DICK MERRIWELL'S RACKET
OR AN EARTHQUAKE AT THE SCHOOL

By Burt L. Standish

Sarnaby did not try to rise, he sat there staring apprehensively at the woman who shook her finger against the tip of his nose. "Don't you dare lift a hand to my Zenas, you old pirate!" she screamed.
Dick Merrimell's Racket:

Or,

An "Earthquake" at the School.

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CHAPTER I.

A VISIT FROM GOOCH.

It was a wet, nasty, drizzly April night. Brad Buckhart drummed the "devil's tattoo" until Dick became annoyed, for he was endeavoring to put in some hard licks at his studies and his companion's restlessness diverted his attention.

The Texan sat slouched forward, with one elbow resting on the table and his chin in his hand. A book was opened before him, but he gave it no attention.

"For the love of goodness, Brad," exclaimed Dick, "let up on that! It's getting tiresome."

Brad gave a snort and straightened up.

"Waugh!" he growled. "This is a beastly old night. Hear the rain against that window. It makes me a whole lot tired."

"A perfect night to study, old man. Now's the chance for you to get at it and grind."

"Pard, I was never able to grind. It goes against my grain a heap. Studying disagrees with me."

"You will have to study, Brad, if you keep up with your class. You will have to study to escape conditions. You're in dangerous ground already. The time we lost while away from school set us both back. I presume you want to play baseball?"

"You bet your boots!"

"Well, the first thing you know you will have such a black score against you in your studies that you'll find yourself up against it and forced to give up the game while you get at it and plug to catch up in your lessons. We can't spare you, old man. I need you right under the stick."

"Well, if there is anything I hate it is geometry!" roared the Texan, thumping the book with his fist. "If there's anything I hate it's theorems, parallelograms, triangles and cross sections and all that sort of rot. What's the sense of it? What's the sense of it?"

"I don't have to tell you the good of it; you ought to know yourself by this time. At any rate, you have to learn it."
“Old Gooch is a crank on geometry,” declared Dick’s disgruntled roommate. “He just takes fiendish satisfaction in dressing a fellow down and making a holy show of him before the rest of the class. I have got it in for that old guy, and sometime I will settle with him. He is a withered, dried-up old back number, anyhow!”

“You shouldn’t talk that way about him, old man; ’tisn’t right.”

“But it is true!” cried Buckhart, again thumping the book. “I think he is trying to fix me so I will have to give up playing and go to grinding. I am not the only fellow in the school he is working to catch in the same trap. Dick, he is sore on baseball and football and everything else in that line. Just because Prof. Gunn favors athletics, Old Gooch grows worse and worse in his crankiness.”

“Well, it’s up to you to fool him and not permit him to get you into a trap. When you put your mind on a thing, Brad, you will learn it. But I have seen that it is like pulling teeth for you to settle down and plug.”

“That’s right,” nodded the Westerner. “I reckon I’d be in worse shape than I am now if you didn’t persist in pushing me. But you want to look out yourself, pard; Gooch has the evil eye on you. I know it. You hear me wareble! He is watching you the same as a cat watches a mouse.”

“Let him watch!” laughed Dick. “Little good it will do him.”

“Don’t you be so sure. When that man sets out to trip a fellow up he generally succeeds.”

“Oh, I don’t know! At any rate, he didn’t keep us from having a bowling alley in the gym.”

“That’s one reason why he is sore on you,” nodded Buckhart. “You started the scheme of having the alley put in and got Gunn on your side. It made Gooch hot under the collar. I worked pretty hard for it, too, and now every time Gooch looks at me he scowls like a thunder cloud. I tell you Gooch is——”

“Hey?” exclaimed a sharp voice, as the door suddenly popped open and the head of a man popped in. “Did I hear you speak my name? What do you mean, sir, by talking about me behind my back? I want to know what you mean, sir!”

It was Prof. Gooch himself, and he entered the room in a manner that indicated he was both excited and angry. Evidently he had been listening outside the door.

Brad turned pale and looked flustered.

“What do you mean, sir?” repeated the professor, pointing an accusing finger at the Texan. “You can’t deny it, sir. I heard you say something about Gooch.”

“Aren’t you mistaken, professor?” asked Dick, who was both annoyed and exasperated because the fussy old pedagogue had been listening. “I think you must be mistaken.”

Brad took his cue in a moment.

“Why, of course he’s mistaken!” he exclaimed. “I never said a word about Gooch. I said smooch. We were talking about baseball, and I was speaking about smooching the ball. Do you know what that means, professor? Why, when you hit it on the trade mark and line it out, you give it a smooch. Why, ha! ha! ha! Did you really think we were talking about you?”

“Now, see here; see here!” spluttered the crabbled old fellow. “Don’t you prevaricate, young man. I’ve got pretty good ears, pretty good ears.”

“Well, this sure is a joke!” chuckled the Westerner. “Didn’t you ever see a batter smooch a ball, professor? Well, it is a sight to delight your soul. When he smooches it he gives it a corker, and that’s a fact. Why, we wouldn’t talk about you, professor. Such a thing is ridiculous! Why should we talk about you? We never think about you.”

“Oh, you don’t, you don’t? Well, sir, you had better think about me! I advise you to think about me. I will make you think about me! I won’t have any cadet in this school who doesn’t think about me. What am I here for? I am here to be thought about, sir. Talking about baseball, were you? Well, what business have you talking about baseball now? This is your time to study, sir. You have no right to be discussing baseball at this hour. I won’t have it! I want you to understand, young man, that I won’t have it!”

“We just happened to speak of it, that’s all,” protested Buckhart, in an effort to pacify the agitated old man.

“Well, you have no right to happen to speak of it. You should be studying assiduously. You should not even permit yourself to think of it now. There is too much of this thing going on in this school, and the time will come when there will be a change. Mark what I say, the time will come. I don’t believe in boys wasting their time in such foolishness. What does baseball mean, too? It distracts your attention from your studies. You get your mind on baseball, and you can’t think of anything else.”
“It’s good, healthy exercise, professor, and you know a boy needs exercise as well as study.”

“Exercise, bah! Exercise, fudge! You should get exercise enough drilling. Instead of that, you get excused from drills in order to spend your time at baseball. Might just as well excuse a boy in order to let him play marbles. Just as much sense in it. And it isn’t as dangerous. Baseball is dangerous! Baseball is vicious! What do you do? You go out onto a field and run until your heart is strained and your system is injured. You injure your health, sir. Now, don’t tell me any different, for I know what I’m talking about. I know! I know! There is only one thing worse than baseball, and that is football. Talk about prize fighting being brutal! Why football is worse—yes, sir, worse! There must be a check put on these vicious sports pretty soon. All they will teach in schools will be baseball and football and such folderol. Why does your father send you here, young man? Does he send you here to learn to smooth a ball? No, sir; he sends you here to develop your mind. He sends you here to prepare yourself for a successful life career. Don’t interrupt me. I won’t have it. I am speaking now. I won’t be interrupted.”

Brad conghed.

“Silence, sir! And you, too,” he said, turning on Dick: “you’re the worst one of them all. You’re the ringleader. It is your hand, young man, that has led other boys to forget their studies and to go crazy over baseball, and football, and fiddlededlinks. But I am watching you. I have my eye on you. You think you are at liberty to do anything you please just because Zenas Gunn is getting old and weak-minded and you can influence him. Let me tell you this: Zenas Gunn won’t always be at the head of this school. There will be a time when his failings will be recognized and he will find himself on the shelf. Then you see what will happen.”

“I am afraid, professor, that you are in a bad mood to-night. Just why should you come here and talk to us like this?”

“Because you need it, sir—you need it!” rasped Gooch. “It’s my duty; I am doing my duty. I have felt guilty for some time because I haven’t done my duty. You’re back here at the school, and I can’t say that it has given me satisfaction. You’re clever and you take care not to get trapped, but your influence on your companions is detrimental, young man—detrimental. I am going to be honest with you. I think it proper that I should be honest with you. I was sorry when you came back. I have nothing against you personally, but I have seen that you were exerting a bad influence on your companions. Boys come here to study. They don’t come here to waste their time in foolishness.”

Watching Dick, Brad saw his face flush and his eyes shine. The Texan knew his roommate was angered now, and he was not surprised when Merriwell suddenly rose to his feet, exclaiming:

“Prof. Gooch, you’re going too far! I don’t propose to have you talk to me like——”

Suddenly he checked himself, for he realized that his anger was getting the best of him, and he knew he would say something for which he would afterwards be sorry.

“Give it to him!” muttered Brad.

That was exactly what Dick longed to do, but his good judgment and masterly control of himself prevented such a mistake.

Gooch saw the boy was exasperated to the point of explosion, and something like a grim look of satisfaction came to his face.

“Go on, sir,” he nodded; “just show your disposition. Now you are betraying your real nature. Go on, young man.”

“I beg your pardon, professor,” said Dick, quietly.

“I didn’t mean to speak impertinently.”

The professor was disappointed, but he instantly declared:

“It makes no difference what you meant, you were impertinent. I am discharging my duty. You forgot yourself, Cadet Merriwell. You forgot who it was you were speaking to. I have a right to tell you my opinions. I have a right to come here and express myself. I have a right to advise you. It’s my duty to advise you.”

“But there are various ways of giving advice, Prof. Gooch. Are you sure you did it in just the proper spirit?”

“Now don’t criticise me—don’t criticise me! I won’t be criticised by any boy in this school! It’s presumption! It’s insolence!”

Dick sat down, not a little to Buckhart’s disappointment.

“Go ahead, professor,” he said. “I think I can stand it.”

This air of resignation seemed to exasperate the old man more than anything else.
“There it is! That’s like you! You're clever! You're sly! You think I will say something I will be sorry for. Don’t make any such mistake, young man. I came here for the purpose of speaking to you concerning this matter, and I mean to discharge my duty. Do you know what you are doing? You’re leading your roommate astray. You’re leading him to spend his time on that frivolous game of baseball when he should be studying. I think I will write to his father about it. I think his father should know.”

“Do!” muttered Brad.

Dick said nothing, but sat still with his dark eyes fastened on the professor. Somehow Gooch could not meet the steady gaze of the boy, which added to his exasperation.

“I think I have made myself plain,” he went on. “I think I have said quite enough.”

“I think so,” returned Merriwell, quietly.

“Now that will do—that will do! You have no right to think when I am present. Permit me to do the thinking. Don’t talk back to me. I see I am wasting my time. My time is precious, too. But you understand me and that’s enough. I will go now, but don’t spend any more of your studying hours in talking about smooching the ball.”

At the door the old professor paused and turned. Somehow he felt that he had not accomplished much by this visit, and he sought to make his exit more dignified by adding:

“You should know, young gentleman, that I am interested, heart and soul, in your welfare. If I watch you closely it is for your own good. I shall continue to do my duty. Good-night.”

He went out, closing the door softly behind him.

CHAPTER II.

ALL FIXED.

“Well, what do you think of that?” exploded Brad, the moment Gooch was gone.

Dick made a warning gesture.

“Better not speak too loud, old man,” he said. “He may have stopped outside the door.”

“Well, I’d just about as leave he’d hear what I think of him as not,” declared the Texan.

Merriwell arose quickly, advanced to his companion’s side and placed a hand on his shoulder.

“Keep still, Buckhart,” he said, sternly. “You can’t afford to get him down on you any more than he is.”

“It is not myself I am thinking about,” spluttered the Westerner. “It’s you. I don’t care anything about what he said to me; but the idea of his shooting his face off at you like that, pard! Why, it’s outrageous! The milk of human kindness is dried up in his old veins. What are you going to do, Dick? Do you propose to stand for that sort of business?”

“It looks as if I’d have to stand for it,” said Dick.

“But you were hot. You were boiling; I saw that. I don’t know how you held yourself in.”

“It was necessary to hold myself in check, old man. I might have said something for which I would have been sorry. In fact, I came very near it.”

“Well, you sure had provocation enough. Think of him telling you he was sorry you came back to the school! Think of it! Waugh! Why, my fur is bristling! Pard, if you don’t get it back at him somehow I will be disappointed.”

“Leave it to me,” said Dick. “If Mr. Gooch has started in to make trouble for me, he may find it interesting.”

“That’s the talk! That’s what I like to hear! When you get your gray matter to working, you can kick up the biggest racket of any fellow in this world. It’s up to you to start something. I will stand behind you. I will back you up, pard.”

“All right, Brad; let it drop now. Get to your geometry and plug.”

“I’m in fine shape for that! I’m feeling just like it! Think I can study now? Why, I want to break something!”

For all of the Texan’s excited condition, Dick finally succeeded in quieting him, and Brad tried to follow his companion’s example when Merriwell resumed his studies.

Just before the sounding of taps Dick dropped his book and, speaking in a low tone, said:

“It’s a dark, stormy night, Buckhart. I have the impression that there will be something doing to-night. You might be ready when the time comes.”

“I am yours to command,” declared Buckhart.

At sound of taps both boys partly undressed and got into bed, after extinguishing their light.

Although Buckhart sought whisperingly to question his companion, Dick rushed him and would give no explanation.

For a long time they remained quiet, and the Texan was beginning to doze off when Dick nudged him.

“Here’s where we get into gear,” said Merriwell.
They slipped out of bed and donned the clothes they had taken off, with the exception of their shoes. Taking the shoes, they prepared to leave the room.

Dick opened his door cautiously and peered out into the corridor, where a dim light was burning at a distance. The barracks seemed still and deserted.

"Ready?" whispered Dick.

"All ready," assured Brad.

Like phantoms they slipped out of the room, softly closing the door, and stole silently along the corridor. Both were on the alert, for it was impossible to tell when they might encounter the night watchman. They passed the light and reached the stairs. Their feet made no noise as they descended, but near the foot of the stairs Dick suddenly paused.

"What's the matter?" whispered Brad.

Merriwell clutched his arm and made a gesture toward the corner near the outer door. Looking in that direction, Buckhart could see a dark figure seated in the corner in a huddled position.

It was the watchman.

As the boys stood thus in doubt, to their ears came a sound that gave them both a feeling of satisfaction, for it was an audible snore.

The watchman was sound asleep.

"Great stuff!" whispered the Texan.

Dick moved on again, and they passed the sleeping man, but turned back from the door, knowing they must not arouse him. Both of them knew every inch of the ground, and soon they came to a window by which on other occasions they had secretly left the building. This window was fastened, but Dick's fingers found the catch and they opened it.

Two minutes later both were outside, with their feet wet. Buckhart spluttered and growled as he tried to force his damp feet into his shoes. Rain was still falling, but on that side of the building they were somewhat protected from it.

After getting into their shoes they stood still a moment, and the Texan demanded:

"What's next on the program, pard? I'm letting you run this business."

"Come on," directed Merriwell.

He led the way around the corner toward the gymnasium. As they left the shadow of the wall they were struck by the full force of the storm, which had not abated in the least.

Quickly they scudded to the gymnasium door, which Dick soon opened with the aid of his key.

"Waugh!" muttered Brad, shaking the water off him, when they were inside. "This is a lovely old night! This is a gorgeous old night! I just admire it! You hear me chirp!"

"Couldn't be a better night for our purpose."

"For our purpose! I'd like to know what our purpose is."

"You will find out pretty soon. Brad, I want to carry over every one of the bowling balls into the academy."

"Sho! That's funny! What for are you going to do that?"

"You will find out," laughed Dick.

For at least half an hour they labored at their task of carrying the heavy balls from the gymnasium to the academy, piling them up beneath a certain window. They even removed the smaller candlepin balls and added them to the pile.

"Now," said Dick, "we will see if this old window works as she ought to."

Many a time had the boys entered the academy by that window, and, therefore, they knew how to open it. When it had been pushed up Dick climbed on Brad's shoulders and got in. With the window fastened up, he leaned out and directed Buckhart to hand him the balls. One after another they were passed to him until he had received them all. Then he gave Brad a hand, and the Texan came through the window.

"Wait here a little," muttered Dick; "I want something else. I will be back directly."

Saying which, he sprang out of the window and disappeared into the darkness.

"Well, this yere business is a whole lot mysterious!" muttered the Westerner, as he stood by the window and listened to the beating rain. "I am dead sure my pard has a wise scheme in that head of his, but I don't tumble to it a great deal. Wonder what he is up to now."

In a short time Merriwell returned and flung a coil of rope through the window. Then Brad assisted him, and he once more climbed into the academy.

"Now we're all right," he said.

"Glad to hear it," muttered Buckhart. "What's doing next?"

"We're going to take these balls into the loft over the East Room. Come on!

"There sure is some work about this!" half laughed Buckhart, as he picked up two of the heaviest balls. Two at a time, the larger balls were carried through
the room into another part of the academy and up a flight of stairs. They sought to carry as many of the candlepin balls at a time as possible, and as a result Brad struck against the corner of a bench, nearly falling down and dropped three of the balls. They fell to the floor with a clattering bang that echoed hollowly through the empty rooms.

"Great horn spoon!" gasped the Texan. "That was like a discharge of artillery! Bet it stirs up the whole school."

"Keep still," said Dick. "I don't believe it will disturb anybody. If it was heard, it is ten to one no one will be able to tell what it was or where the sounds came from."

Nevertheless they hastened to the window and remained watching and listening for at least ten minutes, fearing the noise might bring someone to investigate. At last they decided that no one had been aroused.

Finally all the balls were in the room to which Dick had wished them carried. This was a large, empty floor directly above the east lecture room. It was reached by two flights of stairs, one on either side of the room. Toward these stairs the floor sloped on a gradual slant, so that it had been difficult to keep the balls from rolling down them. In fact, it had been necessary to pile them against the partition between the flights of stairs.

"Now," said Dick, "I want a stepladder. I know where to find it. Stay here and I will bring it."

He was gone nearly five minutes; but returned with the stepladder. Brad struck a match and held it to light him up the stairs.

The ladder was opened and placed in the middle of the floor directly beneath a large square trapdoor in the ceiling. Mounting the ladder, still lighted by matches held in Buckhart's fingers, Dick was able to reach the trapdoor and draw the bolt that held it. It opened downward, and he carefully lowered it.

"Now, hand me up those balls, Buckhart," he directed.

As they were passed up to him, he stood on the top of the ladder and lifted them into the loft. In a few moments all were thus disposed of.

"Say, pard," entreated the Texan, "do tell me what your little game is. Are you going to hide those balls up there? Is that your trick? I don't see how it is going to affect Old Gooch."

Dick laughed softly.

"That's all right," he said. "Now I want that rope. You know where I left it. Think you can find it and bring it?"

"Sure thing."

The rope was brought, and Merriwell tossed it into the loft.

"I am going up there now, Brad," he said, "and I want you to close and bolt this door."

"What? Why, I will fasten you up there."

"Never mind that. Set the bolt so it will hold the door, but at the same time barely catch it. Fix it so a light pull will drop it. After that get out from beneath this door, unless you want to take a chance of having those heavy balls come down on your head."

"Holy smoke!" muttered Brad. "More mystery. Pard, if you don't elucidate I will certainly explode."

"I will tell you all about it after I get the balls fixed."

"You will be shut up there with them. How are you going to get out?"

"What do you think I brought that rope for? There is a window."

"Great tarantulas! Are you going to shin out the window on that rope?"

"That's what I propose to do."

"But it will be all wet and slippery, pard. Mebbe you will get a fall. Better be careful."

"Don't worry about me, Buckhart. Just do as I have told you to do."

Then Dick seized the edge of the opening and sprang up lightly into the loft. Although it was very dark outside, he could dimly see the outlines of the single window at the end of the building.

"Close the door, Brad," he whispered. "And try to fix the bolt just as I have directed."

Buckhart obeyed.

When the door was closed, Dick tried it to make sure it was secure. Following this he began piling the balls upon it. His one fear was that it would spring and suddenly drop open, or that the bolt would not hold it. This fear, however, was groundless, for everyone of the balls were placed on the door, and it still remained secured.

"Now it is up to me to get out," muttered Dick, as he stole toward the window, taking the coil of rope with him.

Near the window he ran into an upright post, but instead of disturbing him, this gave him a feeling of satisfaction. At once he began uncoiling the rope,
found the end of it, passed it round the post, and then reached the window. Once or twice as he worked he struck a match to make sure that he was doing everything as he wished it to be done. Opening the window, he flung out both ends of the rope, so that it now hung by the exact middle about the upright post. When this was done, he crept out of the window, getting a good grip on the double rope, and swung down. It was no easy task to do this and lower the window, but the feat was finally accomplished.

With the rain beating upon him, Dick let himself gradually down the rope, aware that the slightest slip would be fatal, and keeping constantly in mind the necessity of holding on to both strands as he descended. By the time he reached the ground he was nearly played out. Standing there, he examined the ends of the rope. Both ends were knotted, and immediately he produced his knife and cut one of these ends off. Then he seized the other end and began pulling on the rope. For fully ten minutes he worked in this manner before drawing it clear of the window and the post in the loft. At last it snapped out from beneath the window and fell in a tangle about his neck.

"So far, so good," he half laughed, quickly beginning to coil the rope. "Now to finish this job."

With the rope so coiled, he hurried round to the window by which the academy had been entered, and the coil was left on the ground as he again clambered into the building.

As he mounted the stairs with the same cautious step, he heard Buckhart calling to him. It was evident that Brad still thought him in the loft, and was wondering at his continued silence.

"Whatever's the matter with yet, pard?" asked the Texan. "What are you doing up there? Why don't you answer me?"

"I am not up there, old man," said Dick. "I am here."

"Well, by the jumping jingoes!" exclaimed Buckhart. "This gets me. How did you do it?"

Dick explained.

"Now, Brad," he said. "I have here in my pocket a ball of stout cord. I want you to hold matches while I tie the end of this cord to that bolt. It's a ticklish job, for if the old door breaks loose I will get a broken head."

Suddenly the Texan began to chuckle, and his efforts to keep from roaring with laughter set him into a fit of choking.

"I begin to see daylight," he declared. "I begin to tumble to your great scheme, pard. Oh, thunder! Won't there be a racket when those balls break loose!"

Dick said not a word, but mounted the stepladder and attached the cord to the bolt, while Buckhart held lighted matches. Having done this, he moved the ladder to a place where he could pass the cord over a cross-beam, so that if pulled from below it would draw out the bolt.

"Now," he said, "if I remember rightly, there is a way to lower the end of this cord into the lecture room. I know the seat directly below where it will hang.

Getting close to the rear wall, he found a loose piece of flooring and pulled it up. Beneath this there was a small, round hole in the ceiling. This hole had been used on a previous occasion as a "peep hole" by some boys hidden in that upper room. Through it Dick carefully lowered the stout cord.

"She's done!" he declared. "Now, if this cord is not discovered, there will be a little racket when Gooch delivers his ten o'clock lecture to-morrow."

Suddenly Brad seized Dick's shoulder.

"Sh!" he hissed. "Keep still! Listen!"

"What's the matter?" whispered Dick.

"I heard something!" answered the Texan. "There is somebody in the room below!"

CHAPTER III.

BY A NARROW MARGIN.

Both boys remained silent and listened, their hearts thumping heavily. After some moments Dick faintly whispered:

"You must be mistaken, Brad. I didn't hear anyone."

"Well, by the great horn spoon, I heard something!" the Texan whispered back. "Keep still a little longer, pard. Mebbe they're listening to hear us."

It was well that they did keep still, for after some moments Dick distinctly heard something like whispering arise from the room below by way of the two staircases.

Buckhart heard it, for he reached out and gripped his companion's elbow. The situation was one to put a strain on their nerves, for to be caught there at that hour by the watchman or anyone in authority at the academy would place them in an awkward position and would be pretty sure to land them in the guardhouse. Listening as they were, with their nerves taut,
the sound of their beating hearts seemed astonishingly like heavy trip hammers.

Brad placed his lips near Dick's ear and whispered: "Something or somebody down there, sure as shooting, partner!"

A moment later a terrible, hollow, unearthly groan echoed through the place with a sound that was enough to chill the blood of the Texan, who felt his hair rising, while a shudder ran over him. Never in his life had he heard a sound so awe-inspiring as that groan proceeding from some unknown source in the dense darkness of the building.

Almost immediately before Buckhart could get a good hold on himself the sound was repeated, and then in the lower room there followed a startled rush of retreating feet, mingled with gasping exclamations of dismay. Evidently the chaps downstairs, whoever they were, had been even worse frightened than Buckhart, and they were losing no time in getting out of the academy.

"Great blisters!" palpitated the Westerner. "Who coughed up that paroxysm of sound?"

Then he suddenly realized that the groan had issued from the lips of Dick Merriwell, for near at hand Dick was softly chuckling in the darkness.

"Well, confound you!" growled Buckhart. "I will bet a bunch of long horns that you have scared me gray headed. Great horn spoon! I never heard anything like that before! I sure thought a ghost with the colic had broken loose and was somewhere in this vicinity."

"I rather think those fellows downstairs were worse frightened," muttered Dick. "Wonder who they were and what they were doing."

"Must have been some of the boys up to some sort of high jinks, like ourselves."

"Or somebody who followed us here. Brad, we had better get a move on and dig out of this."

"I am with you, pard—I am with you."

"Come on."

They lost little time now in descending the stairs to the lecture room and making their way through the academy to the window by which they had entered the building.

This window remained open, and near it Dick paused in an effort to peer out into the darkness, but he could see nothing. A gust of wind drove the rain into his face and made him shiver a little.

"Got to chance it, Brad," he muttered. "Follow me closely."

Then he sprang out of the window, and Buckhart paused only to release the catch and lower the sash as he clung on the outer edge of the sill. When he dropped the ground the window fell a short distance, but the wind seemed to catch up the sound and snatch it away into the dismal night.

Dick did not forget the rope by which he had escaped from the loft. Gathering it up, he scudded away toward the gymnasium, the door of which had been left unlocked.

Within the gym the boys paused to shake themselves, and then Dick disposed of the rope.

"So far, so good," he softly laughed. "But now comes the trying part of it. We've got to get back to our room, and we know there are other chaps astir."

"Dad bing 'em!" exclaimed Brad, softly. "I'd like ter get my hands on 'em! Wonder who they were!"

"The best we can do is to guess at it, and there's not much satisfaction in that."

When they left the gym Dick paused to lock the door behind them, and then they ran swiftly to the sheltering wall of the barracks building, coming soon to the window they sought.

Brad was lifted by Dick until he could reach the window, which he sought to open. For some time he worked at it, but it would not budge.

"Hurry up, old man," urged Dick.

"Drat the thing!" growled the Texan. "It seems to stick fast. Guess the rain has swelled it."

"Rain doesn't hit it. It isn't swelled. Push it open."

"Can't do it, pard. She won't push."

"Let me get at it."

Brad dropped back to the ground and gave Dave a boost, so that he could have a try at the window. In a few moments Merriwell decided what was the matter.

"Brad," he said, "we're in for it. The window has been fastened on the inside."

"In for it!" came from Buckhart. "I think we're out for it. Pard, this sure is a horse on us."

Dick dropped to the ground, and, hugging the wall, the two boys stood quite still, realizing the full extent of the scrape they were in.

"Say, I'd like to punch somebody's head!" came fiercely from the Westerner. "I'd like to get my paws
on the galoot who fastened that window! I know who did it. It was done by those chaps we heard in the lecture room."

"I think you're right, Brad," confessed Dick. "Somebody must have heard us when we stole out of here, or discovered our movements in some way and followed us. Perhaps some of the boys were aroused when you dropped those candlepin balls. Perhaps they got up and sneaked out to discover what was going on. They found this window open, and when they got back inside they fastened it on us."

"That's it, pard—that's it! And now we're out in the cold, cold night. Say, pard, isn't this perfectly lovely! Isn't this a jolly old joke! By Jim! I'm having a fancy time, I am!"

"The joke doesn't seem so very funny to me," acknowledged Dick. "If we don't git back to our room, I see where we get raked over the coals to-morrow. There will be no way of explaining this thing. We will just have to take our medicine."

"I am going to get in there if I have to kick down a wall to do it!" grated Buckhart.

"That's what those other chaps counted on. They knew somebody was outside, and by fastening the window they fancied that we would be compelled to make a racket and arouse the watchman."

Brad stepped off a little and shook his fist impotently at the window.

"I'd like to put my brand on the mavericks!" he asserted. "It would fill my heart with intense delight. Say, pard, you've got a long head; can't you think up some way that we can get out of this scrape?"

"The basement," said Dick—"let's try the basement."

"I'll try any old thing."

"There's a window by which we escaped from the basement once on a time, you remember. Perhaps we can get in the same way."

Soon they were kneeling on the damp ground by the basement window, and to their intense relief they finally succeeded in opening it.

"The world is ours!" laughed Buckhart, in great satisfaction. "Pard, I knew you'd get us out of it somehow. They can't throw you down. You land on your feet every time, just like a cat."

"Look out for the water tank below this window," admonished Dick. "Remember how Tubbs fell into it once and came near drowning?"

"I remember," said Brad. "Go ahead, pard. I'll look out."

Dick backed through the window and slowly let himself down on the cemented floor of the basement. It was so dark in there that they could not see in front of their noses, but Dick fancied he knew the lay of the land, and Brad kept close to him by hanging on to his coat tail. Slowly they crossed the cemented floor and reached the vicinity of the stairs leading upward.

All at once Dick halted.

Both boys had been alarmed by the sound of footsteps over their heads.

"The watchman!" whispered Dick.

The watchman, or some one, was astir, and they kept quite still until, to their great dismay, they heard him at the door at the head of the stairs. Dick had not told Brad that he fancied this door might be locked, but now he distinctly heard a key inserted in the lock, and then the door was opened.

"Down!" he whispered. "Get under the stairs, Brad! Don't make a noise!"

Together they quickly crouched beneath the stairs, and a moment later they heard some one descending into the basement. This person paused to strike a match, and the blazing stick was held in his fingers as he reached the foot of the stairs. They saw him distinctly and recognized him as the watchman.

Suddenly, with an exclamation of pain and anger, he dropped the match, which he had carelessly held until the blaze had burned his fingers.

"Darn the old thing!" he growled. "Why didn't I take my lantern in the first place? Either there are rats or ghosts roaming around in this old building tonight. I have got to have a light. I have been hearing too many sounds I can't understand."

He struck another match, and as he stood there quite close to the boys he seemed liable to discover them any moment. Their danger was great, but they remained perfectly still and trusted to fortune, which happily favored them. As soon as the match was burning well the man moved across the cemented floor in the direction of a little closet in which he kept certain articles of use and necessity. He was opening the closet door when Dick whispered in Buckhart's ear:

"We've got to scoot for it now. Let's try to sneak without making a noise."

They moved at once, creeping out from beneath the stairs and started to get out of the basement. Luckily the watchman was muttering to himself, so he failed
to hear any slight sound they made. With all the caution they could command under such circumstances, they crept up the stairs. When this was accomplished a sudden mischievous temptation caused Dick to softly close the door, his hand already having discovered that the watchman’s key was in the lock, with a bunch of other keys dangling from the ring. Merriwell turned the key the moment the door was closed, thus locking the watchman into the basement.

“Let him stay down there a while,” he chuckled.

“Oh, great tarantulas!” snickered Buckhart. “He will kick up a racket pretty soon, see if he don’t. We want to be in our little nest when the explosion comes.”

“This way,” said Dick. “We will skip up through the kitchen and take to the back stairs.”

Still moving with as much caution as possible, they quickly reached the kitchen. Brad was at Dick’s side when they ran full and fair into a figure which suddenly appeared dim and white before them.

“Waugh! A spook, sure as shooting!” chattered Buckhart.

The “spook” uttered a gasp, and the next moment it scooted away toward the back stairs. This flight was followed by a clattering sound that seemed to indicate the unknown was dropping various articles as he fled. In the midst of it all Dick plainly heard this exclamation:

“Dern my picter!”

“Oh, suds!” laughed Merriwell, “it was Tubbs, or I’m daffy! And I’ll guarantee he will leave a trail of pies behind him all the way to his room.”

“Tubbs?” muttered Buckhart. “Pard, I reckon you’re right. Lordy, didn’t he dust!”

“Yes; and we had better dust, too. In about sixty seconds this building will be humming like a swarm of bees. Stretch out, Brad, old man! Stretch out!”

Up the stairs they bounded. Buckhart slipped and nearly fell as he stepped on a custard pie Obedia had dropped, but quickly recovered himself and hurried on.

Now from the locked door of the basement suddenly arose a terrific hammering, mingled with the angry shouts of the watchman, who had found himself locked into the cellar. These sounds resounded through the whole building.

“Talk about your rackets!” panted Brad. “This certain is a hair-raiser.”

Reaching their room, they dashed in. Dick paused to close the door behind Buckhart.

“Into bed, Brad! Strip off and into bed!” he hissed. “Don’t lose a second.”

The rapidity with which they tore off their clothes was like legerdemain. They shed them in an amazingly brief space of time, but swiftly as they worked they were not fully into their pajamas when they heard doors slamming and voices calling along the corridor.

“Let the bed go,” said Dick, striking a light. “Get this room straightened out. Look out for your duds, old man.”

They straightened up the room, and then Merriwell led the way back into the corridor, where the boys were already swarming.

CHAPTER IV.

MORE OF IT.

Ready and eager to seize at any excuse for a lark, the cadets were in an uproar by this time. The hammering and cries of the watchman still continued to arise from the basement, as no one had released him. In the corridor the boys were shouting and yelling as if panic stricken; but beneath all this racket there was an undercurrent of mischievousness. Chip Jolliby pranced wildly up and down the corridor, waving his long arms and whooping:

“Sus-sus-sus-somebody is being mum-mum-murdered! Sus-sus-sus-somebody is being sus-sus-sus-scaled! Hear him how! Hear him sus-sus-sus-scream! Why don’t sus-sus-sus-somebody sus-sus-sus-save him?”

As Chip dashed past, Ted Smart made a flying jump and landed on his back, seizing him around the neck.

“Off to the rescue!” shouted Ted. “On, my noble charger! I will save the captive maiden or perish in the attempt!”

Chip ran fair and full into Billy Bradley, who was upset, and Jolliby fell sprawling over him. Smart struck on his feet as light as a feather and then pounced on both Bradley and Jolliby, jumping astride them.

“The world is mine!” he cried.

“Ow, dear! ow, dear!” cried the Cockney youth.

“Hi believe Hi ‘ave bit my tongue hoff, don’t y’ now!”

“Get off those fellows, you great big brute!” laughed Hal Darrell, seizing Smart by the neck. “Why, you will crush them!”

“Dern my picter!” squeaked Obediah Tubbs, at this juncture. “What’s all this fuss about? I was just dreaming a scrumptious old dream.”
“Waugh!” cried Buckhart, laughingly. “I will bet my pile you were dreaming of pie. You don’t walk in your sleep, do yer, Obed?”

“What’s the matter anyhow?” asked a dozen voices.

“Let’s go find out,” suggested Dick. “Somebody is kicking up a fuss downstairs. Come on, fellows!”

He took the lead and they followed him. Some one had turned on all the lights, and the place was now illumined. When they reached the kitchen stairs Dick paused in pretended astonishment.

“What’s this I behold?” he cried. “Is this a pie? Why, here is more pie! There seems to be pie spattered around here profusely.”

“Where’s Tubbs?” shouted a voice. “Put him on them. He will take care of them.”

Down the stairs they pattered in their bare feet, coming at last to the basement door, after passing through the kitchen.

Dick paused at the door.

“Keep still, fellows,” he directed, holding up his hand. “We want to find out who it is down here. It may be a burglar.”

“Well, he is the biggest fuf-fuf-fuf-fool of a bub-bub-bub-burglar I ever saw,” declared Jolliby.

Then he cried:

“Hello! hello! Who are you? Stop thumping on the door! Who are you?”

“Why, I am Harris, the watchman,” was the answer. “Let me out of here. Somebody locked me into the basement.”

“Now, come! come!” returned Dick: “don’t try that game on us. You’re not the watchman. Here are the watchman’s keys in the lock. You’re a burglar.”

“You’re another!” was the indignant retort.

“Somebody will pay for this! Somebody locked me into the basement!”

“All ready, boys,” said Dick. “When I open the door be ready to go for him. It must be a burglar.”

Then he turned the key in the lock and suddenly jerked the door open, at the same time thrusting out his arm, seizing Harris by the collar and giving him a yank. The watchman was pulled forward into the midst of the boys, who immediately pounced upon him without ceremony. At least eight of them clutched him and fell on him as he went down.

“Great tackle!” shouted Ted Smart. “Great work! Now we have him!”

The poor watchman was almost smothered by the boys on top of him, and his choking voice could be heard from beneath the heap wildly spluttering for them to get off and let him up.

“You’re crazy, the whole of you!” gasped the man.

“What are you trying to do? Get off me, you young idiots!”

“Take care! take care!” warned Dick. “He must be desperate!”

At length they arose and permitted the watchman to sit up, while they stood around and stared at him.

“You idiots!” he exploded, weakly shaking his fist at them. “What are you trying to do? Trying to murder me, were you?”

“Why, my goodness!” said Ted Smart; “I really believe it’s Harris! Why, I never was so surprised in all my life! Isn’t this remarkable! Why, Harris, what were you doing down in the basement with the door locked? Why, Harris!”

“None of your business what I was doing! I want to know who locked that door.”

“Well, we will tell you!” said Smart. “We don’t know, but we will tell you all about it! I am surprised at you, Harris! It’s a shame to make such a noise and wake us up! We need our sleep, Harris.”

“I will wake yer up! I will wake somebody up for this, see if I don’t!”

“Be careful, boys,” warned Dick. “Don’t go too near him. I fear he is crazy. I fear he is mad.”

“I am!” declared the watchman, almost foaming at the mouth. “I am madder than a wet cat!”

“Hit’s perfectly lawful!” said Billy Bradley, in a tone of awe. “Such behavior Hi never saw, don’t y’ ‘now!”

Shaking with wrath, the watchman rose to his feet.

“I will find out who did it!” he vowed. “I will make somebody smart for this piece of work!”

“Young men! Young men!” called a voice that gave them all a slight start. “What’s the meaning of this? What’s all this dreadful uproar over?”

Prof. Gunn himself appeared, partly dressed, his nightcap still on his head.

“Oh, professor!” exclaimed Smart, “I am so glad you have come, come. Don’t go, went; but stay, stop a while.”

“What’s the matter, Harris?” questioned the professor, sternly.

Then Harris excitedly and ramblingly explained that he had gone into the basement for the purpose of getting his lantern, having heard strange noises, and
when he attempted to return had found himself locked in.

"Some of those young rascals did it," he averred. "I heard some of them moving around when I went after my lantern."

Prof. Gunn looked the boys over searchingly and sternly.

"Is this true?" he demanded. "Is it possible there is in this school a boy who would do such a thing? I can’t believe there is such a boy here."

Buckhart gave Dick a nudge in the ribs.

"Oh, we didn’t do it, professor—truly we didn’t do it!" cried a chorus of voices. "How could you think it of us, professor?"

"I hate to think of you," said Gunn, slowly shaking his head; "but some one did it. Go to your rooms at once, every one of you. I shall order an investigation in the morning."

"That’s right, professor," said Smart. "I don’t blame you! If you catch the wicked chap I just hope you will skin him!"

"Retire to your rooms at once," ordered Zenas.

Still finding it difficult to repress their merriment, the boys began to retire.

"Good-night, professor!" they called, as they mounted the stairs.

It was not such an easy thing, however, to quiet the cadets, for others were swarming along the corridors, and soon there was a perfect wedge of them, some struggling to proceed in one direction, while others sought to move in the opposite direction. They pushed, and swayed, and struggled, and Prof. Gunn hastened up the stairs to stop the uproar. Into the midst of them he unhesitatingly plunged, again shrilly ordering them to retire to their rooms.

"That’s the talk, professor!" cried several; and then they closed about him, and his white nightcap was soon bobbing first to one side and then to the other as the mass of boys pushed and swayed.

"Great horn spoon!" muttered Brad Buckhart; "I will never get over this night! This is the worst I have ever struck in this old academy."

But even as all things must come to an end, so at last there was an end to the excitement and uproar, and the cadets retired to their rooms.

"Pard," said the Texan, as he crept into bed, "when it comes to kicking up a genuine number one racket, you’re the boy to do it. And the end is not yet. There will be something doing in the morning."

"Let’s forget it and try to get in a few winks of sleep," said Dick.

CHAPTER V.

THE FINISH OF THE RACKET.

Somehow word was passed around among the boys that something would happen at ten o’clock lecture, and Gooch was pleased to have an unusually full attendance at that hour. The lecture room was packed with the boys when Gooch began to speak.

Dick had arrived early, in order to get the seat he wished, and in this he was successful. The cord dangled at his elbow close by the wall in that rather dusky corner of the room.

By some rare coincidence the topic for that morning was earthquakes. Gooch launched into his subject after his usual fashion, speaking sharply and rappingly. As the professor proceeded Brad Buckhart found it almost impossible to repress his merriment. Several times he choked and coughed to keep from laughing outright. These coughing fits annoyed Gooch, who finally stopped and said:

"You seem to have a bad cold. If you are in distress you may retire."

"I think I am all right, now, professor," said the Texan, soberly.

"Very well, very well; I will proceed. As I was saying, any great concussion, even upon the surface of the earth, is competent to produce tremors, which may be regarded as diminutive earthquakes; thus the great landslides at Rossberg, in Switzerland, in 1806, was accompanied by a local quaking of the ground. Volga and Mohr have suggested that some of the small earthquakes which have been felt in Germany may have been caused by the falling in of the earth of enormous subterranean caverns formed by——"

At this moment Dick gave a sharp pull at the cord.

What followed was simply terrific. When the bolt was jerked loose the heavy balls fell a distance of ten feet, with a series of thunderous crashes and concussions which fairly shook the building. Then, having struck on the slanting floor, they rolled rumblingly toward the stairs, down which they came thudding and bounding into the lower room.

At the first crash, when it seemed that the whole building was about to fall, panic seized the cadets, so
that, while some of them seemed turned to stone in their seats, some sprang up and stood crouching with uplifted hands and arms, as if expecting the ceiling to come down upon their heads.

Rattlebang!
Crash!

Boom! boom! boom!
The sounds made by the balls were simply frightful. As the big ones came bounding and rumbling down the stairs into the lecture room Prof. Gooch, whose face was ashen gray, uttered a wild yell and dropped on his hands and knees, foolishly trying to crawl under a chair. The spectacle he presented at that moment was one over which the whole school laughed for many weeks afterward.

"An earthquake! An earthquake!" howled the cadets.

Following this, some of them made a wild dash for the door.

Dick improved the opportunity to give another sharp yank at the cord, which broke somewhere in the upper room; and he quickly and coolly began to wind it up into a ball, which he thrust into his pocket.

Brad Buckhart had a fit. He simply slid down under his seat and sat on the floor, clinging to his sides and roaring with laughter.

"Oh, great horn spoon! Oh, rattlers and tarantulas! Oh, see Goochy—see old Goochy!" he gasped.

At that moment he was unable to see Gooch, because tears of joy were rolling down his cheeks.

Dick gave the Texan a kick in the ribs, exclaiming: "For goodness' sake let up! You will give yourself away. Don't let anybody see you laughing now! Run! scoot! yell! Do anything but laugh!"

For all of this advice, Merriwell was himself on the verge of explosion with laughter. The whole affair was highly ludicrous, and as a practical joke it was, up to this point, a howling success.

Seizing Brad by the collar, Dick jerked him to his feet and started him after the cadets who were swarming toward the door. Those who had reached the door in advance had already discovered that there was no immediate danger, and, without question, were satisfied that the whole thing was a joke. The sight of the huge bowling balls was enough to settle this point. Therefore, instead of opening the door and seeking to escape, they held it fast.

Never in the history of Fardale Academy had there been such a tumult as followed. Some of the cadets climbed on their companion's shoulders and attempted to scramble over them toward the door. Gooch, who had thrust his head through the rungs of the chair, now rose to his feet, and the chair rose with him. He clawed at it and tried to fling it off, but somehow it stuck fast, and the sight again threw Brad Buckhart into convulsions.

It was fully ten minutes before the excitement and uproar died away.

In the meantime Dick had reached the platform and removed the chair from Gooch's head, saying, with apparent anxiety:

"I trust you are not harmed, professor? I hope this terrible affair has not disturbed your nerves? It's a shame, professor—a shame!"

"What was it?" gasped Gooch, who even then had not fully grasped the truth.

"Nothing serious, professor. I think somebody must have dropped something."

"Dropped something!" shrielled Barnaby, finally beginning to suspect a practical joke. "Dropped something! What do you mean, sir? Do you mean to tell me that some rascally boy has disturbed this morning's lecture? Do you mean to tell me that some of those young scoundrels have perpetrated such an outrage?"

"I am afraid such is the case, professor," said Dick.

"It's a crime! The scoundrels who did it shall be expelled! I will have them expelled!"

"I couldn't blame you, professor—I couldn't blame you," said Dick, still with the same serious countenance and sad expression.

The cadets were jabbering and chattering among themselves, and now Barnaby suddenly pounded fiercely on his desk.

"Silence!" he shouted. "Take your seats, every one of you!"

"Are you sure there is no further danger?" cried Ted Smart. "Are you sure the earthquake is over?"

"Take your seat, sir!" snarled Gooch, shaking a finger at Ted. "I believe you had a hand in this!"

"Just look hat that, professor," urged Billy Bradley. "Hit's a ball, don't y' now. Hit rolled right down the stairs, don't y' understand. Hit made han awful noise, don't y' see."

Saying which, the Cockney youth deposited one of the largest balls on the platform at the professor's feet.

In his rage Gooch gave the ball a savage kick, with the result that a moment later he was hanging onto his foot with both hands and hopping around on the other
foot, while his face was twisted into an expression of agony.

"Oh, my corn!" he cried. "Oh, tut! tut! tut! Oh, sus! Oh, dear! Oh, dear! Oh, dear!"

"Dear me, professor!" half sobbed Dick; "I am so sorry—so sorry!"

He hastened to ask Gooch if there was anything he could do, but Barnaby shook his head, lowering his foot after a while and hobbling round and round in a circle, with his wrinkled old face screwed up.

"I am shocked!" said Dick. "Professor, I am dreadfully shocked."

"That's all right! That's all right!" mumbled Gooch. "You can't do anything. I believe you are the only decent boy in this school, after all. Take your seat."

At this juncture Zenas Gunn, who had heard the terrible racket, came poking into the room, an expression of wonderment and anger on his face.

"What's the meaning of this, Prof. Gooch?" he demanded. "What's all this disturbance over here, Prof. Gooch? Are you trying to tear the building down? Answer me, Prof. Gooch!"

The sight of the head professor seemed to send Barnaby into another fit of anger, and he simply shrieked:

"It means, sir, that some of those young ruffians have perpetrated what they consider a fine joke—that's what it means, sir!"

"Eh? Well, can't you control them? Can't you govern them? Can't you make them behave, Prof. Gooch? Why do you permit such a disturbance, sir?"

"Oh, yah! yah! yah!" retorted Gooch, jumping up and down in his tracks. "What are you here for anyway? Why are you not minding your own business?"

Immediately Gunn doddered forward and mounted the steps to the platform, his face wearing a look of great exasperation.

"Look here, Barnaby Gooch," he said, shaking his head from side to side, "don't you talk to me in that tone before these boys—don't you dare do such a thing, sir!"

He shook a long finger at Gooch, who immediately retorted by shaking a finger at the head professor, and at that moment it seemed as if the two would fly at each other like angry dogs.

"You can't tell me my business, Prof. Gunn!" declared Gooch.

"Go on, you old terrors!" muttered Brad Buckhart, almost hugging himself with delight. "Sail into each other, you old birds!"

Then came a cry from a number of the boys, for Mrs. Gunn had followed her husband closely and now appeared in the room. Seeing the position of the two professors and expecting an immediate combat, she rushed for the platform and placed herself between them, thrusting them apart.

"Don't you lay violent hands on my Zenas, you old curmudgeon!" she shrilled, glaring at Gooch.

"You go chase yourself!" retorted Barnaby.

"What's that? What's that?" snapped Nancy, who was very hard of hearing.

"I said you were grace itself," bowed Gooch.

"Oh! did ye? Oh! did ye? Well, it's a good thing you did!"

"You're an old fright!" said Gooch, in a lower tone.

In spite of her deafness, Nancy understood his words as uncomplimentary, and she immediately demanded to know what he had said. In trying to deceive her, Barnaby made it worse, for he declared:

"I said, madam, that you were a sight—a beautiful sight."

"Hey? Called me a sight, did ye? Well, no man kin talk to me that way! I will pull your whiskers off!"

Then she fell on Gooch, who uttered a howl of dismay. He did his best to thrust her off. Here and there, round and round the platform they went, with Gunn excitedly dancing after them and waving his arms up and down as he shouted:

"Stop it: Stop it! I won't have it! Stop it this minute, both of you!"

"Take her off, you old lobster!" panted Gooch.

"Take her away before I murder her! Ow! There goes an ear! She's got my ear! I tell you to take her away! I won't be responsible if you don't take care of her instantly!"

Zenas finally succeeded in precipitating himself between them, with the result that he received a terrific bang on the ear with Nancy's open hand. This sent him staggering against Gooch, who was upset in a twinkling.

Barnaby did not try to rise. With his hands on the floor behind him, he sat there, staring apprehensively at the woman, who now stooped and shook her finger against the tip of his nose.

"Don't you ever dare lift a hand to my Zenas, you old pirate!" she screamed.
"For the love of goodness, Prof. Gunn," entreated Barnaby, "do lead her away! Put her in a cage! Smother her! Chloroform her!"

"Come, Mrs. Gunn," said the head professor, with attempted dignity. "I shall investigate this affair. I shall go to the bottom of this business. Don't say another word to him. Come, my dear."

He grasped her arm, and she permitted him to pull her away.

"You are not hurt, Zenie?" she anxiously inquired.

"Not a bit, Nanny," he retorted.

And together they left the room, unmindful of the cadets, who were again in paroxysms of laughter.

"Oh, wow! wow!" gasped Brad Buckhart, barely able to catch his breath. "Talk about your larks! This has been a jin-dicky! You hear me warble!"

CHAPTER VI.

M ARSH PEACHES.

Prof. Gooch lost no time in seeking to discover the perpetrators of the joke. He went about it in a very determined manner and repeatedly declared that he would expose the culprits if he had to spend a year at the task. Whenever two or three boys were talking together by themselves it became a common thing to have Barnaby suddenly appear right upon them, his bearing indicating he had been listening to their conversation. This grew annoying, and, more than once, discovering the old professor was listening before he had fancied he had been detected, the cadets said things that were not intended to add to his peace of mind. At the same time they took care not to make any direct reference to him. The subject of earthquakes was a standing topic of jest at the school. Strangely enough, Gooch never thought of suspecting Dick Merriwell. Indeed, Dick’s solicitude for him in the time of panic caused by the crashing and thundering of the bowling balls, had seemed to satisfy the old fellow that this was the one boy in the school who certainly had no part in the joke.

Gooch fell to calling the cadets up before him privately at certain hours and questioning them. In this he failed to make the progress he desired.

One day, however, when the boys had been dismissed and Gooch lingered by himself in the class room, Hector Marsh came stealing in soft-footed to him, a crafty look upon his face.

"Prof. Gooch," said Marsh, cap in hand, "I think it is possible I may be of some assistance to you."

"Hey? You? Assistance?"

"Yes, professor."

"How, sir—how?"

"I know you have tried to find out who carried those bowling balls into the loft and interrupted your lecture with them."

"Yes, sir; I have—I have, sir. Do you know anything about that affair, sir?"

Marsh looked nervous.

"If I tell you anything, professor, I shall do so at my own peril."

"If you don't tell me it will be at your peril," harshly retorted Barnaby. "I command you to speak up! If you know anything speak up."

"Perhaps I don’t know anything about it," said Hec, beginning to hedge. "You see it's this way, professor: if I peach and the boys find it out they will make life miserable for me. They will drive me out of the school, perhaps."

"Hey? Drive you out of the school? Preposterous, sir—preposterous! They can’t do it!"

"You don’t know, professor. They can do it. If they find out I have been to you and told you anything they will do it. You don’t know how they can pester a fellow. You see how it is, professor. If I tell you anything I will have to be sure you will not betray me."

"But I command you to tell!" rasped the old man, rapping on his desk.

Hector was rather pale now.

"I really don’t know anything about it," he faltered.

"But you do—you do!" asserted Gooch, pointing a finger straight at Marsh. "You can’t back out now. You do know about it."

"No, sir; but I think I can tell you something that will assist you in finding out all about it."

"Then go ahead. Why don’t you go ahead?"

"I believe I was mistaken. I can’t tell you a thing."

Gooch saw a look of mingled obstinacy and fear settling on Marsh’s face, and suddenly the old man took another tack.

"My boy," he said, "you had better trust me fully. You had better tell me anything you can. I will protect you. I will see that you get into no trouble by it. If you know who the culprits are, speak up at once, with the assurance that I will see that they are expelled. When they are gone from the school you will have nothing to fear from them."

"On the contrary, professor, if it should become known I’d told you anything that led to the expulsion
of anyone from the school, all the other boys would turn against me, and I couldn’t stay here.”

“Do you mean to say there is such a condition of things in this school? Is it possible, young man? I can’t believe it!”

“It’s the truth, professor.”

“Well, it’s simple scandalous—simply scandalous! This school is going to the bad! This school is getting into a terrible condition.”

“I can give you no positive proof as to the identity of the culprit,” said Marsh; “but I might put you onto the track. If I was sure you would not let it be known who told you—”

“There, there, my boy; you may feel sure. I promise you.”

“You won’t mention my name?”

“No, sir, I will not mention your name. I will promise you that. Go ahead and speak up. What do you know?”

“Professor, the night before the racket I couldn’t sleep well. I happened to be wide awake when I heard a sound that surprised me. It seemed to come from the academy and was loud enough to cause me to jump out of bed. I listened and heard nothing more, but I was satisfied something was happening. You know some tramps once spent a night in the academy when it was cold and stormy. This was a stormy night, and I began to wonder if tramps were not in the academy. I didn’t like to wake everybody, so I simply pulled Cadet Shaw out and told him there was something going on. I told him what I had heard. Our curiosity was aroused, and we resolved to investigate all by ourselves. We dressed and stole out of barracks. In doing so we found a window open. When we made this discovery I began to suspect that some of the fellows were up to something. It was raining and blowing terribly. After a while we found one of the academy windows on the lee side wide open. I tell you, professor, it took a lot of nerve for us to follow them. Shaw didn’t want to do it. He thought we ought to report to the watchman. I wanted to catch the chaps who were in the academy, and finally we climbed into the window. There didn’t seem to be anybody anywhere in the whole building. When we reached the lecture room we decided the window had been left open by accident, and we were just on the point of getting out and going back to bed when we heard the awfulest groan imaginable. It nearly frightened, professor, but I didn’t like to be left there alone by Shaw, and so I ran, too. When we got outside we decided that some of the fellows were in there and that they had escaped from barracks by the window we found unfastened. Then we thought we would trap them, and we climbed back into the window and fastened it. We fancied we had them shut out and they would certainly be caught. I know now that they got into the basement some way and slipped upstairs when the watchman went down there. They were the ones who locked him into the basement. That’s about all I know.”

Gooch betrayed his disappointment.

“Very unsatisfactory—very!” he said. “That doesn’t seem to help the case at all. Of course I knew some one carried the balls up there, but I wanted to find out who did it. You didn’t even see anyone? You don’t know who did it?”

“Perhaps I suspect,” said Hector, craftily.

“Eh? Suspect? Is that it?”

“Yes, sir.”

“You must have something to base your suspicions on.”

“I have, professor.”

“What do you base them on?”

“That groan. I recognized the voice.”

“Ah! Now it’s barely possible you may be of some assistance to me. Who do you think it was?”

“I am satisfied, professor, that it was a boy who has a great influence here.”

“Name him, sir—name him. It makes no difference who he is or how much influence he has, he shall be expelled. I promise you that. Name him, sir. What is his name?”

“I think it is Chester Arlington,” said Marsh.

“Eh? Arlington?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Now, be careful! We don’t want to make any mistakes. Have you any other reason for thinking thus?”

“Professor, I understand that Arlington has in his room a trophy—one of the candlepin balls. You know he couldn’t very well carry it in there in the daytime. How did he get it into his room? It must have been taken there at night.”

“Wait a minute! Wait a minute! One of the candlepin balls? What are candlepin balls—those big balls?”

“No; the small ones.”

“And this is in his room?”
“So I have been told.”
“Where does he keep it? He can’t have it exposed to view. He must have it concealed.”
“The fellow who told me said it was under his bed.”
“Aha! Under his bed, eh? Well, we will find out about that! Well, we will investigate that!”
“But remember your promise, professor. Remember that you are not to tell anyone that I told you.”
“Oh, I will remember! Don’t you worry about that. Under his bed, eh? Well, we will look under his bed. We certainly will look under his bed. Has some influence here, has he? His father is rich, eh? Well, if he has had a hand in that business he will find that his influence and his father’s money cannot keep him in this school. You may go, Cadet Marsh. I shall take the first opportunity to look under Arlington’s bed.”

Hector sought to slip out quietly without being observed, but when he issued from the door he was surprised to see at least thirty boys waiting outside in two long lines. The moment he appeared some one groaned.

Marsh halted, his face growing pale.
“Sneak!” hissed a voice; and immediately the others cried:
“Spy!”
“Blabber!”
“Cheap duffer!”
“Look at him!”
“He is guilty!”
“He’s been peaching!”
“Soak him, fellows!”
“Give it to him!”

Some one of them caught Hector by the collar and gave him a jerk. Fairly started between the two lines, Marsh braced up and attempted to walk with an air of defiance and dignity. Some one hit him over the head, and a moment later he was receiving cracks, and cuffs, and kicks from both sides of the lines. When he started to run some one tripped him up. He rose to his feet and started again, only to drop a second time. Then he made a scramble to escape, and all of the boys apparently endeavored to get at him. Once more rising to his feet, he fled in terror, their derisive epithets ringing in his ears.

“Hang you all!” he fiercely muttered. “I won’t forget you! I will find a way to get even sometime!”

At barracks’ door he nearly collided with Chester Arlington. Chet paused and looked at him in surprise.

“What have you butted into—another earthquake?”
“Bah!” snarled Marsh, showing his ugly teeth. “Don’t you talk to me! Don’t you speak to me! Bah!”
“You bark like a dog,” said Chester, sneeringly. “That’s natural, for you are a cur.”

In his rage and excitement, Marsh retorted:
“That’s all right! You won’t have many chances to talk like that to me. You will get it in the neck pretty quick. Just you wait, Mr. Highflyer! Your time is coming!”
“You do raise an awful wind with that big mouth of yours.”

“Bah!” again snarled Marsh, pushing past Chester and hurrying up the stairs.

CHAPTER VII.
DICK’S PROMISE.

Arlington was not at all disturbed by Hector’s words, for he had heard Marsh making similar threats before. A little later, however, having returned to his room for a book, he was surprised to see the door unceremoniously opened by Barnaby Gooch, who walked in.

“Oh, you’re here, are you?” said Gooch, looking at him with his gimlet eyes. “I say you’re here?”
“Yes, sir, I am here,” answered Chester, respectfully. “Do you want anything of me, professor?”
“You will find out later. I may want something of you. You may have something that I want.”
“If I have anything you want,” declared Chet, in still greater surprise, “you simply have to ask for it.”
“Then give me that candlepin ball!” ordered Barnaby, shaking his finger at Arlington in the gesture common with him. “Give me that candlepin ball, young man!”
“Candlepin ball?” exclaimed Chet, astonished.
“What candlepin ball?”
“You know, sir—you know very well! Where is it?”

“Professor, are you crazy? I don’t know what you are talking about.”

“Now don’t tell me I am crazy! Don’t tell me anything like that, young man! I won’t have it from you! You had better be careful! You had better take care! You have influence in this school, have you? Well, sir, you will have a chance to exercise your influence in your own behalf directly.”
Arlington’s astonishment increased every moment.

"The old man must be daffy," he thought.

"The best thing you can do," said Gooch, "is to bring out that candlepin ball at once."

"I know nothing about a candlepin ball, sir," declared Chet.

"Oh, you don't, eh? Don't know anything about it at all, I suppose? Well, sir, you stand right where you are, sir. Don't you move, sir. If you move you will regret it. I will look around a little myself. First, young man, I will look under your bed."

This Gooch proceeded to do, and what he discovered caused him to utter an exclamation. A moment later he arose to his feet, and to Arlington’s astonishment he held in his hand one of the new candlepin balls.

"What's this, sir? What's this I find under your bed, young man?" proudly demurred the old pedagogue. "No candlepin ball here, eh? You don't know anything about any candlepin ball! Oh, no! Will you tell me what this is?"

"Plainly, professor, it is a bowling ball; but I know nothing whatever about it. How it came under the bed I can't tell."

"Oh, you can't tell! Well, you will have to tell! You'd better tell! The sooner you tell the better it will be for you."

Arlington, however, continued to protest his absolute innocence, with the result that Gooch departed in great dudgeon, satisfied at last that he was on the track of the perpetrators of the "earthquake joke."

Gooch lost no time. In less than half an hour Arlington was placed under arrest and escorted to the guardhouse, where he was confined.

Within five minutes, as it seemed, the entire school knew what had happened. Immediately there was excitement and speculation.

At the finish of the afternoon session the boys gathered for a few moments on the parade ground, and everyone seemed speaking of Arlington and what had happened to him.

"It's too bad!" said Ted Smart. "It's a shame to treat him so well! Now, why didn't they take me? I carried those balls up there! I was the originator of that great joke! I touched off the earthquake!"

"Hanyway," put in Billy Bradley, "some'ow Hi don't believe Arlington did hit, don't y' now. Hit don't seem like 'im to me, don't y' hunderstand."

"I don't hup-hup-hup-believe it either," nodded Chip Jolliby. "It isn't like him at all. Arlington would never pup-pup-pup-put up a joke like that. He is no ju-ju-ju-joker."

"I never saw a selfish chap like him who was a joker," declared Earl Gardner.

"Nor I," agreed Hal Darrell. "When a person is selfish he is generally looking out for number one."

"Not all persons," chimed in Ted Smart. "A selfish widow is generally looking out for number two."

"'Ow is that?" asked Billy Bradley, blankly, and somehow his question and his manner seemed to greatly amuse the boys, who laughed heartily.

"Hi suppose that's one of your Hamnerian jokes!" snapped Bradley, in disgust. "Hi never see the point of your confounded Hamnerian jokes, don't y' now."

"That's strange; that's most remarkable," said Ted Smart. "You are so keen of perception, Sir William! You are so wise and astute, Billy, my boy!"

"Just notice Ted's knightly air as he declaims those little things," smiled Gardner.

"Yes," said Darrell, "a sort of up-all-nightly air."

"Dern my picter!" cried Obie Tubbs, staring at Hal in astonishment. "Never heard you crack a joke before. You must be ketching it."

"That's all right, Tubbs," said Hal, patting the other boy on the shoulder. "Don't you worry. You're a wonder yourself. Any fellow who begins a meal with pie and eats backward is remarkable. Now, what's your idea of beginning with pie and eating backward?"

"Why," answered Obie, in a droll way, "don't you see, gol ding it! My stomach's upset and I have to feed it that way."

Somehow this explanation of the fat boy was ludicrous in the extreme, and again the little knot of cadets was convulsed.

"Obie, you're all right," laughed Gardner. "There is one great object in your life. I suppose we all know it. Now, Obie, if a fairy should suddenly appear to you and offer you three wishes, what would you do?"

"Dern my picter! I'd sign the pledge!" cried Obie, and that produced another shout of merriment.

Tom Walker had joined the group, and now he spoke up:

"This business ought to come pretty near finishing Arlington," he said. "After walking post, this will come hard on him. You know old Gooch declares he'll have the fellow expelled who perpetrated the earthquake joke. I see where the high and mighty Chester gets his walking papers."
The others seemed to think Chester was in danger of expulsion, and they continued to talk of it until one of them noticed that Dick Merriwell was standing near and took no part in the conversation.

“Well, Capt. Merriwell,” said this fellow, “it’s not likely Mr. Arlington will give you any more trouble. If he is fired out of school now he will never get back. Even you won’t be able to get him back again.”

“I don’t think he will be expelled,” said Dick, quietly.

Any information expressed by Dick always proved interesting to the cadets, and now several urged him to explain why he fancied Arlington might escape. This, however, he declined to do, although he persisted in expressing his conviction that Chester would not be expelled.

They were still talking of the matter when he departed and proceeded to his room.

Buckhart was on the point of leaving the room when Merriwell came in. He saw the troubled look on Dick’s face.

“Whatever is it now, pard?” he demanded. “By that cloud on your face I’d imagine you were the one in trouble, instead of Arlington. I don’t see what you’ve got to worry about.”

“Don’t you?”

“Not by a long shot.”

“Why, Brad, I know Arlington is falsely accused. I know he is locked up for something he didn’t do.”

“Well, what of that?” exploded the Texan. “Are you going to lose sleep over it? Waugh! if you do you ought to go to the guardhouse yourself.”

“Perhaps I will,” muttered Dick.

“Hey? hey? What? You? Say, pard, whatever freak has struck you now?”

“See here, Brad,” said Dick, quietly, “I hope you don’t think I am going to see a fellow expelled for a trick perpetrated by me?”

The Westerner was startled and alarmed.

“Oh, look here!” he cried; “you don’t mean to tell me you’re going to own up? You don’t mean to tell me you’re going to blow on yourself? Why should you? What has Chet Arlington ever done for you that you should do that for him? Old Gooch has sworn that he will have the boy expelled who did that job. He will keep his word, even if he finds out you did it. My goodness, pard, we can’t stand for that! You’ve got some one besides yourself to think of. I am in the mess.”

“Don’t worry about yourself, Brad,” advised Dick, in the same quiet manner. “If I find it necessary to own up in order to clear Arlington, I will take all the blame on my own shoulders. You will not be mentioned.”

“Whoop!” roared Buckhart. “Well, I’d like to see you do it! What do you take me for? What kind of a cheap horse thief do you fancy I am? Do you reckon I’d let you stand up and blow on yourself, while I kept mum? You bet your boots I wouldn’t! When you do that the Unbranded Maverick of the Rio Pecos will get to the confessional himself. You hear me warble! You hear me softly murmur! Now I reckon you understand just what will happen. If you tell I will have to take my medicine, too. You got that to think of, pard?”

Dick sat down dejectedly.

“Don’t be a fool, Buckhart!” he implored. “I was the one who put up this job. I led you into it, and I am the only one to blame. It’s only right that I should be the one to suffer for it. You can see yourself that it isn’t right for me to keep still and let some one else suffer—some one who is not guilty. I can’t do that, Brad.”

“All right, pard—all right. Go ahead and do any old thing you like; but just figger it out that I will take my medicine, too, if you have to. Oh! it will give Chester Arlington great satisfaction! If we both leave this school he will have things pretty near his own way here. Then he will be cock-of-the-walk. Just think of it! He has plotted and schemed and done all sorts of crooked tricks to get you out of school, and now, just to save him, you propose to let yourself be kicked out. Have a little sense about this thing, partner!”

In spite of Buckhart’s argument, Dick remained fixed in his purpose.

“I cannot see even my worst enemy suffer for anything I know he is not responsible for, knowing at the same time that I am responsible,” declared Dick, quietly.

“Well, for the love of goodness, don’t be too hasty, pard!” entreated the Texan. “Mebbe they can’t prove it against Arlington, anyhow. I don’t see how they can prove it. I don’t see what they can base their proof on.”

“The candlepin ball found in his room.”

“That was a mighty queer. How do you suppose that ball got there, anyhow?”
“I suppose it was put there by some one. I heard that Hector Marsh had a talk with Gooch, after which the professor searched Arlington’s room. You know Marsh was chummy with Chester at one time, and he can’t get over it because Arlington declines to have anything to do with him now.”

“Well, let me gently whisper something into your ear. Let me warble a little song. Pard, if you have to own up and if we are fired, I will lay for that Piute, Marsh, and everlastingly lam him. I will soak him good and plenty. That’s what I will do! I will bet a bunch of steers that he was one of the duffers we heard in the lecture room that night. That’s how he knew so much about it. He fastened us out of barracks, and so he was the cause of the whole disturbance. He came mighty near fixing us that night, but I will fix him!”

“I fancy you may be right about that. Don’t worry, Brad; I am not going to take any part in this business unless compelled to do so to save Arlington.”

Late that afternoon Dick succeeded in seeing Chet a few moments in the guardhouse. It is doubtful if any other fellow in the school could have accomplished this, but the guard on duty took the chance of reprimand in letting Dick speak to the prisoner.

Arlington was surprised when Dick appeared at the door.

“You?” he exclaimed, staring at Dick.

“Yes,” nodded the visitor.

“How did you get in here?”

“Never mind that. I wanted to speak with you a moment. I know you had no hand in this affair of which you are accused, Arlington.”

“How do you know it?” demanded Chet, instantly.

“How is it that you know so much?”

“Never mind; I know it.”

Arlington laughed harshly.

“Well, little good it does me if you do know it. Here I am. I am in for it. I am accused of it, and I suppose the thing has been cooked up so they will prove it against me. I will be fired. Merriwell, you will have no more trouble from me. It’s mighty tough, too! If I was guilty I wouldn’t squeal, but I do feel sore now. You say you know I didn’t do it. If that’s the case, you must know who did.”

“Perhaps I do,” nodded Dick, quietly.

Arlington stood quite still and stared hard for some moments at the visitor.

“Thundering queer you know so much about it unless you had a hand in it,” he said. “Did you have a hand in it?”

“Perhaps I did.”

Chester was greatly astonished now.

“Then what can you do?” he asked. “You can’t get me out of the scrape unless you get into it yourself. Why should you do it for me? I guess it’s up to me to take my medicine.”

“Wait and see what will happen,” came quietly from Merriwell. “I promise you you shall not be expelled.”

With this promise he departed.

CHAPTER VIII.

DICK STRIKES.

Dick was on his way from the guardhouse, when he saw a carriage draw up in front of the academy.

June and her mother were in it.

Mrs. Arlington had heard of her son’s trouble, and she lost little time in getting to the academy. She found Prof. Gunn in his private room and was immediately admitted, by his direction.

The head professor pushed his spectacles up onto his forehead and received her with as much calmness and dignity as possible under the circumstances.

She was stern, cold, pale and haughty.

“What is this I hear about my son, Chester?” she demanded. “Have I been correctly informed that he is confined?”

“I fear you have, madam—I fear you have,” answered Zenas. “I am very sorry.”

“I have come for him,” she retorted. “I shall take him away from this school. I can leave him no longer in such a wretched place.”

“I beg you not to be too hasty, madam—I beg you!”

“Sir, such treatment of my son is outrageous! Such treatment of my son is unpardonable, sir!”

“It may seem so to you, madam; but the discipline of this school must be maintained.”

“Discipline!” she retorted, with biting sarcasm. “If all I hear is true, there is little real discipline in this school, Prof. Gunn.”

“Ha! hum! I think you are misinformed, Mrs. Arlington. We endeavor to maintain discipline here. It’s indeed most unfortunate that your son has fallen into this trouble. I regret it exceedingly. But if he has been guilty of misconduct—”

“He is not, sir. My son is naturally a gentleman. What’s the offense charged to him?”
Zenas made hurried explanations, to which she listened in the same cold, unchangeable manner.

"And do you think, sir, for one moment," she demanded, "that my boy would be concerned in anything like that?"

"I hope he was not, madam—I sincerely hope he was not. I hope that it may be proved that he is innocent."

"Do you, indeed, sir? Then why is he confined? Then why has he been placed under arrest, as you call it? If my son is innocent, the outrage is all the greater. Do you think that, if it should be proved that he is innocent, I would let him remain here? Not a day, not an hour, not a minute, Prof. Gunn!"

"Dear me! Dear me!" spluttered the agitated old man. "I fear you don't understand matters, madam. He will be given a fair and impartial hearing. If he clears himself he will be in better standing than before."

"Indeed!" again retorted the woman, with the same biting sarcasm. "And what's to atone to him, sir, for the disgrace he has suffered? Will you explain that, Prof. Gunn? If my boy is innocent, why is he confined?"

"There! there! there! Don't become excited, madam," spluttered the old pedagogue, who himself was very much excited in the presence of this icy woman. "It will be all right."

"On the contrary, it can never be all right. My son has a persistent enemy here who is trying in every way to injure him. I am certain that this is his work. Chester has endured everything, and he shall suffer no more. It is a disgraceful thing that another boy can impose on him in such a manner."

"You must be mistaken, madam; I am certain no other boy has imposed on him."

"But I know it, sir. It's time that you should know it too."

"What other boy do you speak of, Mrs. Arlington?"

"Richard Merriwell."

"Why! why! why! He is one of our model boys. Indeed, he is one of the finest young chaps in the school."

Mrs. Arlington's smile was like a crack in the icy surface of a mill pond.

"It's this thing that has exasperated me," she said, with her head very high. "My son, who is as much superior to ordinary boys as may be imagined, has never had proper respect or deference shown him here. This young Merriwell, who boasts he is an athlete, but really seems to be a sort of a ruffian, has missed no opportunity to annoy Chester and make his life at this school a hard one. He is sly, and that is why you think him such a model. Prof. Gunn, I advise you to have him placed under arrest. Let him be confined and tried. It is my belief that you will find that he was the perpetrator of this outrageous trick."

"Impossible, madam—impossible!"

"There it is!" said Mrs. Arlington. "That is what my boy has been compelled to contend against. Prof. Gunn, I must see him at once! You must permit me to see my son immediately!"

"Very well, madam; you shall do so," returned Zenas, now assuming an air of dignity himself. "I shall not speak of your son's past record at this school, for it seems to me that you should know something of it yourself."

"You are wise in your silence. Will you kindly see that I am conducted to my boy?"

The professor sat down and started to scribble a note. Then he missed his glasses and searched around for them among the papers on the table. As he did so he became more and more excited, for his wrath was rising.

"Where are they?" he muttered. "Where have they gone? Come out here! You can't hide from me! Don't you try to crawl under any of those papers! I want you to come out here!"

Right and left he pawed the papers on his desk in his wild search.

"You're always hiding!" he rasped. "You're never where I put you!"

The woman watched him stonily for a few moments, then said:

"If you are looking for your spectacles, sir, you will find them on your forehead."

He clapped his hand on them, and the expression of surprise and exasperation on his face was amusing enough to make almost anyone smile; but Mrs. Arlington remained unchanged.

Having scratched off something on a sheet of paper, the professor rang a bell, and a cadet on duty appeared at the door.

"Here, sir! Here, Cadet Morton!" said Zenas.

"Take this. Conduct this lady to the guardhouse and show this order to the guard on duty."

"Yes, sir," said the cadet.

Without a word to Gunn, who was bowing stiffly as
she departed, Mrs. Arlington left the room and followed her guide.

June was waiting anxiously in the carriage when her mother came out.

"How is it, mother?" she asked.

"I shall see Chester at once," was the answer.

In a moment June was out of the carriage and at her mother's side.

"I will go with you."

But when the guardhouse was reached and the guard on duty had read the note, he announced that he could admit Mrs. Arlington only.

"Then I will wait here, mother," said June.

Hector Marsh and Clint Shaw had observed the approach of the carriage and were closely watching every move. Marsh chuckled with satisfaction.

"Now there is a rustle!" he sneered. "Come on, Shaw! Let's saunter around this way."

Together they came round to the guardhouse and found June waiting outside.

"There is his sister," said Shaw, speaking loudly enough for her to hear. "She's a peach!"

Marsh showed his teeth in a grin.

"She must be struck on her fine brother!" he growled.

June's cheeks were burning in a moment. She flashed them a glance that was full of indignation.

"My, what fine eyes she has!" chuckled Shaw.

"Ah, there!" he said, doffing his cap. "You look lonesome, my dear."

Now June's anger became so great that the color left her cheeks and she grew very pale.

"Are you two of the young gentlemen of this school?" she said, her voice quivering.

"Why, sure!" retorted Shaw; "and there is another young gent inside."

At this Marsh laughed loudly and discordantly.

"Why, she has the same top-lofty air as her fine brother!" sneered Hector.

Just then, looking past them, a sudden expression of satisfaction came to the girl's face.

"Dick!" she cried, "I am glad you have come!"

Dick likewise had been watching, and his arrival was timely. He saw instantly that June was being annoyed, and his gorge rose.

"Miss Arlington," he said, "have these fellows bothered you?"

"They have been very insulting," replied June.

An insult to June was something to arouse young Merriwell's wrath in a twinkling. Immediately he started for the pair, and the look in his eyes caused them to take to their heels and dust around the corner.

But they could not escape him in that manner, for he was after them in a jiffy, and his hand closed on Shaw's collar.

"You cheap duffer!" he grunted, giving Clint a furious shake. "You low whelp!"

"Hey, Marsh!" called Shaw, in alarm. "Come back here! He has grabbed me!"

Then he turned on Dick.

"Leggo!" he panted. "Take your hands off or I'll——"

"I wish you'd try it!" flared Dick.

"I will!"

Shaw lifted a clinched fist.

An instant later Dick Merriwell's hard knuckles cracked on the fellow's jaw, and Clint was knocked down as if he had been hit by a sledge hammer. As he fell his head struck against the building, and he dropped to the ground stunned and motionless.

Merriwell quivered with the intensity of his rage. He stood looking down at the boy he had struck. Marsh had stopped and started back, but now he paused, not caring to get within reach of Merriwell's hands.

For several moments Dick and Hector stood quite still, both of them looking at Shaw, who remained motionless on the ground.

Suddenly Marsh cried:

"All right, Mr. Merriwell; we will see what we can do for you!"

Then he took to his heels and disappeared.

To Dick's surprise, Shaw did not quickly recover, but lay still, as if that blow had rendered him unconscious.

Dick was kneeling beside him when several cadets, having been told by Marsh, hurried to the spot. Among them were Gardner and Bradley.

"What's up?" cried Billy.
“Evidently somebody’s down,” said Earl. “Is he hurt much, Dick? Look here, can’t you get him up? Marsh has told everybody. You have broken the rules, and there will be the dickens of a scrape. Yank him onto his feet.”

“Hold on!” said Dick. “I am afraid he is hurt pretty badly.”

This proved to be the case, for it was fully ten minutes before Shaw showed any signs of recovery. Even when they lifted him to his feet he would have fallen but for their support. They were trying to get him away somewhere when a score of boys flocked about, and Lieut. Swift, the military officer of the academy, also appeared.

Swift asked a few questions and then took charge of Shaw himself. He said nothing to Merriwell, but all felt there was trouble in store for Dick.

In the meantime Mrs. Arlington had been urging Chester to let her take him away.

“You can’t remain here, my son; I shall not permit it,” she declared over and over.

“Now, have a little sense about this thing, mum,” he retorted. “I am not going to leave until this old business is settled. Don’t you think it? I am going to stay right here and face them. I will make them prove it against me.”

“You didn’t do it, Chester?”

“You bet your life I didn’t!”

“Think of it! Think of it!” she exclaimed. “My boy locked up on such a charge when he is innocent!”

“I will make somebody pay for it, mum: They can’t rub this thing into me.”

“It’s a mistake for you to remain here another minute. They can’t prevent me from taking you away if I choose to do so. You had better come, Chester.”

But he was obstinate in his refusal.

“Wait till I prove I am innocent,” he said. “After that I may get out of this old school. I am sick of it now.”

She could not change him in his determination, and finally she departed, feeling fully satisfied that he would indeed succeed in proving his innocence.

As they were driving away from the academy Mrs. Arlington noticed that June was pale and disturbed.

“Don’t you worry about your brother,” she said.

“He has told me with his own lips that he is innocent, and he will prove it.”

“Oh, I hope he does!” said June; “but I was thinking of something else just then. Two of those boys spoke to me while I was waiting outside. They were very impertinent. I don’t know what I should have done if Dick—Mr. Merriwell—had not driven them away.”

“Dick!” exclaimed Mrs. Arlington, bitterly. “He is responsible for all of your brother’s troubles!”

June did not attempt to argue with her, for she knew it was useless.

“Something happened after he drove those insolent boys away,” she said. “There was great excitement. I saw the cadets running, and then a little later some of them were helping another boy away. He didn’t seem able to walk alone. Oh, I don’t know what it was that happened!”

“Never mind that,” said Mrs. Arlington; “it’s nothing to you. Let them settle their own quarrels. You should be thinking of your brother.”

CHAPTER IX.

S H A W E S C A P E S.

Within an hour Dick Merriwell was arrested and placed in the guardhouse.

The astonishment of Chester Arlington, as Dick was locked in with him, may be imagined.

“Look here!” he cried, “what does this mean? What have you been doing?”

“I had a little set-to with Shaw,” was the answer.

“I am afraid I hit him a pretty hard crack. They tell me he is in the hospital and the doctor is trying to bring him round.”

Arlington stood staring at his companion for some moments, finally exclaiming:

“Well, you gave him what was coming to him! How did you happen to do it? It isn’t like you.”
"I lost my temper," confessed Dick, humbly.

"Lost your temper? You? Oh, say, Merriwell, I can’t believe that! You, a perfect wonder, lose your temper!"

"Yes; I had provocation enough and I completely forgot myself."

"What was the provocation?"

"Never mind. You will find out sometime."

"Say, by Jove, Merriwell! It’s a shame you got into trouble for hitting that dub! Lost your temper, did you? Great Scott! I didn’t think it of you, and I like you better for it! You’re like other fellows, aren’t you? You can lose your temper."

"I believe I told you not long ago that I have been compelled to fight against this failing of mine. I fancied I was master of myself, but I see I am not—not yet."

"Well, you must have soaked him a corker! In the hospital? Wouldn’t that jar you!"

Chet burst out laughing as he thought of it. Suddenly he stopped.

"When are they going to give me a trial?" he cried.

"Are they going to keep me in here a year? What are they trying to do? Are they faking up a lot of evidence against me?"

"I don’t know what they are doing, Arlington."

"Well, I won’t bother you. You have troubles of your own. And you told me you could get me out of this scrape. I’ve been thinking that over, Merriwell, and the more I think of it the firmer has grown my belief that you can’t get me out of it without getting yourself into it. Look here, I don’t want you to do anything for me. Understand that! I won’t have it, Merriwell! They can’t prove it against me. Some slob put that candlepin ball under my bed. That’s no proof. What if it was found there? Let them go ahead with their old game; I will beat them. Just you keep mum and see if I don’t come out on top."

"I will keep mum until I have to speak," promised Dick.

Within fifteen minutes there was another surprise. for Lieut. Swift himself appeared and told Chester that he was at liberty to leave the guardhouse.

"What do you mean by that?" asked Arlington.

"Never mind now," said the military instructor.

"Aren’t they going to try me?"

"I don’t think it will be necessary. I think you will be exonerated without a trial."

"Well, wouldn’t that bump you some!" exclaimed Chet. "Now what do you make of that, Merriwell?"

"I don’t know," confessed Dick.

"Well, so long!" said Chet. "I hope you get out of your scrape just as easily."

Arlington’s curiosity to know the cause of his release was unabated, and immediately on leaving the guardhouse he set out to learn the facts. It did not take him long to learn that Shaw, who was in the hospital, had been talking. Apparently the blow had deraigned Clint, for he talked in a rambling manner without seeming to know what he was saying. And it was this talk from his lips which led to the release of Arlington, for Shaw had in his ravings practically confessed that he was the one who placed the candlepin ball under Chester’s bed. Indeed, although he spoke of other things, he constantly referred to this, telling how he had sneaked into the room and hidden the ball there. He seemed to fancy that the doctor was Hector Marsh, and over and over he repeated his story.

Dick, however, was destined to remain all night in the guardhouse. Early in the morning Prof. Gunn, who had spent a sleepless night of worry, gave orders that Merriwell should be brought before him.

"I am greatly distressed over this matter, Cadet Merriwell," declared the professor, shaking his head.

"How could you do it? I considered you a model. I have told others you were a model. You must have had great provocation. What is your excuse?"

"I have no excuse to make," answered Dick, in a low tone.

"But there must have been some reason for it. Are you aware that the doctor thinks Cadet Shaw has concussion of the brain? This is a most serious affair, and you, my model boy, you are responsible!"

Dick was silent.

"Speak up, Merriwell," urged Zenas, entreatingly.
"Let me hear your excuse. Of course, you will have to suffer punishment for breaking the rules, even if Shaw recovers; but I wish to know that you had provocation of some sort."

"Professor," said Dick, "I think that will come out at the investigation. It will do no good for me to seek to justify myself now."

Then, as he uttered these words, there sounded hurried footsteps outside the door and a sharp knock fell upon it. When the door was opened a cadet stood there, and he cried:

"Is Lieut. Swift here? Cadet Shaw has escaped from the hospital and disappeared. We want to go in search of him."

"My! my! my! my!"

"My! my! my!"

"My! my! my!"

"Palpitated Prof. Gunn, "take leave—take it! Escaped from the hospital! You don't tell me! How did it happen?"

"He slipped out somehow."

"And he has disappeared?"

"Yes, sir."

"Find him—find him at once! I will see Lieut. Swift. Cadet Shaw must be found."

The professor hurried out of the room, and the guard who had conducted Dick there seemed in the excitement of the moment to quite forget him. They obeyed Gunn's summons to follow him, and to Merriwell's surprise he was left alone.

It was true that Shaw had managed to escape from the hospital, and soon the greater part of the school was searching for him.

Being left at liberty, Dick joined in the hunt.

CHAPTER X.

THE RESCUE AND THE TRIAL.

In his delirium on getting out of the hospital, Clint Shaw had stolen away into the cedars back of the gymnasium, and thence he fled from the academy. He had been seen, however, by a passing farmer as he fled across the field and plunged into a piece of woods. Information from this man put the searchers on the track of the fugitive.

It was midforenoon when Dick, who, with a number of the boys, was searching a strip of woods near the river some three miles from the academy, saw a white figure rise from a place of concealment some distance away and take flight.

"It is Shaw!" thought Merriwell. "He saw me approaching."

Immediately he pursued, exerting every effort to overtake the deranged boy. Dick gained rapidly, and in a few moments he was certain it was Shaw. Looking back several times, Shaw saw Merriwell drawing nearer and nearer. This seemed to add to his terror. Panting heavily, he ran on and on, hearing the sounds of pursuit drawing closer and closer.

At length Clint came to the bank of the river, and a backward glance showed him that Dick was less than twenty yards away.

With a wild yell, Shaw flung himself into the river, striking out at first to swim across.

When Dick saw this he tore off his jacket, even as he ran, and dropped it. There was no time to pull off his shoes, for he wished to reach Clint before the frightened boy was too far from the bank.

Unhesitatingly Dick plunged in headlong.

As he rose to the surface he saw Clint, a short distance away, suddenly fling up his hands with a cry, as if seized by a cramp, and sink from view.

Dick put every ounce of strength into his strokes, the icy current carrying him downstream. His heart was filled with a great fear.

Fortune favored him, however, for Shaw rose only a few feet away; and, with a mighty forward lunge, Dick succeeded in clutching the fellow.

Immediately Clint turned and grabbed at his would-be rescuer.

Knowing the danger of being seized in that manner, Merriwell struggled to hold Shaw off, at the same time panting:

"Keep still, will you! I will get you out of this if you will give me a fair show."

Other cadets had seen Dick rush in pursuit of the crazed lad, and several of them came crashing through the underbrush and reached the bank of the river in time to witness some of the struggle in the water.
Brad Buckhart was one of these, and he prepared to plunge in to Dick's assistance.

Merriwell, however, had succeeded in forcing Shaw nearer the bank, and he called to his roommate:

"Run downstream, Brad, and wade out a little. Grab us as we float by."

"All right, pard," shouted the Texan; and he obeyed.

Buckhart was barely able to clench them as the current was carrying them past; and, with his assistance, Shaw was finally pulled out of the water, limp and nerveless. The struggle had completely exhausted him, but the boys were unanimous in declaring his life had been saved by Merriwell.

* * * * * * *

At one o'clock that afternoon Dick appeared for trial before the court judge. The entire school was keenly interested, and it seemed that nothing else had been talked about since the rescue of Shaw. Everyone anxiously waited the result of the trial.

The trial itself was brief indeed, for Dick promptly confessed to the charge against him. The great surprise came when Shaw appeared to testify. Strangely enough, the plunge in the river and the struggle in the water had seemed to clear the fellow's befuddled brain, and he now appeared in his normal condition, although somewhat pale and weak.

"They tell me Dick Merriwell saved me from drowning," he said. "I remember it, although it's like a dream. He did hit me, and I want everybody to know that I started to hit him first. I am going to tell the truth, for he saved my life. I am to blame for it all. If anyone is punished punish me."

This was not all Clint said, but it was enough.

"Dick Merriwell," said the judge, as Dick stood before him, "it is plain that there are circumstances that palliate your offense. Still, sir, you broke the rules. You know that fighting is not permitted here. I regret to say that I find it necessary to sentence you to seven days' solitary confinement."

At this there was a great sensation in the room.

Dick stood looking the judge straight in the face, his countenance unchanged.

"However," continued the judge, "having taken into consideration all the circumstances, I have decided to suspend the sentence. Unless you again offend in a similar manner, it will not be enforced, and you are now at liberty."

It was with the greatest difficulty that those in the room repressed their desire to give a cheer.

Prof. Gunn was the first to shake Dick by the hand.

"Ha! hum!" said the old professor, endeavoring to appear grave, although he could not keep a smile of satisfaction from his face. "Hum! ha! Permit me, Cadet Merriwell, to congratulate you on the result and on your brave and noble conduct."

As Dick appeared outside he found, as it seemed, the entire school awaiting him. When he stepped out he saw their faces turned toward him and their eyes fixed upon him. Near at hand was Chester Arlington, who suddenly flung his cap into the air and yelled:

"Three cheers for Richard Merriwell! Let her go, fellows."

They did "let her go!"

THE END.

The Next Number (417) Will Contain

DICk MERRIWELL'S SAND; OR,

Winning by Pure Grit.

HILSBORO PLAYS AND LOSES!

WHAT’S IN A NAME?

In No. 253 of the Medal Library will be published a story entitled “The Water Witch,” by an author whose name is a household word.

Who is it that has not heard of J. Fenimore Cooper, the author of “Leather Stocking Tales.” If you would beguile the tedious moments, and at the same time store your brain with a knowledge of human nature, if you would read a story that is so full of interest that you feel like beginning at the beginning again, after you have turned the last page, go to your newsdealer and ask him for “The Water Witch.” The price is ten cents; or you can get it from the publishers, Street & Smith, by sending four cents additional for postage.

APPLAUSE.

I am a constant reader of Tip Top, and I think it is the best there is. I send you a top for a cover. Probably you’ll use it, and probably not. I will be very thankful to you if I shall see it in print. I wish you would hurry up and say something about Dick Merriwell, for I like him better than Frank, though both are dandies. I would like to hear about Dick playing basket-ball. I remain, yours forever, Harry L. Colton, St. Joseph, Mich.

We appreciate your kindness in sending us the “top.” We think you have a great deal of talent in that line.

I have read Tip Top for the last five years and during that time have but one fault to find with it. I think Frank should marry Elsie Bellwood instead of Inza Burrage. Elsie was a brave and noble girl and loved Frank, but when she discovered that he cared for Inza, like the noble girl she is, she sought to make him believe her light-headed and fickle. She had sacrificed her own feelings till her very soul turned in revolt. She had seen selfthought and selfishness so much in others, and had received so little credit for her own gentleness, that at last, in desperation, she threw aside her better impulses and permitted herself to be swayed entirely by the powerful and unreasonable impulses of her heart.

Frank was Elsie’s ideal in every way, and for him she had been ready to do anything in her power. She was worthy of Frank, and in his heart to Inza.

I like Doris a great deal. Doris resembles Elsie in every way. She is a noble, unselfish girl, beautiful in face and figure, and, best of all, gentle and forgiving. It may be late for Frank to turn, but Dick has plenty of time to change.

Why not put it to vote and leave the readers decide upon the girl whom Dick shall marry?

Dick and Elsie would be a good idea to print the pictures of all the Tip Top characters on the covers of the Weekly—inside—so that everybody could have an album containing the pictures of the best-known people in the world.

Hoping to see this in print soon, I am, yours very truly, king of Elsie admirers.

John L. Shattuck.

We see that the “king of Elsie” admirers believes in standing up for his friends.

No. 416 should be a fine number, because it will be the eighth anniversary of the “king of weeklies” and the third of Frank’s proposal to Inza.

I think Reginald Ventmore is afflicted with that disease—the “lumbar vertebrae” which he refers to in his letter, if he means what he says in No. 408. I would like to see Chester Arlington become a friend of Dick’s, because I believe he would stick to Dick like a burr sticks to Frank.

I do not like the plan of H. A. L. and a few others of starting two weeklies, because if this happened I do not think that the stories would be as interesting as they are.

“A Tip Topper” says that Hans and Harry should be dropped. He is about as bad as I. M. Kicking and others.

Wishing success to Street & Smith and Burt L. Standish, I remain, an admirer,

E. W. K. Hanlon, Jr.,
1421 Mt. Royal Avenue, Baltimore, Md.

We extend our sympathy to all the Baltimoreans.

As an old reader of Tip Top, I think it is my duty to aid in its defense, as another kicker has arrived at the front in the person of I. M. Kicking, Jr., who pours out his tale of woe in Tip Top, No. 401. Where do all of the kickers spring from? Is there an established order of kickers? If not, they should, organize a society and issue a weekly in accordance with their own idea of how one should be run. In going through this life one will often meet some very queer beings—one class, and fortunately a very small class—are those who are always kicking against and trying to reverse the existing order of things. In this class Mr. I. M. Kicking belongs. For the benefit of the latter I would like to say that I am not a Buckhart admirer, nor am I writing for a prize, which I. M. Kicking seems to think is the object of all those who indulge in their particular favorite. It seems to me that I. M. K is one of those cranks known as notoriety seekers—if he does not know what that means, I will try to enlighten him. He is one of those people, who, being unable to draw himself into the notice of the public, says, writes or does something, which every sensible person would try to avoid for the sake of I. M. K. I hope I make my meaning clear. He says Dick is a cad. Well, everyone is entitled to his own opinion, so we will not worry about that; but when he tries to dictate to the author—who, doubtless, has forgotten more than I. M. K. ever knew or ever will know—why, that is about the limit.

I say that some things in Tip Top are impossible. Maybe they are. We read it for pleasure and amusement, and we get it; that is sufficient. If all stories were founded on fact, we should have very few books, and those few would be very dry reading. Notwithstanding the assertion that “truth is stranger than fiction”; but, as I am now treading on dangerous ground, I suppose it will be well to switch off and leave the writing in the hands of the great and only Burt L. I. M. Kicking may have a very good story but he reads this. He may also feel like kicking the writer; but as he has no regard for the feelings of others, he may pardon me for indulging in a few personalities at his expense. As for his hero, Chester, I have always thought there was some good qualities in him, as the last few numbers of Tip Top
have shown. He realized his mistakes; he has bowed to the inevitable. It is to be hoped, however, that Mr. Kicking will not desert his idol, nor that he has resolved to turn a new leaf in his book of life; but, by following his example, live to be a sensible man. Trusting that these few remarks will furnish I. M. Kicking & Co. future and junior, food for thought, I will now hike back to the pines, leaving Tip Top to sail on just as serenely in the future as it has in the past, undisturbed by any more foolish letters such as I. M. K. had the misfortune to write.

I am glad that Fay Bee will not be consigned to the waste-basket. I will close, with a cheer for Tip Top and Burt L. Standish, Philadelphia, Pa.

FAY BEE.

Your letter is quite interesting and particularly well written. We think Fay Bee would make a most interesting correspondent for some likely chap.

Not seeing any Applause from this city, I thought I would write to tell you that I think Tip Top is the finest weekly published. I have only been reading Tip Top about six months. I have just finished reading No. 407, and think it is fine. I saw in the Applause of that number a letter from Bert Dale, who says that Dick has a swollen head and that Brad is a bully. Mr. Dale could not have been reading Tip Top very long or he would know better than that.

Of the characters like Frank, Dick, Bart, Brad, Hal, Ted, Smart, Dave Flint and Barron Black best.

I hope to see Flint and Black fast friends soon.

I think June is the girl for Dick and Doris for Barron Black.

I hope to see Arlington reform.

Wishing Burt L. Standish and Street & Smith the best of good luck, I remain,

M. B. M.

Alexandria, Va.

We are glad to hear from old Alexandria.

I have been reading Tip Top Weekly ever since you began publishing them. I would like to say that I think they are just as good now as they ever were. Would like to hear once more of our old friend, Jack Diamond. I will try and keep out of the Doris-June affair, as I was a strong Elsie admirer and finally found out she was not for Frank. With best wishes to Street & Smith and Burt L. Standish.

Lafayette, Ga.

So you are a follower in Elsie's train. Well, there are others who admire her also.

Not having seen any letters in the Applause column coming from Birmingham, I take great pleasure in writing you one, which I hope will be worthy enough for you to print.

I have been reading Tip Top for several years, and can truthfully say that it is the best of its kind. Mr. Standish is a genius, his portrayal of the characters of Tip Top is "out of sight."

I have noticed that there has been a great deal of disagreement among the readers as to the characters of the book. I would like to say that I think I. M. Kicking has simply written his letter for notoriety; he is one of that kind that wants to get notoriety; but don't care how they get it. I, therefore, think that his letter is not worth criticizing. It would take a better judge of human nature than he to define Chester Arlington's character. It cannot be denied that Chester has at least one redeeming trait in his character—that of his "never-give-up" determination—which, with proper training, would make a man out of him. I am not trying to defend Chester in the least, but am trying to be just to him. I think that June is the girl for Dick and Doris for Brad. Flint is true blue. He is, to my thinking, one of the strongest characters Mr. B. Standish has portrayed.

Trusting my letter won't tire you, I beg to remain, respectfully yours,

S. M.

Birmingham, Ala.

There are a great many who think as you do about Flint.

Although I had a letter in No. 299, Tip Top, I could not help writing to you again. In No. 406 I saw that Kent B. Stiles, of Brooklyn, N. Y., said that I had another thinking coming to me in regard to Clue Arlington. I wish to inform Kent that I have not changed my mind in regard to Arlington, although I am glad that he has shown that he has a spark of manhood in him. It seems to me that Tip Toppers do not have much to say about Barron Black. He is a great favorite of mine, and I hope to see Dave Flint and Black friends. Anybody that could fight Brad Buckhart to a standstill, like Barron did, ought to command the respect of Tip Top readers. Next to Dick comes Brad. He is all right, and I would like to kick I. M. Kicking a few, or any body that dares say a word against him. Anybody that don't like Brad must have a "screw loose" somewhere. Kent says he is a "true blue Dorisite," and invites the admirers of Doris to come to Tip Top. If he should be convicted of the waste-basket, I will close, with a cheer for Tip Top and Burt L. Standish.


FAY BEE.

Another Juneite to the front.

I have read every Tip Top to date, and I can truthfully say that I believe them to be the best of their kind printed. I think Burt L. is to be congratulated for giving his many readers so splendid an idea of the adventures of his hero, Frank Merrillwell.

I cannot remember having seen any Applause from readers of the Tip Top in this city, so I concluded that it was the thing to write.

Frank's friends are my friends, and any person such as Hugh Campbell, who doubts Mr. Standish's ability and makes suggestions to him as to how he should write his books, should be tarred and feathered.

I think we can rely on Burt L. to please us as much as possible, so I think soreheads such as H. C. should close up.

I will close, hoping to see this in your Applause and wishing Burt L. and Street & Smith long life, I remain, yours truly,

Montréal.

A CONSTANT READER.

We think you are right about Burt L. Standish.

I take great pleasure in writing praise about Burt L. Standish and his famous Tip Top Weekly. It deserves to be called the ideal publication of the American youth. It was about two years ago when I first read a Tip Top—it was No. 215, the title of it was "Dick Merrillwell's Trick"; or, Paid in Their Own Coin." At first I did not like it, but, after I read a couple of them, I began to grow interested and began buying all the back numbers, and in a year's time I read all.

I was glad that Frank selected Inza, as she was my favorite from the start.

I hope that Dick will choose June, as she is my favorite.

My principal favorites are in the order named: Frank, Bart, Dick, Hock, Mason, Barron Black and Chester Arlington, Buck Badger and the rest of the flock.

Of the girls I like are Inza, Elsie, June, Doris, May Blossom and Mrs. Badger.

I saw in a couple of Tip Tops a column devoted to something like an exchange column, and I wish that Burt L. Standish would set aside a column for exchange notices. Can you tell me a desirable place in this city where I can buy all the back numbers?

How many of the Adventure Weeklies were published? Yours truly, a June admirer.

J. B. Newark, N. J.

We cannot advise you where you can get them. A great many of them are out of print. Twenty-seven numbers.

I wonder if I dare attempt to use a little space in your Tip Top Applause column. A warm contest is generally in progress among the readers of this Weekly. In reading their letters, I am reminded of a time when I was about fourteen, and as angry at such letters as the one written by I. A. Z. T. and others. Although I do not agree with them, still I feel that it is their privilege to dislike Dick and Burt if they wish. We cannot all think alike. Because some one happens to dislike one of our favorites, gives us no right to censure them and call them names. Because some one sees some good in Chester Arlington, that person is to be congratulated on having a disposition capable of overlooking one's
bad qualities and seeing some good in everything. There was a
time when I thought Cheston was beyond recall, but I now believe
he will yet be a man.

I wish that a strong bond of friendship and good fellowship
might exist between every Tip Topper. We all admire the books
and believe it has a better influence on us than any other book.
Because some one happens to disagree with us, let us not pro-
test to "roast" them. It does not tend to make us feel better
toward each other, but rather stirs up a feeling that ought not to
exist.

We all know that Tip Top is a good book and Mr. Standish
a good writer, and one who has done and is doing a noble work.
Let us then say nothing but words of kindness to those who
differ from us. They will feel better toward us; whereas, letters
of a tendency to "roast" only cause anger. I am just as devoted
to Tip Top as any other reader, and I always feel sorry to see
letters against Dick. Personally, I think him a fine boy, second
only to Frank. I admire all of his friends and Frank's. My
reading of the book will stop only with the ending of the publica-
tion. I commenced with No. 1, and have never missed a single
copy. We are too old friends to part company now. The girls
are all lovely. It is hard to make a choice between Doris and
June, but I think that Dick will be able to choose between
them, and shall follow under the ardent leadership of "Nebraska"
in No. 456 for June.

The idea of F. G. M. in No. 397 to start a correspondence club
between Dick and one who would do much toward making friends
between Tip Toppers.

I thoroughly enjoyed the letter from Daisy Louise H., of Chi-
icago. She is a very enthusiastic writer. There are so many
good letters in this column that I enjoy reading them.

Hoping my letter will not be "turned down" on account of its
lengthiness or the views I have put forth, I will close, with best
wishes for all concerned with Tip Top, author, publishers and
readers.

EDITH M. ROOT.

Topkea, Kan.

We are very gratified to hear from our fair, diplomatic young
reader from Kansas. She shows, by her letter, that she is the
possessor of the rare and most admirable quality called tact.

We would like to get more letters like this one.

In looking over the Applause column of the Tip Top, No. 407,
my eyes fell upon a few lines signed "A Girl Admirer," Daven-
port, Iowa, and also one signed "A Girl Admirer," Pittsburg, Pa.
I do not write because I wish them to think I am an admirer
of the fair sex, but simply to let you know I am a constant reader
of the Tip Top, and also like to see a good thing treated good.
I mean Frank, Brad, Tubbs, Pies, Burt L., and I cannot forget
Bett.

As for the farmer, I. A. Z. T., he must be from up above the
north pole, so freeze him out. Hey, put him up in the Maine
woods with Bert Dale.

The Tip Top certainly is a corker, and Burt L., also, has a
friend in me. As for the Cleveland girl, she must be a big help
to her mother.

Hoping to see this in the Applause column, I remain, loyal to
Tip Top always, very truly,

AN ADMIRER.

Knoxville, Pa.

We are led to believe that you are really an ardent admirer of
the fair sex.

Reading over some of the Applauses in your Tip Top Weekly,
I came to the conclusion to write you a letter myself. I do not
write this letter for any publicity or notoriety whatever, but just
to give you the candid opinion of an old reader.

The letters from I. M. Kicking and I. A. Z. T, were written
for the sole purpose of notoriety, and the readers of your great
Weekly should take no notice whatever of them, for by doing so
they wish that a strong fire and induce other notoriety seekers
to write letters of the same order. If you will notice, none of
those fellows sign their real name, because they are ashamed
of what they have written and know it.

Mr. Kicking (?) is indeed, kicking against a stone wall when he
attacks the favorite characters of the American youth of
today.

I am of the same opinion as many of the readers that Dick has
a little the swelled head, but he is young and can soon get over
that. I am glad to see that Chet Arlington has become Dick's
friend at last. He has had all the show he is entitled to, and he,
at last, has seen the sense in taking advantage of it. Let us hear
of Buckoim Badger again? He was a very favorite character,
and you seem to have left him out altogether. Cap'n Wiley is
one of the best characters introduced into the Tip Top Weekly.
As a Southerner, I would also like to hear of Jack Diamond
again. Will we ever hear of him? Frank's friends were the
real stuff, and I hope that Dick's will be the same. Arlington
promises to be a second Bart Hodge. Dear old Bart, the strongest
character ever written of in the pages of American fiction.

As this letter is getting too long, I will now endeavor to close.
Hoping that the readers will not judge harshly of my letter and
only paying attention to such stuff as that of I. M. Kicking and
I. A. Z. T., with best wishes to Mr. Standish and Street & Smith,
I am,

WRIGHT R. WONG.

Vicksburg, Miss.

We are always glad to hear from our Mississippi friends.

I have enjoyed reading your most excellent paper, Tip Top, for
a little over two years. I read several other good papers, but I
like the "king of weeklies" best. I have never written to you
before, and I have not seen other letters from our "Evergreen
State," so I thought you might like to hear from one of your
girl friends of that place.

To read the Applause column and see how many people
differ with me as to the characters. Some, I must confess, are
not letters of praise, because such as I. M. Kicking, I. A. Z. T.
and a few others do not know their own minds when they de-
nominate such many boys as Brick Dorm, Harry D., and Dick.
I agree with Robert Robon. If I were a boy, I would
help him convince I. A. Z. T. that Inza, Dick, Bart and Brad
were "the best ever." If he should happen to meet me, perhaps I can
anyway. If I can't use my fat very well, I might say a few
things that "would not hurt at all," as Ted would say.

In No. 408 another lunatic—A Tip Topper—says that Flint
ought to be dropped out of Dick's flock, and of Frank's flock.
Harry R., and Harry D. should be left out. Why suppose he
don't know any better, so I will not waste words on him. I like
all of the characters, excepting Zona. I think Hal D. and Felicia
should love each other, Brad and June, and, last, but not least,
Doris and Dick. I think Doris the sweetest.

Hoping my letter is not too long, I will close with best wishes
to all the boys and girls and also the publishers, sincerely,
Pe Eil, Wash.

We are always glad to hear from our girl friends. These
letters are never too long for us.

Being a constant reader of Tip Top, it is with great pleasure
that I add my opinion of the characters and author of the king
of weeklies.

I have just finished reading No. 408, and I think it is fine. I
like all of Frank's flock, including Cap'n Wiley and Little Abe,
who is certainly a genius with the fiddle. Of Dick's flock, I like
Brad best with Dave Flint a close second; then I like Ted Smart,
Tubbs, Gardner, Singleton, Joliby, Darrell and Arlington. Black
is all right, too.

In No. 405 I noticed a letter signed More Anon, in which he
says Black could whip Brad. Well, he makes me sick. Then
he says Black could whip Flint. Well, what does he think of
the fight on the roof? True, it was not a fist fight, but it was
a good test of strength, in which Flint got the best of it, knocking
Black down several times.

Then, in No. 408, "A Tip Topper" denounces Harry Rattleton,
Hary Damerwurst, Black and Flint. What would Tip Top do
without these characters, and especially Flint? Of the girls,
June is my favorite, but I also like Doris. How is Felicia? I
have a sister who looks like June, and will try to get her to
write and add her own to the number of the readers wish to cor-
spond, in case I write to my address below. Hoping to see this in
print, and wishing a long and happy life to B. L. S., S. & S. and
Tip Top, I remain, sincerely yours,

JOSEPH WARNER.

417 Linwood Avenue, Buffalo, N. Y.

We hope your sister will write to us. If she is like June, she
will.
Prof. Fourmen: I am a constant reader of the Tip Top. If you will answer a few questions for me, I will be very much obliged.

My height is 5 feet 2 inches; age, 12 years; weight, 89 pounds; chest, normal, 32 inches; expanded, 37½ inches; shoulders, across, 16½ inches; waist, 28 inches; calves, 12 inches; wrists, 6½ inches; neck, 12½ inches; forearms, 9 inches; biceps, 11 inches.

Am I up to the average? I play hockey nearly every day. What do I need to exercise with? Hoping to see your answer in print, I am, sincerely yours,

F. M. E.


One-pound dumb-bells are good for a boy of your age to exercise with. You are well up to the average.

Prof. Fourmen: Having read Tip Top Weekly for a long while, I beg to ask you what you think of my build. I am just 18 years old, and stand 5 feet 1½ inches high, and weigh 152 pounds. Neck, 14½ inches; chest, 38 inches; expanded, 44 inches; chest expansion, 6 inches; waist, 32 inches; biceps, right, 14½ inches; left, 13½ inches; forearms, right, 12 inches; left, 11 inches; wrists, 7½ inches; calves, right, 16 inches; left, 15 inches.

Please let me know the quickest and best way of enlarging my chest, and greatly obliged,

E. E.

Duluth, Minn.

Your chest expansion is fine. I don't know of a lad who has a better. Your other measurements are very good. Practice deep breathing regularly, and exercise on the horizontal bar every day. When you practice deep breathing, raise your arms high above your head. You are, evidently, in fine shape to train. Try to get an eight-inch expansion.

Prof. Fourmen: As a reader of Tip Top—"the only thing on the turf to-day"—please answer my question in its columns.

What is the best exercise to develop the chest and lungs?

Respectfully,

W. T. B.

Clinton, Ill.

Deep breathing is generally considered to be one of the quickest, as well as one of the best and simplest exercises for enlarging the chest and strengthening the lungs. Extend the arms high above the head and inflate the chest, slowly, to its uttermost; then hold the breath for a pair of seconds, and then let it out, very slowly. Keep it up until tired. To attain results, one must be very regular in practicing this exercise.

Prof. Fourmen: I should like to ask two questions. I have two bunches—one on each shoulder—which I do not like. Will you kindly tell me of an exercise which will cover them up?

You would do me a great favor if you would do so.

Here are my measurements: Chest, normal, 33 inches; chest, expanded, 36½ inches; waist, 27 inches; hips, 36 inches; upper arms, 13 inches both; forearms, 11 inches both; thighs, 19 inches both; calves, 14 inches both; height, 5 feet 6 inches; weight, 140 pounds; age, 20 years. Please show me up in my weak points? I should like to know very much how to cover up those bones on my shoulders. Hoping to see this in print, I remain, yours very truly,

Constant Reader.

Exercise on the horizontal bars will round out the shoulders. Your chest is rather narrow. The rest of your measurements are fair.

Prof. Fourmen: I am a regular reader of your weeklies, so kindly answer the following few questions: My neck is 15 inches; arm, 11½ inches; forearm, 10 inches; wrist, 7 inches; chest, normal, 31 inches; expanded, 35 inches; hips, 35½ inches; thigh, 21½ inches; knee, 14½ inches; calf, 14 inches; age, 17 years; 6 months; ankle, 10 inches; weight, stripped, 156 pounds; height, 5 feet 11½ inches.

1. What do you think of my build?

2. If too thin, how can I gain flesh?

3. What muscles do you think need strengthening? Hoping to see this soon in print, and with best wishes to all the staff. I remain, yours sincerely,

Ben Victor
Norfolk, Va.

You fail to state your age, so I cannot form a very good idea of you.

You are rather light, considering your height. The best way I know of to gain weight is to take plenty of outdoor exercise, and eat properly cooked, wholesome food.

Prof. Fourmen: I would like to have you answer these questions: 1. What do you think of my measurements? Age, 20½ years; weight, 133 pounds; height, 5 feet 5 inches; chest, normal, 38 inches; expanded, 41½ inches; waist, 29 inches; girth of shoulders, 41½ inches; upper arm, normal, 11½ inches; expanded, 13½ inches; neck, 13½ inches; calf, 13½ inches; forearm, 10½ inches; thigh, 20½ inches; wrist, 6½ inches.

2. What do you think of my records? Here they are: Running broad jump, 17½ feet; standing broad jump, 9 feet 2 inches; standing high jump, 3 feet 7 inches; 440-yard dash, 65 seconds; 50-yard dash, 6 seconds; climping the bar, 18 times; climping, 18 times.

I can also put up (overhead) slowly an 80-pound bell with right hand. I have exercised about two years. Yours truly,

H. Schmidt
Bronx, New York City.

You have a good chest, and your proportions are very good. Your running broad jump is not so good as your other records. You are in splendid condition for rapid improvement.

Prof. Fourmen: Having read the Tip Top Weekly for a number of years, I take the liberty of writing a few lines to you. Being desirous of building up my body, I wish to train to that end. Having read of the new series of instruction for training,
I write to ask you a few questions concerning these articles published. As I am working, I do not have the advantages of spare time. I have a punching bag, and use it every evening. In summer, I play baseball on Sunday and after work. Wishing to start the physical culture course, I wish you to answer me these few questions: 1. Is it absolutely necessary to stop drinking coffee or tea, if it is very mild—or would Postum be better? 2. I am 17 years old, 5 feet 3½ inches in height, and as I work and cannot take walks in the afternoons, would it be good to walk to work, which is about two miles? 3. About what is the right length of time to punch the bag? 4. If coffee or tea are harmful, what else should I drink? I wrote to you once before, but failed to see an answer. Hoping to see this letter in print, I am, yours sincerely, Spokane, Wash.  

G. L.

It is best to stop drinking coffee and tea. Cocoa is a good substitute. If you find it very hard to do without coffee, it will do you no harm, if you will fill the cup half full of fresh milk to the other half of coffee.

Postum is also a very good substitute.

2. If you go to bed early and get up early and walk to your work, you will soon notice a great improvement in your condition. It will be hard at first, but the results will fully repay you, and greatly surprise you as well.

3. Punch the bag for ten minutes every morning before breakfast. You can divide the time into three-minute rounds, with a minute’s rest between.

4. Fresh milk is the healthiest thing you can drink, provided you drink it very slowly.

Prof. Fourmen: As soon as I rise in the morning I have to take papers. I walk about a mile in the morning and two miles in the evening. Will it do to take exercise after taking the papers in the morning? When should I eat, before or after taking the papers? What will develop the pitching muscles? I am bowlegged. Is there any exercise to help? I am not satisfied where I can take regular gym. Work. Will the exercise I get in the morning do me any good?

An Admirer of Flint.

I advise you not to eat breakfast until after you have delivered the papers. A mile walk is a splendid thing before breakfast; it increases one’s strength and weight. Punching the bag or exercises on the horizontal bar will develop the upper arm muscles. Stand with the feet apart and practice bringing the knees together.

Prof. Fourmen: I wish you would answer me some questions through the Tip Top department. I am 15 years old, 5 feet 2 inches, and weigh only 92 pounds. 1. How can I increase my height and weight? 2. How can I develop a good throwing arm? 3. Will you please give me a diet to follow? 4. Is it healthy to eat sweetsmeats or a large breakfast? 5. When is it best to exercise, and what should I use for my development?

Excelsior Springs, Mo.  

Montrose Boggess.

1. Plenty of regular exercise in the open air, and good, well-cooked, wholesome food will increase your weight. Your height will naturally increase as you grow older.

2. Practice with two-pound dumb-bells.

3. Drink as much fresh milk as you can, and eat corn bread or brown bread; leave white bread alone.

4. It is not healthy to eat a large breakfast.

5. Exercise on the horizontal bar three times a day.

Prof. Fourmen: I have been a reader of the Tip Top Weekly for a long time, and wish to ask a few questions of you. My measurements are as follows: Age, 18 years and 1 month old; height, 5 feet 8 inches; weight, 144 pounds; chest, 34-36 inches; neck, 14½ inches; waist, 31 inches; calf, 14½ inches; upper arms, 12-13 inches; forearms, 11 inches; wrists, 2 inches; across shoulders, 18 inches. I am not very strong. What would you advise me to do—to increase my strength? Hoping to see your opinion in your column soon, I am, very truly, Grinn, Iowa.  

A Constant Reader.

I think you need regular and systematic exercise to give you strength. Your measurements are not bad; you ought to have better than a two-inch chest expansion. Raise your hands high above your head, and practice deep breathing. Look to your diet; see that your food is pure and properly cooked.

Prof. Fourmen: Being a constant reader of Tip Top, I take the liberty of asking you a few questions in regard to myself. I am 15 years, 4 months old; height, 5 feet 7 inches; weight, 135 pounds. How are these measurements? What two-pound dumb-bells would you advise me to use? Does cocoa hurt one?

I have just finished reading your first article on physical training in No. 407 of Tip Top, and have lived up to your suggestions. Waiting patiently for the next issue of this Weekly to come out, and thanking you in advance for your advice, I am, very truly, Rider Moore & Stewart.

Trenton, N. J.

I think your weight is very good. I would advise you to use two-pound dumb-bells regularly. Cocoa can’t hurt you if you don’t drink too much of it.

Prof. Fourmen: As I have been reading the Tip Top for several years, I want to ask you to please answer a few questions for me. I am 16 years old, 5 feet 8 inches in height; chest, normal, 32 inches; expanded, 33½ inches; waist, 29 inches; neck, 14½ inches; weight, 115 pounds.

1. What can I do to broaden my shoulders and increase my weight?

2. What can I do to broaden my hips?

3. How can I increase and strengthen the muscles of my neck?

4. How can I strengthen and enlarge the muscles of my legs? They are very weak.

I would like to see answers to this in the next number. I am captain of the All Stars baseball team, and pitcher, also quarterback on a high school team. Thanking you, I still remain, very truly yours.

T. T. W.

1. Exercise on the horizontal bar regularly; practice deep breathing while holding the arms high above the head and eat well-cooked, nutritious foods.

2. Assume a squatting position, with the legs spread apart, then, balancing on one leg, by placing the fingers of one hand on the floor, raise the left leg as high as you can. Same with the right leg. Continue the movement until the muscles tire.

3. Throw the head back as far as possible, then forward, then from side to side; continue the movement until the muscles tire. Practice it regularly.

4. The movement I recommended for broadening the hips is also a most excellent exercise for strengthening the legs.

Prof. Fourmen: As I am a constant reader of the Tip Top, I would like to refer to you my measurements. I am 15 years, 7 months old, 5 feet 9 inches tall; weight, 152 pounds; chest, normal, 35 inches; chest, expanded, 36½ inches; waist, 32 inches; biceps, 14½ inches; forearms, 11½ inches; wrists, 2 inches; thighs, 21 inches; calves, 14½ inches; ankles, 9½ inches; neck, 15 inches; width from shoulder to shoulder, 18-19 inches. I am an amateur boxer, and also catch for our high school baseball team. I can lift 450 to 500 pounds with ease. 1. Please tell me what you think of my measurements? 2. What will make me quicker with my hands and my feet? As this is my first letter, please excuse length. Hoping to see this in print, with your answers and advice, I remain, yours.

F. C. L.

You are exceedingly well proportioned. Your measurements are excellent. Use a punching bag to make you quick with your hands and on your feet. Avoid lifting heavy weights, as you may rupture yourself.
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