costola himself! Perhaps that wretch is not dead, after all!"

"Perhaps you're right, but I hope you're not. These here tracks show those men were interested in the gang down there, and what is being done. They came here to watch the shovelers, and it's pretty certain they took care not to be seen. After they had watched a while, they returned the same way they came, and then it was that Dick encountered them."

Hal was forced to confess that his reasoning seemed likely to be correct.

But the mystery of the disappearance of Dick and his assailants remained as deep as ever.

Buckhart was seized by a desire to visit the hidden cabin, which lay some distance below them.

They did not find it difficult to descend to the spot where the cabin lay buried by the snow that had swirled into a hollow on the mountainside.

The cunningly contrived door of the cabin stood open, just as it had been left.

In front of the cabin, beyond the limits of the hollow, was the spot where the snowslide had started.

The boys entered the cabin.

Things there seemed much the same as when the rescuers of the kidnapped girls had departed the previous Saturday, except that the body of the man slain in the struggle in the dark had been removed by the authorities.

On the dirty floor, however, was a dark stain just where the wretch had fallen.

They looked at the bunk on which Felipe Costola had lain during the weeks he was hidden in that hut to recover from the effects of the bullet wound received in his encounter with Dick Merriwell.

On the box that had served as a table still stood the "slut candle," which Costola had extinguished with a puffing breath a moment before the struggle in the darkness took place.

At the back of the room was a dark opening, which was the doorway leading into the small cave where Doris and Felecia had been confined.

Buckhart peered in there, and drew back, with a "boo."

Hal struck a match and lighted the "slut candle."

"What are you going to do, pard?" asked Brad.

"I have a notion to look that hole over," answered Darrell, picking up the candle.

Brad followed his companion into the cave.

It was a wretched place, at best. In a corner was the natural fireplace, with ashes and a few pieces of charred wood on the stone hearth. In another corner was the wooden door that seemed to close something like a passage.

Bearing the light, Hal went over to the door and examined it. He took hold of it, and tried to open it, for he could not see how it was fastened.
“I wonder what there is beyond here, Brad,” he said. “Is there yet another part of the cave?”
“‘You’ve got me,” confessed the Texan. “You know as much about it as I do, old man.”
“I’d like to know. But we must not waste more time here. We must go back and resume the hunt for Dick. Come on.”

But, as they turned from that door, there came a sudden pouncing of as of some one beating upon it with bare fists, followed by words they distinctly understood, although they were somewhat muffled.
“Brad! Hal!” cried a voice beyond the door.
“Quick—open this door! Let me out!”

In amazement they stared into each other’s eyes. Hal’s hand holding the light shook with excitement.
Then, in unison, they gasped:
“It’s Dick!”

CHAPTER VI.

LOST IN THE CAVE.

Dick Merriwell’s voice it plainly was! Dick Merriwell was beyond that door! How he came to be there they could not conceive, but they knew he was there.

Again he shouted to them:
“Hurry, fellows! Knock the old door down if there is no other way to open it! Let me out, for they are——”
Then followed sounds of a struggle beyond the door, Dick’s words being cut short.
The struggle ended in—silence!
“Dick! Dick!” roared the Texan, tearing at the door in a fierce attempt to get it open. “Answer me! Dick, are you there?”
No answer!
“For the love of goodness, give me something with which I can knock the everlasting stuffing out of this old door!” yelled Buckhart. “Dick’s in there! He’s in trouble! Didn’t you hear it? We must help him.”

Hal had seemed too astounded to move. How Dick could be on the other side of that door was more than he could understand, and but for the fact that Buckhart had heard the cries he might have fancied himself dreaming.
The Texan was like a raging lion.
“Do something!” he thundered. “For Heaven’s sake do something!”

“What can——”
“Something—anything! I tell you, Dick is in there!”
“An ax!” exclaimed Hal—“we must have an ax!”

They hurried out into the cabin, where they finally discovered an old ax.
“Come on!” shouted the Westerner. “Just you hold the light and let me get at that door. I’ll make kindling wood of it quicker than lightning!”

He rushed back into the cave, ax in hand, as Darrrell followed. Hal stood with the light above his head, while Brad spat on his hands and prepared for business.

“Give me room!” he panted.
Then his muscular arms swung the ax.
Crash—the first blow fell on the door, making it quiver.
Blow after blow the muscular Western youth rained on that door, a wild light in his eyes, his teeth gleaming, his cheeks flushed.
Bang! bang! bang!
The din filled the small cave.
The door began to give before this onslaught.
“Now you’re doing it, Brad!” exclaimed Hal, encouragingly. “Hit it again in the same place! That’s it! There she goes!”

With a shattering sound, the heavy door finally fell, a battered wreck.
Hal held the light for them to look beyond it.
As they had anticipated, they saw a dark passage leading away at a downward slant.

But, now the door was down, those boys dreaded what they fancied they might see, for the cries of young Merriwell had been cut short by sounds of a struggle, and silence had followed the struggle.

With wildly-beating hearts, they peered into the passage, fearing the poor light of the “slut candle” might show them a dark and silent body—the body of their friend whom they loved.

“Do—do you see him?” whispered Hal, falteringly.
“No,” answered Buckhart, with something like relief.
“What do you see?”
“Nothing but a black hole.”
Then their hesitation ended.
“Come on!” exclaimed the Westerner. “He’s in there somewhere, and we must find him. Follow me. Will you?”
"Sure thing," assured Hal. "But I'd like to have something for a weapon in case I needed it."

"Don't you worry," said Brad. "I've got this ax, and I'll do some business with it if I find it necessary. Just you keep close to me and hold that light as high as you can, so it will shine over my head!"

Gripping the ax, the fearless Texan entered the passage, crouching low.

Darrell followed instructions by holding the light as high as possible; but that was not very high, for at first the passage proved to be so low that they could not have stood erect had they desired.

Brad moved with a swiftness that was far from cautious. Once he slipped and came near falling.

As they proceeded the passage became somewhat larger. Beyond the door it had widened out for a space and narrowed again, but it did not permit them to stand erect until they had proceeded a number of yards from that place.

"Careful, Buckhart!" whispered Hal, as the anxious Texan made another misstep.

The silence of the cave was of a shivery sort. If the boys had expected an encounter as soon as they entered the passage they were disappointed.

After a time they came to a point where there were two passages, and there they paused, wondering which one to take.

It required no small amount of courage for those lads to penetrate into that dismal place under such circumstances, but they were thinking of Dick, and the hope that they might reach and aid him spurred them on.

"Which way?" whispered Brad.

Hal looked at the two passages in dismay.

"I don't know," he confessed, shaking his head.

"Whichever way we go it's likely to be the wrong one."

"And we can't separate," said Buckhart.

"Hardly!"

"Then we'll choose the left passage and trust to fate."

On they went.

But that was not the only time they were called upon to choose, for they encountered other passages as they proceeded. There were also small cave chambers, with more than a single passage leading from each.

"It's all guesswork," declared Darrell, after a time.

"I'm afraid we're making a mess of it, Buckhart."

"Pard, I'm afraid so, too," confessed Brad, in genuine distress. "But what can we do about it? We heard Dick beyond that door. You heard his voice, didn't you, Darrell?" he asked, as if afraid that he had been deceived by his own ears.

"I heard it," answered Hal. "He was beyond that door, though how he came to be there is something I cannot understand."

"No more can I. But it's certain he did not leave that place of his own accord."

"Dead certain."

"We heard the sound of a scrimmage."

"Yes."

"Dick's in the hands of enemies, and I'll never rest till I can give him a helping hand. You hear me warble! I think he's somewhere in this old cave."

"But where?"

"That's the question. We'll just have to keep on hunting."

They did keep on searching until they were completely bewildered by the many turns they had made and the different passages and chambers they had entered.

When they halted again it was to look at each other in a helpless way and confess that they were lost.

Then a sudden fear came upon them. Lost in that cave! Why, they might never be able to get out! They might search for days in a vain attempt to discover a passage that should lead to the outer world, only to finally starve in the darkness of that place.

The horror of it filled them with a frantic desire to escape from the cave without delay, and they hastened on once more.

Suddenly the light went out, plunging them into Stygian darkness!

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CHAPTER VII.
A MOAN AND ITS ECHO.

As they stood there in the darkness a moment after the light was extinguished, they heard a low, moaning sound that seemed to come from a distance and echo hollowly along the black passages. There was something ghostly and terrible in that moaning, and the boys seemed to feel their hair rising on their heads.

"What is it?" whispered Hal.
“I’ll eat my hat if it doesn’t sound like a dying man!” breathed Buckhart.

“For Heaven’s sake, light that candle again!” panted Darrell, his teeth chattering.

“I haven’t a match to my name,” said Brad. “You lighted it in the first place.”

“But I think I used my last match!” confessed the lad.

“You did?”

“I think so.”

“Then, Heaven have mercy on us, for we’re lost in this cave without a light!”

The thought was enough to chill their blood, and no wonder, for if they attempted to find their way out in the darkness, who could tell what dreadful pitfall they might wander into! And, even if they did not tumble into such a pitfall, without the aid of a light they were liable to wander about those passages until they became exhausted and crazed over their terrible situation. Lost in the cave, it was quite possible that death stared them in the face.

Again from a distance came that blood-curdling moan, rising from a low murmur to a great sob of anguish, and dying away again till silence filled the black passages of the cavern.

Darrell was fumbling with shaking fingers through his clothes for a match.

“What can we do?” asked Buckhart, huskily.

“All right!” exultantly breathed Hal. “I have some matches! I have found them!”

“Then hurry and light that rag!”

Hal struck a match, but as he attempted to set fire to the rag that floated in the dish of grease there came a sudden puff of wind and extinguished the match.

Following the puff of wind, which was like the breath of some hidden demon, once more the moaning sound rose and fell and died away in the distance.

“Light it! light it!” panted Brad. “I swear I can’t stand much of this! It will be a wonder if I get out of here without my hair turning gray!”

“I haven’t many matches,” said Hal. “I must be careful not to waste them.”

“Give me a match,” urged the Texan. “I think I must have Irish blood in me, for I can light a match anywhere, even if there is a gale of wind blowing.”

“The wind comes in a sudden puff, that’s the matter. If it blew right along—— Let’s change our position.”

“Don’t you dare move!” broke from Brad. “I might lose you in the darkness, and you have the only thing that will make any light. Say, I’d go daffy alone here in the dark in just about seven seconds!”

Hal struck another match, trying to protect it with his hands. The puff of wind came, followed by the moan, but he was able to keep it from blowing out the match, and he succeeded in starting the rag to burning.

The light of the “shut candle” enabled the boys to look at each other. They were ashen pale, with an expression in their eyes that told of a horror seeking to fasten itself upon them. The Texan was still clutching the ax, to which he had persistently clung.

“Buckhart,” said Hal, with an effort, “we must find our way out of this infernal place!”

“I reckon you’re right,” nodded the Texan.

“We have failed to find Dick.”

“I don’t wonder!”

“And the grease in this dish is burning low.”

“What? I swear it is! Darrell, we’ve got to get up and hump ourselves!”

“But it’s no use to rush about aimlessly. We must use some kind of judgment in our efforts. This cave can’t be so terribly large, for Blue Mountain is not large.”

“It’s large enough to satisfy me!” said Brad, dryly.

“I don’t mind a ruction, and I enjoy fighting against odds; I have slaughtered Apaches and lynched horse-lifters; I don’t mind stacking up against a grizzly or a mountain lion; but I will admit that this getting lost in the dark underground kind of takes the sand out of me and makes me feel limp as a rag.”

Again from one of the passages came that puff of wind, but Hal sheltered the light with his hand and kept it from being extinguished. The moaning sound followed with certainty.

“It’s the wind that makes that sound,” declared Darrell.

“Well, I swear it makes a groan just like a dying man!” said Brad.

“The wind draws through here in a peculiar way, and that shows there must be two openings in order to produce such a draught.”

“Two? I’ll be satisfied to find one of them.”

“We have been following these passages down-
ward nearly all the time. Of course, that might lead us to another opening; but the one by which we entered is somewhere above us. Therefore, if we wish to return to that point, we must follow no passage that does not lead upward."

To this the Texan immediately agreed, declaring that Hal's head was clear.

So they set out to follow all the passages that led upward. After a little, to their dismay, they entered one that led upward for some distance, but finally turned and led downward.

They retraced their steps and sought another passage. All they could find, however, led downward.

"Bad!" exclaimed Buckhart—"mighty bad! What are we going to do now?"

"I don't know; but we've got to do something in a hurry. This light will not last ten minutes longer!"

The Texan groaned.

"We've made a mess of it, pard!" he exclaimed.

"We haven't helped Dick, and we're in a bad scrape ourselves."

They soon decided to choose one of the passages and follow it, regardless whether it led up or down. That seemed to be the only thing to do, and they carried out their determination.

The passage chosen led downward a short distance, but turned and caused them to expend no little energy in climbing upward.

However, as Hal had said, the light sank lower and lower, and, within ten minutes, it died to a charred mass in the dish, glowing faintly and going out at last.

The boys stood quite still for some moments. Each reached out in the darkness and got hold of the other.

"It's a bad old scrape, pard!" breathed the Texan.

"All the same, it's no use to squal. We've got to try to find our way out in the dark."

Darrell did not express the fear that had settled upon him, for it seemed too much like showing the white feather, and he did not wish to discourage his companion.

In truth, the situation was one to appall almost any heart, and it is not strange that the boys were thus shaken.

After a time they started on again, and it seemed that they wandered for hours along the passages of that cave, keeping close to each other.

Hal was in the lead now, and, of a sudden, he felt a puff of wind in his face. It caused his heart to leap with joy, for he fancied it must mean that the opening was close at hand.

The next moment his heart sank again, for from far away came a low, moaning sound that rose to a wail of anguish and died again to a moan that was followed by deathly silence.

The boys knew that, in wandering about in the darkness, they had finally returned to the spot where the light had been extinguished by the sudden breath of wind some time before.

As the moaning died away something like its echo seemed to come from the lips of the two wretched lads.

CHAPTER VIII.
A SHOUT AND A SHOT.

It was hours later that two haggard boys finally came panting forth to daylight by the way of the hidden hut. At last they had by accident found their way out of the cave as they entered it, and they were thankful, indeed, for their deliverance.

The experiences they had passed through in the Erebus darkness of the cavern had robbed them for the time of strength and energy and boyish ginger, but they hailed the daylight with shouts of joy, clasping hands and executing a rather fantastic dance.

Suddenly they stopped.

"Dick!" whispered Hal.

"Dick!" echoed Brad.

They were thinking of the friend whose fate still remained a mystery.

"What is to be done?" was the question that came from Hal's lips.

"We can't give it up," said Buckhart. "We must find him."

"We will!" exclaimed Darrell.

The declining sun told them midday was past, and they knew no time was to be lost.

"We can't do it alone," admitted the Texan.

"We're plumb up a tree, pard."

"We must have assistance," agreed Hal.

"The men down there—let's go for them."

They lost little time in hurrying down to the ravine, where the shovelers were still working; but when they told their story they were vexed to find it received with no small amount of incredulity. However, the earnestness of the boys finally impressed
the men, one of whom set about questioning them. They were not confused by his questions, nor did they contradict themselves about anything. As a result, it was not long before twenty men were ready to follow them.

Some of the shovelers had brought their dinners in pails, and not everything was eaten, so Hal and Brad were given some sandwiches, which they ravenously devoured, as they were very hungry, although they had not realized it until the food was offered them.

The boys led the way back to the hidden cabin. On the way an old pitch pine was passed, and Brad suggested that it would provide them with torches to aid them in searching the passages of the cave. But it was necessary to return to the cabin for the ax, which Buckhart had clung to through all their wanderings in the darkness of the cave and had brought forth when they finally emerged. This consumed time, but it was useless to think of entering the cave without something to furnish light.

With the aid of the ax the tree was soon cut down, and from it was split a number of resinous pieces to serve as torches.

The men were eager enough to enter the cave.

A few of the torches were lighted, and Hal, bearing one of these, led the way through the butt and into the passage.

Still with the ax, Brad followed at his heels, and the men came along behind them.

To say that the men were astonished as they proceeded would not be sufficiently strong. They were amazed to learn that there was such a cave in Blue Mountain.

"They didn't take stock in our yarn, pard," said the Texan; "but I reckon they're beginning to believe it now."

"They can't help it," said Hal.

Still the boys were oppressed by the fear that they might be too late to aid Dick Merriwell. The mystery of his fate bore upon them with crushing force.

"Too bad we couldn't have ripped open that old door when we heard him shouting to us," said the Westerner, regretfully. "That was the time when he needed us."

The many passages seemed to fill the men with bewilderment, but they vowed that they would explore every one of them and the entire cave.

Finally, they came to the small chamber where the distant moaning could be heard. The boys caused them to stand still and listen, and the yellow light of the smoking, flaring torches made the scene weird and awesome.

At last the puff of wind came, followed by the blood-curdling moan.

The teeth of one of the men, an Irishman, chattered together, and he gurgled:

"Howly Saint Patherick! It's the banshee, so it is! Begorra! Oi'm not feeling well at all, at all, an' Oi'd loike to go home, av nobody objects."

No one objected, but he found that he would have to go alone if he sought to leave the cave by retracing his steps, upon which he quickly decided that he would remain with the rest of the party.

Much time was spent in exploring the cavern and traversing the passages. The torches they had, lighted before entering burned out and others were supplied.

As the time passed and the search seemed unproductive of results the hearts of Dick Merriwell's friends grew heavier and heavier.

"Pard," said Buckhart, sadly, "I'm afraid we'll never see poor Dick again."

"We'll find him!" vowed Hal. "We'll find him!"

It was not long after this that Hal suddenly stopped, excitedly commanding the others to be still.

At that point the cave was wide enough for six men to stand abreast.

"What is it?" demanded Buckhart.

"I heard something!" asserted Darrell. "Listen! There it is again! It's a shout! Answer it—answer!"

Then part of the men raised their voices in an answering hail, which seemed to fill the cave with a great volume of compressed sound.

Then, far away, a pistol shot echoed through the black recesses of the moaning cave.

CHAPTER IX.

AGAINST ODDS.

In climbing Blue Mountain Dick Merriwell finally came to the cliff against the face of which stood the tall pine tree. As he looked up at the bare wall of rock he was first struck by the thought that the cliff was impassable, and he would be forced to retrace his steps until he could find a way of passing round the bluff.
TIP TOP WEEKLY.

Then, looking at the tree, he saw that its top reached a few feet above the upper edge of the bluff. Immediately he was struck by a daring thought. Why not climb the tree and attempt to reach the top of the cliff in that manner.

With the skates swung on his back and held together by the straps over his shoulders, he lost no time in starting to climb the tree, for he felt that Hal and Brad would have the laugh on him if he were compelled to retrace his steps and thus lose the lead on them that he had obtained.

He knew how to climb a tree. It had been part of his early “education,” and he made little fuss over the task of reaching the lower limbs of this one. After that the feat was comparatively easy until he drew near the top, where it grew somewhat more difficult.

And there, when he had almost reached the top, he suddenly discovered something that caused him to whistle with surprise.

Against the face of the cliff a limb of the tree rubbed. Beyond and just above that limb was a black opening, at least four feet square, in what had seemed to be the solid stone. He could look into this opening for a little distance, and then it seemed to turn to the right, and he could see no further.

“A regular bear’s den!” muttered the boy, his eyes dancing with genuine pleasure over the discovery.

As he lingered there, he was tempted to slip along that limb and enter the opening.

But he was unarmed, and there was no way of knowing what creature he might encounter in the hole, so he soon decided to leave it unexplored for the time.

But it had not taken him ten seconds to form a determination to enter that place some time and see what it was like and what he could find.

The task before him now was to reach the top of the cliff. Although he saw that this would not be easy, still he was satisfied it was possible, and he persisted in the perilous attempt. The top of the tree swayed in and swept its branches against the cliff, when, to his amazement, he discovered a rope dangling downward from above. As the rope lay in a perpendicular rift of the rock, he had not observed it before.

The boy asked himself a dozen questions in as many seconds. Then he grasped the rope and gave a pull upon it.

It seemed fast and immovable. With the aid of that rope he found it a comparatively easy task to mount safely to the top of the ledge, where he found the rope securely tied about a heavy bowlder.

Further than that, in the snow he discovered the tracks of two men.

“Are there bears hereabouts? and have hunters been looking for one in that hole down there?” he muttered.

Stooping, he examined the tracks intently, and it was not long before he reached the astonishing discovery that the men had come up over the ledge and departed from the top of the cliff, but they had not approached the place from that direction. There were no tracks leading to the top of the cliff; only those leading from it.

“Now, what’s the meaning of that?” murmured Dick. “I saw no tracks near the foot of that tree, and unless the men climbed from the foot to reach this spot they must have come out of the hole down there.”

No wonder he was startled by this conclusion. But he was not given much time to meditate over it. Some slight noise caused him to look up, and he saw two men rushing down toward him.

For a moment he was turned to stone by amazement, for he instantly recognized the dark-faced, bearded fellow in advance.

It was Felipe Costola!

Now Dick had seen Costola caught in the snowslide and swept down the side of Blue Mountain into the gorge, where at this moment shovelers were searching for his body, therefore it was not at all strange that the boy was bewildered.

The fellow behind Costola was one of his ruffianly crew, who had also been carried down the mountain by the avalanche of snow.

Somehow these men had escaped, and the deadly enemy of Juan Delores, the father of Little Felecia, still lived!

The men had seen Dick, and they were hurrying to stop him on the ledge.

The boy saw an encounter was inevitable unless he could take to flight and avoid them, and the latter course was almost as dangerous on the slippery, snow-covered side of the mountain as it was to stand and face the ruffians.
Dick flung aside his skates.  
"Ha! ha!" cried Costola, as he came leaping down the rocks.  "It is the boy who makes all the trouble! We have him! Grab him, Pedro! We fix him!"

"We fix him!" echoed Pedro, and the two rushed at Dick, who faced them without the least sign of fear.

In fact, to the astonishment of the men, a strange laugh broke from the lips of the lad who waited for their attack.

"So you're not dead yet, Costola!" he exclaimed.  "Well, I must admit that you have more lives than a cat. I'm very sorry I haven't my gun. A fellow always can see something to shoot when he's left his gun at home."

A moment later the three were engaged in a desperate battle for life there on that cliff, two men against one nervy, undaunted, athletic boy.

This was the struggle witnessed by Buckhart and Darrell, who sought in vain to reach the spot in time to render Dick aid.

Young Merriwell depended mainly on his nimbleness to enable him to hold his own against these men, and, at first, he was able to avoid them as a flea avoids the hand that tries to capture it. At the same time, he got in one or two stinging blows, which aroused the ruffians to intense fury.

But misfortune overtook the boy when he tripped over the rope that ran from the huge bowlder to the edge of the cliff. Before he could straighten up the fellow called Pedro had grasped him.

"Now I have you!" panted the man.

At the same time Costola sought to fasten his hands on the boy, urging his comrade to hold fast.

But Dick tore himself free with a supreme effort, at the same time striking Pedro a heavy blow on the nose, causing the blood to flow in a stream which dyed the snow.

Pedro volleyed forth a string of Spanish, and Dick laughed as he turned his attention to Costola.

"Little devil!" grated Costola, furiously.  "We make you laugh another way soon!"

"Oh, I don't know!" returned Dick, dodging a blow and giving the man a body thump.  "How do you like that one in the slats! Makes you a trifle woozy, doesn't it?"

Gasp ing, Costola called for Pedro to get at the boy again, and the other ruffian responded, although blood still ran from his nose.

"Knife him! knife him!" snarled Pedro.  "That stop him quick. Let me!"

"We are two," said the other.  "We can fix one boy. No knife. Grab him!"

Again they penned Dick between them and the brink of the precipice, and again they flung themselves at him, but he escaped with a pantherlike spring, whirling like a flash and striking Pedro a terrible blow.

The man struck flung up his arms and fell on the very edge of the ledge, a portion of his body projecting, while, as he slipped over the brink, he wildly sought to clutch something with his hands.

In vain.

With a scream, the wretch toppled over and disappeared.

Felipe Costola had caught up a stone kicked loose from a bare spot of ground by their feet during the struggle. With it in his hand, he rushed at the boy.

Dick felt confident now, and he laughed in Costola's face, waiting till the man was close before making a move to spring aside.

As he sprang, however, his feet slipped on a bit of ice, and down he went on his hands and knees.

Like a wild beast Costola flung himself on the brave boy. The hand that held the stone was lifted, and down it fell with terrible force on Dick's head.

Without a groan, a gasp or a sound, young Merriwell sank on his face and lay still.

CHAPTER X.

THE FLIGHT THROUGH THE CAVE.

When consciousness returned to Dick Merriwell he found himself dangling in midair, with a rope about his body. He brushed harshly against rough, cold stones, and then he was grasped by a pair of hands, while close at hand a voice called something in Spanish.

Something led Dick to pretend that he was still unconscious. But he had sense enough to know that he was pulled into a dark hole, and, through his eyelashes, he saw for an instant the limbs of a tree and the steep side of the mountain.

At that moment he could not quite understand it, but he afterwards knew he had been lowered from the top of the cliff by Felipe Costola, while another man seized him and drew him into the opening he had seen in the back of the bluff.
And that other man? In spite of his resolve to play possum, the boy came near betraying himself, for the other was no less than Pedro!

How had Pedro escaped death or broken limbs?

It happened that when he fell from the cliff the man dropped into the upper branches of the very tree Dick Merriwell had climbed a short time before, and there he managed to clutch a limb and hold fast, which saved him from what might have been a fatal drop to the rocks below.

“Little dog!” hissed Pedro, as he dragged Dick back into the hole. “Little devil! How I would like to give him the knife! But I have to wait for Costola to say what shall be done.”

The rope had been untied from about the waist of the boy, who was left there as Pedro crept back to the mouth of the passage in the rock.

Dick felt that the time had come for him to do something, yet when he tried to move, his head swam and he was conscious of a great weakness.

In his head there were shooting pains, but he minded them not.

“Now is the time!” he thought, and, with a mighty effort, he lifted himself a little and looked toward the mouth of the passage.

Before him lay utter and terrible darkness, but behind him were men who would destroy him.

As the boy moved on he realized that the passage grew larger. Pretty soon he managed to pull himself to his feet with his hands against the cold rocks, but he could not stand erect there. He knew he was in a natural cave, but there was how large it was and there was some escaping the ruffians.

“If I had a little strength I’d not run away!” he told himself. “But I’m weak as a fish. It would be foolishness to try to fight them.”

He felt his way along a little, and then, of a sudden, to his ears came a shout of astonishment and the sound of excited exclamations in Spanish.

“They’ve found I’m not where Pedro left me,” he decided. “It’s something of a surprise to them. But they’ll be coming after me in a hurry now, and I must make something of a hustle myself.”

He fancied the cave could not be very large, and the fact that it seemed certain the opening in the face of the cliff was not in general use as an entrance caused him to think it possible he would quickly find another way out of the place.

With this thought in his mind, the boy hurried onward as fast as possible through the darkness of the place. Knowing nothing of the various passages, he fancied he was following the one course that must lead him directly to another exit.

At times he realized he passed through small chambers. When he came to such places he continued along the wall to the right, against which he kept a hand until he found another passage.

By a rather surprising chance, he made his way through the labyrinth directly to the wooden door that closed the opening into the small chamber back of the hidden hut.

Of course he was amazed and not a little appalled by the distance he had traveled underground, for to him that distance seemed even greater than it was, and he fancied he had wandered through those passages for hours.

He felt over the door with his hands, seeking some means of opening it, but finding none.

“It must open somehow!” he muttered, fully satisfied that this was the other way out of the cave, although he did not know at that moment just where he was.

So he continued seeking some means of opening the door, now and then pausing to listen for pursuing enemies.

Thus it happened that Dick was beyond that door when Brad and Hal entered the chamber in the rear of the hidden hut. Listening intently, he heard and recognized their voices.

Then he shouted to them.

At the same time there was a gleam of light along the passage behind him, and he saw Costola and Pedro rushing toward him, the latter holding a flaring torch.

Setting his teeth, Dick turned to meet those men. Had he possessed his usual strength he might have given them a fierce fight, even though penned up in that narrow place.

But, in his present condition, Dick was no match for those men. They hurled themselves upon him and beat him down. They took him captive and rushed him from the spot.

While behind them sounded the furious blows Brad Buckhart rained on the door, the sounds echoing like cannonry along the passages of the cavern.
CHAPTER XI.

DICK’S ESCAPE.

“Little devil!” said Pedro, as he bent over Dick. “Why don’t you let me kill him, senor?”

“What good will it do?” demanded Costola, who sat near, on a flat stone, nervously smoking a cigarette.

“It would give me great satisfaction,” asserted Pedro. “He has made us no end of trouble.”

“And to kill him might make us more trouble.”

“How?”

“They are searching for us now in this very cave.”

“But they never can find us here.”

“We cannot be sure of that. If they were to find us and we had killed this foolish boy it would be all the worse for us. We must think of that. Keep your hands off him, Pedro.”

The men were speaking in Spanish, but Dick could understand them, although he made a pretense that he could not.

They had brought him to that place with no small amount of trouble. It had been necessary for one of them to climb a rope found dangling from somewhere overhead, after which the other tied the end of that rope about Dick’s waist, and the boy was laboriously dragged up the wall a distance of more than fifteen feet. As he lay, bound and helpless, the rope was let down again, and the second man came up.

They entered an opening in the wall of a round chamber, and, when the place was lighted, Dick saw it was here they might well hope to conceal themselves from all searchers.

Some bedding had been brought to the spot, but Dick was compelled to lie on the stone floor.

Felipe Costola swore at the boy, declaring Dick had caused him more trouble than any one else in all the world.

“But for you,” said Costola, “I would have done long ago the things I am here to do, and now I would be far from here.”

“It has given me great pleasure to cause you trouble,” asserted Dick, coolly.

“You shall be sorry!” hissed the Spaniard.

“I think not. You are a brave man! You wage war against a girl—against Little Felecia! Oh, you are very brave!”

“It’s not my fault that she is of her father’s blood. All of his blood must perish!”

“It doesn’t strike me that you are making much of a success in the business of destroying folks,” said Dick, tauntingly. “Thus far you have got nothing but the worst of it.”

“My time will come!”

“I thought it had come when I saw you carried down the mountain by the snowslide. I will confess that you have very good luck in escaping from such unpleasant predicaments.”

“I knew you would think me dead,” said Costola, in satisfaction. “And now the fools are trying to find my body down there in the snow. It was not covered very deep, and I was not hurt at all. It was easy to get out, and I help Pedro. Then we come here. But you, little fool!—you find the place.”

“I believe I am causing you some bother,” said Dick.

“But we have you now.”

“It looks that way,” confessed the boy, with a sigh.

“Let them hunt. They never find you.”

Much more passed between them, but Dick showed his nerve to the last.

At times the light was extinguished, for the men knew searchers were in the cave, and they feared the light might lead to their discovery.

Dick welcomed the darkness, for he had discovered a sharp edge of rock, and against this he set about wearing the rope that tied his hands. He was compelled to work slowly and with the utmost caution, as too much rustling on his part would arouse the suspicion of the men.

Needless to describe the wretched hours he spent thus. To him it seemed those hours were days. Still he did not give up, and he kept on at work, although his wrists were raw and bleeding.

Once Pedro suddenly flung himself on the boy, clapping his hand over Dick’s mouth and holding it there. For an instant the lad fancied his time had come, and he was on the verge of making a desperate effort to break the rope that held his hands, when the men hissed in his ear:

“Keep still! Make a move you be killed!”

Costola crept past them, and the ears of the boy told him the man had stopped where he could peer down into the lower cave.

Then came the sound of voices and the tramp of
men, while the light of torches shone up into the retreat where the ruffians were hiding with their captive.

Dick saw Pedro’s face above him, revealed by the reflected light of the torches, and again the Spaniard whispered for him to be still.

The lad realized that it would be madness to cry out were he able to do so, and therefore he pretended to be terrified into utter passiveness.

The lights and the voices passed on.

After a time, this was repeated, and the lights and the voices repassed, whereupon the ruffians chuckled with satisfaction, feeling certain the searchers had been handsomely avoided.

But Dick knew friends were near, and he lost no time in wrenching at his bonds, which, to his satisfaction, were snapped asunder.

His hands were free!

With all the caution he could command, he drew up his feet until his fingers found the rope and the knots.

Even then it was a slow and painful task, but he was successful at last, and the rope was slowly and quietly unwound from about his ankles.

The boy’s heart was throbbing with excitement, but he succeeded in keeping his nerves steady.

“You need all your nerve, old man,” he told himself.

Bit by bit, inch by inch, he dragged himself toward the opening near the roof of the chamber.

Costola and Pedro were whispering together.

To his great satisfaction, the boy was able to reach the edge of the opening before the suspicions of the men were aroused. Then his fingers touched a bit of rock that fell rattling into the cavern chamber.

A second later, one of the men struck a match.

The boy knew the time for prompt and decided action had come.

“Good-day, Costola!” he cried, as he promptly let himself over the edge of the rock. “I’ll see you later.”

A shout of surprise broke from the lips of both men, echoing along the passage of the cave.

Costola snatched forth a revolver.

“Stop!” he commanded.

The reply of the boy was a taunting laugh.

The pistol flashed, the match went out, and the boy dropped.

CHAPTER XII.
THE LIGHT UNDER THE ICE.

Fortune favored Dick, for he struck unharmed upon his feet. Above him the tricked Spaniards were snarling savagely, but he lost no time in getting away.

A moment before he dropped, as if in answer to the shouts of Costola and Pedro, he had heard a great roar of voices, and now he sought to move toward the point from which he fancied the sound came.

He was lucky in striking the right passage, and he had not stumbled far along it before he saw a gleam of light ahead of him.

A few moments later Dick Merriwell came panting into the presence of Brad Buckhart, Hal Darrell and the men who were searching in the cave.

A whoop of joy broke from the lips of the Texan, and he clasped Dick in his arms.

“Hooray!” he roared. “It’s him! Whoop! Wake up tomcats and yowl! It’s Dick! He’s all right, Hal! Why don’t you open your throat and let off steam?”

Darrell was no less delighted, although not in such a demonstrative manner.

The men sought to crowd round Dick, but he said:

“This is no time to talk about it. Two of the ruffians supposed to be destroyed in the snowslide are in this cave. I have just escaped from them. Follow me, and we’ll try to make things interesting for them.”

They were ready enough to follow, but when the chamber sought was reached the rope was found dangling from the opening above, seeming to indicate that the men were not there.

However, enough time was wasted for Buckhart to ascend that rope and investigate.

Costola and his comrade had vanished.

The Texan came sliding down the rope in a twinkling.

“Taken to their heels!” he cried. “Dusted! Vamoosed! Puckached! Gone!”

“Then they have made a dash to escape from the cave by the opening in the cliff,” said Dick. “Come on!”

There was a general rush along the passage, with the boys at the head of the party.

In time they came to the narrow place where it was necessary for them to creep along one at a time, and
Dick was the first to reach the opening and look out upon the mountain side.

The sun had sunk in the west and the shadows of night were beginning to gather over the world, but at some distance recklessly plunging down the mountain, young Merriwell saw two men.

Costola and Pedro were doing their level best to escape, and it looked as if they might succeed.

In a twinkling Dick was descending the tree, while his friends followed.

The pursuit down the mountain in the gathering darkness was picturesquely reckless, to say the least, for not one of them all seemed to pause a moment to consider the danger.

"Gaining on them, pard!" shouted Buckhart to Dick, as he went scooting over a slippery place clutched a small bush to keep from falling headlong, and swung himself down a bluff.

Behind them strung out the men who had poured from the opening of the cave and descended the tree.

The excitement of a man hunt was in their blood, and they were like a pack of wolves.

What a day it had been for Dick Merriwell and his youthful companions! And now was it to end with the escape of the ruffians?

Dick was determined that Costola and Pedro should not get away if it could be prevented. Already those men had made no end of trouble, and it was time to bring their careers to an end. The hand of the law was waiting to fasten itself upon them.

Costola looked back and saw the pursuers gaining. Bitter curses escaped his lips, and to Pedro he snarled:

"If they catch us, I have a shot for that devil boy! He has made all the trouble!"

"You should have let me slit his throat," panted Pedro.

They approached the foot of the mountain, and Dick Merriwell saw them disappear into the fringe of trees about the cove. He was not many rods behind them, and he dashed through the trees to the cover, fully anticipating that the men would be seen hurrying across the ice.

To Dick’s surprise, he could see nothing of either of the men...

They had disappeared.

He peered across the ice, filled with regret and wondering what could have become of the ruffians.

Brad appeared at his elbow, and Hal came up, panting heavily.

"Where are they?" gasped the Texan.

Dick shook his head.

"Haven’t the least idea," he confessed.

Then, stooping low, by the failing light he examined the marks on the snow and discovered the two men had rushed out upon the ice of the little cove.

"They didn’t have time to get across and under cover before I was here at the edge of the ice," he said.

Then he started out upon the ice, followed by Brad and Hal, while the men of the party came crashing through the timber toward the lake.

Dick had not proceeded more than twenty feet from the shore before he stopped, a gasp of amazement escaping his lips. At the same instant, he clutched Buckhart’s arm and pointed downward at the ice beneath their feet.

"Look at that!" he breathed.

No wonder he was astounded and bewildered, for beneath the ice he could distinctly see a tiny gleam of light, like a small flame! As they looked, breathless, bewildered, amazed, the gleam light moved onward slowly, as though borne by a human hand!

CHAPTER XIII.

AT LAST.

What did it mean?

"Great howling coyotes!" palpitated Brad Buckhart, rubbing his eyes and staring again. "Am I dreaming?"

"It’s a light, Dick!" came from Hal, "a light under the ice!"

"That’s right," agreed Dick, "and somebody is carrying it."

"How can that be possible?"

"That’s what I’d like to know," said Buckhart. "I had a sneaking notion that fire and water didn’t mix well, and I’d like to know how there can be fire down here in the water beneath this ice on which we are standing. I would, I swear!"

"It—it can’t be a reflection, can it?" questioned Hal, as they followed the tiny gleaming speck. "I don’t see——"

At this moment the light disappeared, as if it had died out.

"I opine the water was too much for it at last,"
said Brad. “But that was the strangest fire I ever saw. Why—— Blow me cold! There she is again! Well, I’ll eat my hat!”

Sure enough, the tiny flame flared up again beneath the ice.

And now, gazing down at it, they seemed to perceive dark forms that moved along with the small speck of fire.

“I tell you what,” said Brad, “some family of fishes is cooking its evening meal. ‘They’re having a roast, or something of the sort.’

Two of the men who had taken part in the pursuit now came out upon the ice. One of them held a piece of the pitch pine that had provided them with torches in the cave. He was the Irishman who had been frightened by the moaning wind that sucked through the passages of the cavern.

“The saints defend us!” he gasped, as he saw the light under the ice. “It’s bewitched everything is this day!”

Then he dropped the stick and scrambled for the shore in ludicrous haste. Arriving on shore, he told the other men what he had seen and warned them not to go onto the ice.

Dick picked up the stick of resinous pine dropped by the startled Irishman. A strange fancy had entered the head of the boy, and now he began to look around at the surface of the ice. In a few moments he discovered the hole cut by the fisherman he had encountered there when he first crossed the lake.

Upon reaching that opening in the ice and kneeling to peer into it, the boy made a surprising discovery.

There was no water under the ice at that point! With feverish haste, Dick found a match and struck it, igniting the pitchy end of the stick he held. When this was blazing properly, he thrust it down through the opening.

The light of the torch showed him, some five or more feet below, the sandy bottom, with no water whatever covering it.

“May I be kicked by a blind mule!” came from Buckhart. “Where’s the water gone?”

“It’s been drawn off to-day,” said Dick.

“Drawn off?”

“Yes.”

“What for?”

“Because the lake was too high, for one reason. Don’t you remember how oddly white the ice looked this forenoon when we crossed the lake?”

“Sure as shooting!”

“That was because they had already begun to draw the water off. It sounded hollow beneath my skates. And then, while we were climbing the mountain, strange cracking sounds came up from the lake. That was caused by the ice settling.”

“But it didn’t settle here. What holds it up like this?”

“It’s supported by its own solidness and the manner in which it rests on both shores of this narrow cove.”

“That’s right,” agreed Darrell: “though I wouldn’t have believed it if I hadn’t seen it with my own eyes.”

Still holding the torch through the opening in the ice, Dick was examining the bottom of the lake.

“Just as I thought,” he said. “Those rascals dropped through here. There are their tracks down there.”

“What?” cried both boys, together. “Then they——”

“They made the light under the ice that we saw. It’s probable that the one in advance fell through this hole by accident. Then the other followed him, and they thought they’d be able to hide from us under the ice.”

“What are we going to do?” questioned Hal.

“Follow them!” declared Dick.

“Follow? Why——?”

“I’m ready,” declared Buckhart. “Go ahead, Dick, and you’ll find me at your heels.”

“But they’re armed,” said young Merriwell. “We must have weapons of some sort. It will be folly to try to run them down under the ice without we arm ourselves.”

“Level head,” said Brad.

The men were swarming out onto the ice now, and to them the boys appealed for weapons.

At first the men refused to believe that the fugitives had escaped by dropping through a hole in the ice, but when they came up and looked down, finding there was no water under the ice at that point in the cove, they were compelled to believe.

“Tell them to keep off,” said Dick. “Look at them all coming out here. This ice——”

Suddenly, without a sound to give warning, the sheet of ice fell crashingly beneath the weight of those who had ventured upon it.
Of course they all went down, but, although everyone was hurled from his feet, nobody was at all seriously hurt.

"My goodness!" said Buckhart, as he rose amid the great cakes of thick ice. "Those gentlemen below must have a headache now! I shouldn't care to have anything quite as heavy fall on me. You bet your boots I wouldn't!"

"They are done for!" said Hal Darrell. "The falling ice must have killed them almost instantly."

"Not till I see Felipe Costola dead before me will I be satisfied that his end has come," said Dick. "Think how many times and in what amazing ways he has escaped death!"

"There was no way of escaping this time," declared Hal.

"I'm not at all sure of that."

"How could he escape?"

"If his body is not found, I'll not be surprised to learn that he found another hole in the ice and escaped through that before the crash came."

"Well, we'll find out in the morning," said one of the men.

"I am for finding out now," said Dick; "and I'll pay every man here a dollar an hour for every hour he works searching for the bodies of those men."

"You—you pay a dollar an hour?" exclaimed one of the men, incredulously. "Why, where did you get so much money. You are nothing but a boy."

Another grasped the speaker by the arm, saying in a low tone:

"He's Frank Merriwell's brother! Frank Merriwell is worth millions, and they say this chap is worth as much more, which will come to him when he reaches manhood."

"Well, I don't care to wait so long for my pay," grumbled the objector.

"If he says he'll pay, you can bank on it that he'll do so. A dollar an hour is good pay, and I'll risk getting my money, for one."

There were plenty more who were willing to remain and work, but it was necessary to provide light, therefore a great bonfire was built on the shore. By the light of this, aided by heavy sticks obtained in the woods, the men pried apart the cakes of ice and searched for the riffians, directed in their work by Dick Merriwell.

An hour passed before a discovery was made.

Then a cry went up from one of the men.

The others flocked to the spot, and by their united efforts removed a cake of ice that had crushed a man beneath it. The man was lifted and carried over the broken ice to the shore.

"It's Pedro!" exclaimed Dick. "The chief rascal has not yet been found."

Pedro was quite dead, his neck having been broken by the great weight of ice that fell so suddenly upon his head.

The search continued, the men working now in a body near the spot where the first man had been found.

Again came a cry.

"They've found him, I reckon!" said Buckhart, in deep satisfaction.

Soon another body was drawn from beneath the ice and brought toward the fire.

Dick stood waiting till it was placed at his feet, where the firelight fell on the face of the unfortunate wretch.

"Felipe Costola it is!" he said. "He has met his——"

Then, with a cry, he started back.

For there was a flutter of the man's eyelids, and then the eyes slowly opened, fixing themselves on the face of the boy who was bending above.

"He is not dead!" palpitated Dick.

The lips moved, as if Costola sought to say something; then from the man's throat came a gasping moan, and into his eyes came the glassy stare that told the end had come.

One of the men stooped and placed a hand on the breast of the silent figure, while the others gathered round.

Dick Merriwell lifted his cap with a movement that caused the others to follow his example.

"God rest his soul!" said the boy, simply. "He was a bad man, but perhaps he may have another chance somewhere in another world. I hope so."

"Amen!" said one of the men.

THE END.

The next number (308) will contain "Dick Merriwell's Racket; or, Who Was the Traitor?"
APPLAUSE.

As I was sitting reading a Tip Top Weekly, I happened to glance over the Applause column. I read a letter from Mr. Mercer, which said that he agreed with Mr. McNell that Bart Hodge was no good and ought to be thrown out of the flock. I think that Bart Hodge is an ideal fellow, and all I have to say is that I am ashamed to see a letter from Pittsburgh abusing Hodge. I thought we had people with good common sense in Pittsburgh, but I guess we haven't. Best wishes to Mr. Standish and Street & Smith.

C. H. B. R.
Pittsburgh, Pa.

Bart's thanks for your good words. He is being overwhelmed with the praise of his friends, all of which is most pleasing.

In reading Book No. 298 I find that some one that addresses himself as "C. B. B., Syracuse, N. Y." says that he agrees with Mr. McNell. I think that he had better "go way back and sit down" with others who don't know what they are talking about. Dick and Frank have a different opinion of the goings on; I think that I know what I am talking about. Frank J. Mercer had better read a little more about Bart, and then I think that he will change his mind and won't want Bart to drop off from the flock of the Merriwells. I wish that Bart would make a speech in defense of himself and teach some of the deadheads who think that he is not all right that they are the ones who are fit for the asylum. Frank is the one to have Inza, and Bart is the one to have Elsie, and Dick the one to have Doris, and Hal Zorn. Hoping that the ones that are enemies against Bart will change their minds, and their good success to Street & Smith, I remain, a constant reader.

E. L. S.
Roanoke, Va.

Your remarks about Bart are telling, and may seem very forcible to those who do not agree with you.

For your information I beg to state that I have been an ardent reader of your king of weeklylies, as Miss Nettie Boyle rightly named it, from No. 1 to the present number, and I wish to state here that it is the most instructive and educative of any weekly I ever had the pleasure of reading, and I sincerely hope that the authors who give us this good literature will never die.

I admire the pluck of Miss Boyle in calling G. W. McNell a fire-eater. I think that any one would admit that any one would agree that McNell and I are two of those kind of men who seek notoriety through the patons of the Tip Top Weekly, by making mean and contemptible statements which in their hearts they know they do not feel; there is an old saying which goes something like this: "Birds of a feather flock together;" and these two certainly are birds of the peacock variety, and I would like to be the one to crop their wings, for making the statements about Bart Hodge which they did. In the Tip Top column, Mr. McNell, whom I place with Frank; for Dick is certainly a noble, lovable character, and we all love him already. Before long I will write another letter of applause, but this must suffice for the present. Wishing Frank, Dick and Bart the best of luck, and hoping Street & Smith enjoy great prosperity, I remain,

South Bethlehem, Pa.

PALMER J. HAHN.

Dick Merriwell's character is just what you have described it, and we are pleased to have him appreciated.

Having read Tip Top from No. 1 to present date, I wish to say there's no other novel published that is its equal. Dick Merriwell is a fine hero, and I like his spunk. He moves steadily in the gym. That no doubt he'll become an extraordinary athlete. I hear a person who signs himself Mr. G. W. McNell is giving Bart L. and Frank Inza the best of friends. Bart Hodge. I would like to meet the gentleman face to face and tell him what I think of him. With best wishes to Bart L. and Frank Inza, Bart, Elsie, Dick, Felicia and Doris, I am,

ARTHUR OLYMPUS.
New York, N. Y.

Thank you.

I have been reading Tip Top ever since the first issue, and I think it is the grandest paper of any kind ever published. Why don't you, Messrs. Street & Smith, publish it twice a week? I only know that we should have one to read every night. Well, if they publish a scrap on about Bart Hodge. Now, why don't Bart's admirers treat his traducers with silent contempt? Any one who would try to defame any one else as they are trying to do is not fit to live in a civilized country. We will admit that Bart was full of faults, but has he not fought a heroic fight to conquer them? G. W. McNell, C. C. B., Hal Filbert, Frank J. Mercer and some others are names that will live and be remembered long—with the contempt and loathing that is the just due of two admirals of our navy who tried recently to disgrace a brother admiral. There are not ten of them, all in a bunch, who would have the courage to say to his face what they have said to his back. But "the name is worth the candle."

J. E. S.
Tenell, Texas.

Another of Bart's loyal friends to the front. It is almost an impossibility to keep account of the many nice things said about him, when an avalanche of Tip Top readers swoop down upon them in righteous indignation. Three cheers for Bart and his friends!

As I was reading the Applause Column of Tip Top this morning, I saw two or three letters from some lunatics agreeing with G. W. McNell in the defamation of one of the most interesting characters of Tip Top, the man who next to Frank and Dick, I admire more than any other connected with the story. These men have demanded that Bart Hodge be kicked off the flock of Merriwell's friends, yet they have not presented any evidence that would justify such a premature declaration. I think that we should let the Inza-Elise question drop. Mr. Standish has already settled it as he thought best, and although I am an ardent admirer of the golden-haired Elise, still I would not want her to be fiddle enough to throw Bart down now, even to take the place of Frank. Rather would I want Frank to be dishonorable enough to break his engagement with Inza, for Inza will make Frank a good wife. And even if passionate Bart should ever be tempted to go wrong again, our little golden-haired favorite will, through her influence and love, aid him in resisting temptations and help him to become a better man. I have the honor to be a proud to call a friend. I think that Tip Top is better than ever since Dick Merrifield has become a character in it. I like him ever so much, and hope soon to see him and Hal Darrell the best of friends. I think Dick should have Doris, as they would just suit each other, their
Tip Top Weekly.

natures being so opposite. And I predict that Hal and Felicia will naturally be drawn to each other and become sweethearts. Adding a few words of praise for Tip Top, for I think it undoubtedly the best publication I have ever read, I will make my bow and retire from the scene, with best wishes to every one connected with Tip Top.

ALBERT F. NEWMAN.

Flowery Critic

We are quite pleased that you and DICK MERRIwell are such friends already. His is a great nature, and will win all Tip Top readers.

In regard to the Bart Hodge dispute, I wish to write a few words. I think G. W. McNell's head is all right and all others who agree with him. I agree with C. C. B. and Frank J. Mercer in that perhaps John Leute, Jr., would probably get his head bumped if he should chance to meet Mr. G. W. McNell. I think somebody would shake the conceit out of him. I am sorry for the gang that live in Peoria, Texas. They should be examined by a doctor at once to get the rats out of their gullets. Bart Hodge I think Dick and so do they from the block, and I know that all sound-minded persons will agree with me in the fact that by his meanness to Frank and because he despises each one that has a surly temper I think he has left the block. Otherwise Tip Top is the best paper I ever read. Everybody come up, and let's give the Hodgette's a warm tussel, and all who think that low fellow should be dropped, say so. Yours truly.

JOHNNY JENKINS.

Charlotte, N. C.

We fear there will not be many to agree with you. Bart has a very firm hold on nearly all the hearts of our readers, and there is a great deal more praise of him than anything else.

I have never before written to the Applause of Tip Top, although I have read nearly every number from No. 1 to No. 298, but it is impossible to remain silent any longer after reading C. C. B.'s letter No. 298, and Frank Mercer of Pittsburgh, denouncing good old Bart Hodge. C. C. B., Frank Mercer and G. W. McNell seem to me to be the very personification of Jabez Lynch. They seem to think they are writing the Tip Top instead of Burt L. S. (though I'm sure if they wrote it, it would have very few readers.) As to the Inza-Eliie question, they are both good girls, but Inza always was my favorite. I wonder if Felicia or Doris are going to be the Inza and Ellie of Dick's career. It looks like it in No. 298. I like them both, but wish success to Felicia, sweet little "Star Eyes." Wishing all success to the Tip Top and its editors and Burt L. Standish and all friends of Bart Hodge. I remain,

Chicago, Ill.

MAY PEARL HAGERMAN.

We are always glad to have our girl readers give us their views and opinions. Let us hear from you again.

While reading the Applause in No. 298, I chanced to see this expression: "Hodge should no longer be recognized by any member of Merriswell's flock," and that he hoped something would happen to prevent the marriage of Bart and Eliie. That fellow talks as though he had been having pipe dreams. Bart Hodge should be recognized by everybody, and I hope Eliie will be lucky enough to secure him for a husband. I admire Frank Merriswell's old set of friends, such as Hans, Bart, Ephraim, Barney, Jack, Harry, etc.—the old and reliable set—but I haven't much use for Dick and some of his friends. I think that the Tip Top Weekly is the best paper of its kind ever published, especially the back numbers, for I have read them all. Wishing another letter from Beth and Dick and his friends at Fairmount, W. Va.

AN ADMIRER.

Thank you for your pleasant letter.

As I am and have been a pleased reader of Tip Top, I think it no more than right to thank you and Mr. Standish, who writes from Chicago. I have been reading ever since No. 194, and I did not find one book tiresome. It has been and always will be a pleasure to look forward to Friday for a new story. I believe and know from experience that the Tip Top is the best book for boys to-day. For I have read every book on the market. In all other books, too numerous to mention, I found that every other week they were the same old story, only printed a little differently. I like Frank Merriswell; I don't find no such a thing. I find a plot which is in very story, and Mr. Standish (thanks to him) always manages to make it interesting. After the piece I read in the last issue about the Hodgette question, one interested me. It was for Mr. McNell to go away back and sit down. I have a friend who is a Bart Hodge. He is sometimes as obstinate as a mule and has other faults, but for all of his faults I care for him. And if this certain person would take the advice given him, and if he were as true to his friends as Bart is to Frank, he should and ought to go away back and sit down.

Buffalo, N. Y.

Thank you.

As I have been a reader of the Tip Top Weekly from the first number to the latest, I consider myself eligible to the Applause column. I agree with the other readers in thinking the Tip Top the best paper published. Its characters are studies of themselves, and place it above all others. I notice some of the readers were opposed to our friend Hodge and desire his dismissal from the block—one even goes as far as to call him a "worthless fellow." They should not take up the space in the Applause Column to make such statements as they don't go with the majority of the readers who appreciate true worth when they see it. I am glad to see how nobly Bart's friends have defended him; count me as another. Dick and his chums appear to be upholding Frank and his flock in the hearts of the Tip Top readers. But I trust there are a few "true blue" ones, for after all we must not forget Frank. With best wishes for the Tip Top's future success, I remain a friend of Frank and Dick Merriswell.

Providence, R. I.

J. ARTHUR JOHNSON.

DICK MERRIwell has certainly taken a firm hold on the hearts of our readers, and we are glad to see how popular he has become. Frank's brother could not help but be loved by Tip Toppers.

As I have not seen any Applause from Syracuse for some time, I thought I would let you know how I like the Frank Merriswell stories. I think they are the best stories a boy can read during the long winter nights, as there are no amusements out-of-doors in winter, much. The Tip Top Weekly shall always be a welcome visitor in the household. It would be hard to get along without it. I can hardly wait till the Tip Top comes. I think the girl for Frank is not the one he is married to, but his brother Frank. I have read Frank Merriswell stories a year and a half. My mother and father would not let me read them then, but when they read one they thought it was fine, so that I have read them ever since, and will continue to do so until the last chapter. Hoping Mr. Burt L. will enjoy long life, yours truly.

Syracuse, N. Y.

Thank you.

This is the first time I have written to the Applause Column of the Tip Top Weekly, but the criticism of Bart Hodge in No. 298 has led me to write. I see that C. C. B. (Charlie Cracked Brains) thinks that John Leute would have his hands full shaking G. McNell. I agree with him, because a sane man could hardly handle a crazy one. His brother mantises, Constant Reader. Frank J. Mercer, Hal Elbert and Charlie Cracked Brains should be kept apart from the public, because idiots are sometimes dangerous. I think there are enough Hodgettes to handle them, though. I would like to go Cracked Brains a round. If I couldn't do him up I could get half the readers to help me, even if the other half were women and idiots, as nobody in their right mind would turn away from helping a Hodgette. Frank J. Mercer wants to help G. McNell; but if John Leute wants help he can call on me, as I would like to give Mercer a jolt or two.

Charlevoix, Mich.

Your summing up of the anti-Hodgettes is really very ludicrous, if not complimentary. You will undoubtedly hear from them later on.

JOHN WORTHY.
Figure Skating.

Figure skating, although executed with the feet, is in reality effected by getting the body into the position which will enable the feet to be turned in the desired direction. As a rule the novice gives no attention to the position of the body, but is thinking only of feet and turns, often neglecting which he wants feet to effect; he, in fact, wants to make his feet turn his body, as he is ignorant of the fact that the true way of skating is to make the body turn the feet. A novice, having acquired the power of skating the outside edge, is fired with the ambition of accomplishing the three. He knows that an ordinary three is composed of a curve of outside edge, that to make the turn the skate has to be reversed, bringing him to an inside back, and if he has never been instructed he will proceed on the outside curve; and his body being retained in the position for that edge, he will make a spasmodic effort to twist his skates round, with the result that he will probably fall. Now watch the adept: Just previous to the turn, the whole body from the hip upward is gradually turned so as to be in the position suitable for the curve on which he will find himself after the skate is reversed; and the result is that the turn is effected with the most ridiculous ease and with perfect certainty.

OUTSIDE EDGE.

A movement that has always been considered the greatest difficulty to a beginner is the outside edge. A good method is to take the beginner's hands sideways, holding his right hand with the right and his left with the left, the right hands being underneath. He should walk like a pigeon with one foot crossing the other. When he has walked a few steps in this way and has become accustomed to the unusual position of walking with the toes turned in, he should slide a few inches with the foot which is placed in front, and gradually bring forward the foot that is behind, so that it in its turn may be placed across and in front of the foot that has just finished the glide. The right foot being put down with the toe turned in, across and in front of the left, necessitates it being put down on the outside edge; by gently forcing the learner to the right, he must take a curve to the right, and consequently on the outside edge, and when the left foot is crossed over, by gently pulling him to the left he must make a similar curve of outside edge to the left.

FORWARD CROSS ROLL.

If the beginner has acquired the power of skating the outside edge by the method of turning in his toes and crossing his feet, he will have no difficulty in skating the forward cross roll, which is simply the outside edge on either foot; but instead of turning the foot over from the outside to the inside in order to strike, the skater crosses his feet and makes the stroke from the outside of the skate which is behind. This is not so powerful a stroke as in the ordinary outside, and by carefully attending to the position of the body, large and vigorous curves are possible, which can be skated in the form of an eight. When the balance is perfect two whole circles instead of one can be skated; of course, the circles should be rather smaller than the first. The next last end of the four edges is the outside back. When he has walked without catching the toe of one skate against the heel of the other, he should glide a short distance on one foot and then on the other. The glides should be short at first, but can get longer as confidence is acquired. If the learner can get no one to assist him, he should take two or three strokes backward, and then putting his feet together run round in a large circle. On this way his foot which is on the outside edge, the other, or the outside foot, will be on the inside edge. He must learn to hold himself upright, and try to ease off the weight of his body from the outside foot, even to taking it off the ice if he feels well balanced on the other.

MOHAWK.

A pretty method of going from forwards to backwards or backwards to forwards on an edge of the same character is known as the Mohawk. It is effected by spread-eagling the feet, and comes with facility to those who are able, naturally, to turn their feet sufficiently to get into the spread-eagle position (which is that of the feet turned out with the heels together). For the forward Mohawk the skater proceeds, say on a curve of right outside forward, and when he is about to effect the change to left outside back, he thrusts back his left shoulder and brings forward the left leg in front of the right; then turning the toe out as much as possible, swings it round and behind the right and places it down on the outside back, and at the moment it touches the ice he takes up the right. To effect the change the left shoulder has been thrust back, but the instant the left is put down the right shoulder must be turned back into the proper position suitable to an outside edge backward.

FORWARD THREE.

A pretty figure, consisting partly of a forward three, may well be described. It is composed of a forward three, say on the right, when the skater has proceeded some distance on the inside back, the left foot is placed parallel to the right on the outside back, and a stroke being made, the right is taken, and the skater proceeds on a curve of outside back. On the outside back of left the right shoulder should be kept well back, and at the end of this curve the skater must twist his body, from the hip upward, to the right, as the next step is an outside forward on the left, and unless the body is completely turned round while the outside back is being skated, the forward outside on the right foot cannot be executed with ease. When the outside forward has been continued a short distance, the left is crossed over, and the figure repeated on the left.

INSIDE FORWARD THREE.

The inside forward three is less difficult, because the skater, having learned the forward, has been initiated into the mystery of making a turn, and because the outside edge on which its tail is easier to hold than the inside back of the forward three. All forward turns, that is, turns from a forward to a backward direction, are made on the toe part of the skate, for the purpose of enabling the heel to clear the ice when it is swung round in making the turn. In skating this three the left shoulder should be kept back, there being no alteration in the position while the entire three is skated, except that the left shoulder is thrust still further back just before the turn is made, and this effected, the head is turned to the left.

Qs.

The figures known as Qs are the next to which the beginner should turn his attention, and the first thing to accomplish is the
ability to change the edge on either foot. To effect this a start should be made on, say, the right outside forward, and when it is desired to make the change to inside forward, the unemployed foot should be brought up alongside the employed one.

**Basket Ball for the Week.**

**Clippers (New London, Conn.), 15; Norwich Academy, 13.**

Clippers—L. Sauter (Capt.), forward; Barker, forward; Talbot, center; W. Sauter, guard; Cochrane, guard.  
Norwich Academy—Gilhs, forward; Friske, forward; Bent, center; Bishop, guard; Briggs, guard.  
Manager—Robert Talbot.

**Clippers, 17; Fat Men, 4.**

Clippers—L. Sauter (Capt.), forward; Barker, forward; Talbot, center; W. Sauter, guard; Cochrane, guard.  
Fat Men—Elliot, forward; Hester, forward; White, center; Donohue, guard; Smith, guard.  
Manager—Robert Talbot.

**Clippers, 32; Company A, Third Regiment, 4.**

Clippers—L. Sauter (Capt.), forward; Barker, forward; Talbot, center; W. Sauter, guard; Cochrane, guard.  
Company A, Third Regiment—Cavanaugh, forward; Sherman, forward; Brady, center; Hur, guard; Kiley, guard.  
Manager—Robert Talbot.

**Orioles (Stevens Point, Wis.), 17; Ross, Ninth Grade, 1.**

Orioles—W. West, center; J. Schopp, forward; J. Kanope, forward; E. Myers, guard; C. Kiser, guard.  
Ross, Ninth Grade—E. Kums, center; E. Playman, forward; E. Ross, forward; S. Ellenwood, guard; F. Kums, guard.  
Manager—H. West.

**Orioles, 17; Mohawks, 5.**

Orioles—W. West, center; J. Schopp, forward; J. Kanope, forward; E. Myers, guard; C. Kiser, guard.  
Mohawks—E. Sager, center; E. Ross, forward; A. Rabb, forward; J. Wise, guard; S. Ellenwood, guard.  
Manager—H. West.

**Orioles, 26; Clippers, 9.**

Orioles—W. West, center; J. Schopp, forward; J. Kanope, forward; E. Myers, guard; C. Kiser, guard.  
Clippers—J. Knott, center; W. McLain, forward; D. Hodel, forward; N. Knott, guard; W. Boinyng, guard.  
Manager—H. West.

**N. A. C. (Lowell, Mass.), 17; West Ends, 0.**

N. A. C.—Andrew Livingstone, forward; Redmond Kearney, center; David Cummings, guard; John Gibbons, guard.  
West Ends—Moon, forward; McCaffery, forward; Kane, center; Jones, guard; Curtis, guard.  
Manager—E. A. Dunfee.

**Thornrike Reserves (Thornrike, Mass.), 62; Stars, L.**

Thornrike Reserves—Walker (Capt.), forward; Dunn, forward; Bock, center; Bond, guard; Longtime, guard.  
Stars—Charlot, forward; Lafarr, forward; Poster, center; Vasha, guard; Reopelle, guard.  
Manager—Daniel Dunn.

**Oaklands (Chicago, Ill.), 20; Armours, 1.**

Oaklands—Hale Barker, guard; Basil Gham, guard; Ford Brunner, center; John Lorrain, forward; Earl Fargo, forward.  
Armours—Tom Brown, guard; Frank C. Connors, guard; Edward Weston, center; Delk Shaffer, forward; George Dobas, forward.  
Manager—Earl Fargo.

**Ice Hockey for the Week.**

**Montford A. C. (Baltimore, Md.), 8; Rose Hill A. C., 0.**

Montford A. C.—Holman, goal; C. Hofmeister, center point; Deaver, point; Bond, right wing; May, left wing; H. Hofmeister, forward; Campbell, center.  
Rose Hill A. C.—Stevens, guard; Murphy, center point; Mueller, point; E. Weber, right wing; Baker, left wing; H. Weber, forward; Ball, center.  
Manager—Henry Hofmeister.

**Montford A. C., 7; Rose Hill A. C., 0.**

Montford A. C.—Holman, goal; C. Hofmeister, center point; Deaver, point; Bond, left wing; May, right wing; H. Hofmeister, forward; Campbell, center.  
Rose Hill A. C.—H. Murphy, goal; Stevens, center point; T. Murphy, point; L. Weber, left wing; H. Weber, right wing; Baker, forward; Mueller, center.  
Manager—Henry Hofmeister.

**Manitoba (Chicago, Ill.), 4; Kenmore A. C., 0.**

Manitoba—Graham, goal; Hine, point; Wessling, center point; Krueger, forward; Holton, forward; Modica, forward; Roesch, forward.  
Kenmore A. C.—Swanson, goal; Spear, point; Miller, center point; Westman, forward; Eddy, forward; Strong, forward; Stevens, forward.  
Manager—Roy D. Graham.

**Manitoba Juniors, 4; Iroquois, 0.**

Manitoba Juniors—Graham, goal; Hine, point; Wessling, center point; Krueger, forward; Holton, forward; Modica, forward; Roesch, forward.  
Iroquois—O'Shea, goal; Smith, point; Caldwell, center point; Williams, forward; Richardson, forward; Scott, forward; Anderson, forward.  
Manager—Roy D. Graham.

**Riverside A. C. (Hyland, Ohio), 5; Boys' A. C., 1.**

Riverside A. C.—Jenkins (Mgr.), center; Granger, forward; Branch, right wing; McClure, left wing; Jones, point; Williams (Capt.), center point; Savage, goal.  
Boys' A. C.—Paxon (Capt.), center; Townsend (Mgr.), forward; M. Shoultes, right wing; Davis, left wing; Ely, point; Musssey, center point; C. Shoultes, goal.  
Manager—M. A. Jenkins.

**Keystone (Philadelphia, Pa.), 20; Saranac A. C., 0.**

Keystone—Carlin, goal; Bady, point; Troy (Capt.), center point; Fortmann, forward; Atkinson, forward; Wallace, forward; A. Schafer, forward.  
Saranac A. C.—Holmes, goal; Mahoney, point; Broderick, center point; Crowther, forward; Simpson, forward; Wilcox, forward; Jones, forward.  
Manager—Carlin.

**Keystone, 25; Cameron A. C., 0.**

Keystone—Carlin, goal; Bady, point; Troy (Capt.), center point; Fortmann, forward; Atkinson, forward; Wallace, forward; S. Schafer, forward.  
Cameron A. C.—Duggan, goal; Cameron (Capt.), point; Rodgers, center point; Palm, forward; Lingo, forward; Kreider, forward; Haggus, forward.  
Manager—Carlin.

**Brownies (Syracuse, N. Y.), 8; Le Moyne, 0.**

Brownies—R. Bowen, forward; L. Palmer (Capt.), forward; A. Williams, forward; C. Bobbs or H. Wight, forward; E. Stevens (Mgr.), center point; L. Nutting, point; B. Puffer, goal.  
Le Moyne—R. O'Brien, forward; J. Gere, forward; F. Gere, forward; F. Dunn, forward; W. Doyle, center point; G. Gaffney, point; McCarthy, goal.  
Manager—E. M. Stevens.
Professor Fourmen’s advice, through this department, to young athletes has proven so beneficial that Street & Smith have engaged the good and learned professor to continue the department so long as there are young men and boys in this country who are anxious to develop themselves, or ambitions to become athletes. So our young athletes may continue to seek Professor Fourmen’s advice, which we and they know to be of the best, through this department. If there is anything you want to know about yourself write Professor Fourmen.

Prof. Fourmen:

How far should any one run every day after he has acquired good wind? I seem to be getting thinner, but still do not lose in weight. Is this a good sign? Thanking you in advance for your advice, I remain

AN OLD TIP TOP READER.

You ought to be able to run a half mile to a mile daily, if your wind is as good as you say. 2. Probably your training has developed your muscles so that now your flesh is very hard and firm, which would cause you to think you were thinner. Yes, it is a very good sign that my course of training must have improved you.

Prof. Fourmen:

1. What weight Indian clubs and dumbbells should I use? 2. What is a fair time for one-half mile running? 3. When should you exercise, in the morning or night? 4. Should you take cold shower baths after exercising when you are heated? F. W. M.

1. Use 1 pound dumbbells. 2. Three minutes for a boy of your age is fair time for half mile running. 3. Both morning and evening. 4. Take a rub down before your cold plunge if you are over-heated.

Prof. Fourmen:

I wish to ask you a few questions, and you will oblige me greatly if you will answer them. I am 18 years of age, 5 feet 11 inches tall, and weigh about 130 pounds. 1. Do you think that is the proper weight? My chest un inflated is 38 inches, and inflated is 39 inches. 2. Do you think my expansion is good? What is the best exercise for the neck?

A CONSTANT READER.

1. You could weigh ten pounds more. 2. Yes. 3. Kipping is fine exercise for the neck. Try it at your gymnasium.

Prof. Fourmen:

I want to thank you for the good you have done me through the King of Weeklies, Tip Top. As you know, I entered your athletic contest beginning in May, but I did not send you my measurements at the end of the six months because I had done scarcely any training, not having the things to exercise with. But even if I did not send my measurements the second time you have done me a lot of good. I started in training and took my measurements the 8th of November, 1903, and have been training ever since. I took my measurements again in the 1st of January, which is my birthday, and will train for about three months and take my measurements again. I will keep on training as long as possible. I wish to ask you a question or two. 1. I have a sore knee and I don’t know what is the matter with it. It acts as if it were sprained, but still it is not. It has been troubling me for a year or more. I would like to know what you think of it. 2. Would you advise me to join a gymnasium?

GLEN BAGLEY.

1. You had better consult a doctor about your knee, as it is hard to advise you what to do, for it is impossible to see it, and delay might result in serious disease. 2. Certainly, by all means.

Prof. Fourmen:

Will you kindly suggest through the correspondence department of the Tip Top a remedy that will keep the muscles of the upper part of my arms and legs from hurting and very near jumping out of place when the muscles are contracted. I run an elevator from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m., and would like to know of some exercise to keep my muscles in the proper shape. Has this work anything to do with the trouble mentioned above? Hoping to hear from you soon, I remain

F. E. W.

Very truly yours,

Your muscles do not get enough exercise. You ought to overcome this by bicycle riding or running. Also rub your legs well with witch hazel after exercising, each night and morning.

Prof. Fourmen:

After a month’s use of the athletic goods awarded to me for winning the second prize in the second class, I find them perfect in every way, and shall always use them to train with while they last. I must here thank you and say that I more than appreciate your part of the agreement. And I want to thank you in behalf of all the boys of this glorious land of ours for your regard and good care of them. I know you have an interest in the boys, and know the importance of their being healthy and strong. And let me say again I thank you a thousand times for it. I was also more than pleased this week when I saw in the Athletic World column another great opportunity for the boys. And especially in the skating contest. Skating has been one of my many pastimes for the past three years or more. I have competed in many skating races.
here in both against boys and time. The best time I ever made was in December, 1900, when I went a mile (paced by one of the best gentlemen skaters of this city) in 3:29 1-2. I have not been able of late to do it, but send in on the enclosed card the best time I could make. I had a misfortune while making it, which at present is quite painful. This is the way it happened: I had just passed the finish post and was slack- ing up to turn about. I slacked up a little too quickly, and hit a hilly which I have known better, but was excited to know what time I had made it in. Consequently I am now suffering from a sprained ankle and a lame arm. The time I made it in you will find enclosed. If it had not been for my ankle and arm I would have tried to do better. But still, to be honest, I do not think I could have lowered it much. I shall not write longer this time, because you will hear from me soon again. I close, entering my name and time for the one mile championship. Also the Crescent Relay team's name and time, of which I am manager and coach. Hoping either myself or team will win a prize, I remain,

NORMAN W. COLVIN.

Thank you. I have filed away your coupon.

PROF. FOURMEN:

Being interested in athletics, I thought I would take the liberty to ask you a few questions: 1. What size dumbbells should I use? 2. What size Indian clubs should I use? 3. How high should a punching bag be? 4. What should I use to develop my chest and back muscles? Hoping to see this in the next issue of Tip Top, I remain,

DALE CAMPBELL.

1. One pound dumbbells are about right for you. 2. The same weight is best for dumbbells. The punching bag should be on a level with your shoulders. 4. All of the above exercises and apparatus will do the work for you, if you follow the exercises conscientiously.

PROF. FOURMEN:

1. How can I broaden my chest, back and arms? 2. What size dumbbells should I use? 3. What size Indian clubs should I use? 4. How high should a punching bag be? 5. What should I use to develop my chest and back muscles? Hoping to see this in the next issue of Tip Top, I remain,

LOUIS ZENTZ.

1. Use dumbbells and a Whitley exerciser. Try a punching bag, too, as that is fine for the chest. 2. Begin by running one-quarter of a mile daily, gradually increase the distance until you are able to run from a half mile to a mile, provided your wind is good.

PROF. FOURMEN:

I am 18 years old and weigh 95 pounds, and I am 5 feet tall. I rise at 6 in the morning and take a cold water plunge and exercise when I go to bed at 9 o'clock. I have a trapeze on which I can swing myself 12 times with both arms and twice with one. Do you think my records are good? I have a flat chest and am very stooped. How can I develop my chest? I chew, and smoke a pipe excessively. Yours truly,

C. POWERS BACHILL.

Your records are very good indeed. To develop your chest try a punching bag, dumbbells and Indian Clubs, and in walking try to stand erect, throwing your chest out. Give up the use of tobacco. It is most injurious.

PROF. FOURMEN:

You cannot conceive with what enthusiasm I write you these lines, and I hope you would put this in print in next week's publication, as I am in urgent need of the answer. I am a boy 17 years of age, height not quite 6 feet, weigh, in ordinary clothes, 132 pounds. For several months I have exercised every morning with the utmost diligence and also many evenings. My arm measurements are: Right arm, 9-1-2 inches; right arm when muscles are expanded, 10-1-2 inches; left arm, 9-1-2 inches; left arm when muscles are expanded, 10-1-2 inches. These measurements are not so very accurate, but you can conceive what very weak arms I had before I started, for I could scarcely lift anything without having my arms ache. I used Indian clubs each 1-2 pounds. But as they are too light for me they are of no value. What weight would you advise me to get? Also what weight should my dumbbells be? I do not drink anything containing alcohol, do not smoke or chew. As I am a musician and am constantly brought into contact with the public, (2) What drinks would you advise me to take so as not to look or appear as a crank when offered a drink?

Yours very truly,

AN ENTHUSIASTIC ADMIRER.

1. Your dumbbells and Indian clubs should not weigh more than 2-3 pounds. Any heavier ones would be injurious. 2. Soft drinks such as ginger ale or sarsaparilla and seltzer lemonade are very palatable and sensible.

PROF. FOURMEN:

As a reader of your weekly, Tip Top, I enclose a coupon with the best time I have made the mile in on ice. This time was made January 1, 1902, so I expect to make better time. Some of my ice records follow: 1 mile, 4:00 3-5; 1-4 mile, 6:55 7-9.

Thank you. We have filed away your coupon and hope to see you a successful competitor.

PROF. FOURMEN:

I have been interested in the Tip Top Weekly for some time, and think it is fine, so I would like to ask a few questions: I am 37 years, 9 months old, weigh 66 pounds; my height is 4 feet 5 inches. I am not very strong and would like to know how to get strong. How can I strengthen my ankles so I can skate longer?

J. A. GRAHAM.

Read my article entitled, "General Training for Young Athletes." It will give you all information in detail as to the best methods of exercising to become strong. For the ankles, try rising on your toes. This will strengthen them greatly.

PROF. FOURMEN:

Please tell me if this is a good height for a boy of 15? Four feet and 11 inches. What must I use to strengthen back and arms? Do you think Tip Top will have other baseball contests next season? If so, I have got a team that is a crackerjack. I would have liked to gotten up a football team this year, but was unable to do so. Wishing Tip Top all the success that a new year could bring.

Yours truly,

B. T.

Exercise with dumbbells, Indian clubs and a Whitley exerciser, all of which will greatly benefit you.

PROF. FOURMEN:

I write to tell you of my vast improvement under your instructions. I think I have won a great-deal better prize than that offered by the greatest of weeklyes, Tip Top, viz., physical development. My age is 17, height, 5 feet 10 inches; weight, 140 pounds. How do they compare? The altitude here is 6,000 feet. Therefore the air is very cold. I cannot run more than 100 yards at full speed. Is that enough? Is smoking injurious?

FRED H. PENN.

1. Your measurements are good. 2. That is very good, considering the altitude.
BASKET BALL COUPON.

Name of Team
Town
State
Opponent's Name

NAME OF TEAM
POSITION
NAME OF TEAM

Winner
Final Score
Manager

ICE HOCKEY COUPON.

Name of Team
Town
State
Opponent's Name

NAME OF TEAM
POSITION
NAME OF TEAM

Winner
Final Score
Manager

ICE RELAY COUPON.

Name of Team
Town
State

1st Name
2nd Name
3rd Name
4th Name
Time for Four Miles

Manager

ONE MILE CHAMPIONSHIP COUPON.

Name of Contestant
Town
State
Time for One Mile Straightaway

ALL-STAR SCHOLASTIC TEAM COUPON.

I believe that

on the

Football Team of

is entitled
to a place on the All-Star Team for the following reasons:

Manager
75 Solid Gold Watches

GIVEN AWAY

Not Gold Filled Watches
Not Gold Plated Watches
BUT ABSOLUTELY
Solid Gold Watches
WARRANTED UNITED STATES ASSAY.

FULL PARTICULARS IN NUMBER 20,
BOYS OF AMERICA.

Now Running in "Boys of America"
'A Corking, Up-to-Date Story

BY FRANK MERRIWELL
The Famous Yale Athlete,
The All-Star Athletic Club;
OR,
The Boys Who Couldn't Be Downed

NO BOY CAN AFFORD TO MISS THIS FASCINATING STORY.

The wonderful record of the All-Star Athletic Club, their bitter rivals, their battles on the ice, in the gymnasium, on the snow, in the rink, the plots of their enemies, etc., etc., are just a few of the features of this remarkable story, throbbing with enthusiasm and excitement. Don't miss No. 20, BOYS OF AMERICA, containing the opening installment of this great story.
The above trio of little men, who played hot football for Yale this year, are half-back Hart, Capt. Gould, and quarter-back de Saulles. Capt. Gould played end, but was prevented by an injury to the shoulder received early in the season from putting up his best game. de Saulles played quarter-back, and besides generaling the team did all the kicking, and made many brilliant run-backs of punts. As half-back, Hart was little short of phenomenal at his weight. He was quick at starting, skirted the ends for good gains, knew how to follow his interference, and could squirm through the smallest hole in the line. Light men, as a rule, are not desirable on Varsity teams, and, no doubt, next year Yale will have her usual giant back-field.

Notice Send us the photograph of your Basket Ball team, or your Hockey team, or your Relay team. If you are in the race for the One-mile Ice Championship, send us your photograph. Tip Top readers want to see what Tip Top Athletes look like. The Gallery will reproduce all photographs. Send them soon.
Tip Top Weekly.

(LARGE SIZE.)

If you have not read them, look over this catalogue and you will read a list of stories unexcelled in any part of this world to-day.

Don't fail to read these stories if you have not already.

272—Frank Merriwell's Steadiness; or, The Great Yale-Harvard Contest.
273—Frank Merriwell's Glory; or, The Greatest Triumph of All.
274—Frank Merriwell's Surprise; or, Contest of the Oilskin Envelope.
275—Frank Merriwell's Brother; or, Training a Wild Spirit.
276—Frank Merriwell's Chums; or, Out Again fpr Sport.
277—Frank Merriwell's Marvel; or, Dick Merriwell in the Box.
278—Frank Merriwell's Young Star; or, Dick Merriwell's Great Base Running.
279—Frank Merriwell's Twirler; or, Dick Merriwell's Jump Ball.
280—Frank Merriwell's Command; or, Dick Merriwell's Rebellion.
281—Frank Merriwell's Support; or, Dick Merriwell's Great Work.
282—Frank Merriwell's Hard Hit; or, Dick Merriwell's Red Friend.
283—Frank Merriwell's Energy; or, Dick Merriwell's Triple Play.
284—Frank Merriwell's Fellows; or, Dick Merriwell's Fast Work.
285—Dick Merriwell Enters Fardale; or, Following in His Brother's Footsteps.
286—Dick Merriwell in the Hands of the Five Fiends; or, Fighting His Way to the Front.
287—Dick Merriwell on the Gridiron; or, In the Fray for Old Fardale.
288—Dick Merriwell's Nerve; or, Handling a Deadly Enemy.
289—Dick Merriwell's Determination; or, In the Game to Do or Die.
290—Dick Merriwell Up Against It; or, In and Out of Hard Luck.
291—Dick Merriwell's Strategy; or, A Way to Treat Spies.
292—Dick Merriwell's Long Run; or, Saving the Day for Fardale.
293—Dick Merriwell to the Rescue; or, Elsie and Inza in the Hands of Kidnappers.
294—Dick Merriwell's Strange Battle; or, Fighting a Bucking Automobile.
295—Dick Merriwell at Dead Road Mill; or, A Drop to Death.
296—Dick Merriwell's Wonderful Throw; or, Bracing Up the Basket Ball Team.
297—Dick Merriwell's Kindness; or, Saving a Falling Enemy.
298—Dick Merriwell's Race For Life; or, The Steady Hand and True Heart.
299—Dick Merriwell's Set-Back; or, Outplayed by the Masked Mysteries.
300—Dick Merriwell's Ride; or, Foiling the Agents of the Secret League of Spain.
301—Dick Merriwell's Honor; or, The Sacrifice That Cost Him Dearly.
302—Dick Merriwell at Bay; or, Defending the Pirate Treasure of Hidden Cave.
303—Dick Merriwell Trailing the Treasure; or, Face to Face with the Pirate Captain.
304—Dick Merriwell's Peril; or, Left to Die in the Flames.
305—Dick Merriwell's Snowshoe Hunt; or, The Hidden Hut of Blue Mountain.

With Tip Top No. 285 begins the now famous Fardale Series, in which Dick Merriwell has entered the good old school at which the career of Frank Merriwell also began some years ago. Thousands of young Americans will want to read of the fine things that Dick Merriwell has done, is doing and will in the future do.