Dick Merriwell in Mystery Valley

OR,

BURIED ALIVE IN BULLDOG TUNNEL.

By BURT L. STANDISH.

CHAPTER I.

THE MASTER OF THE VALLEY.

Clang! clang! clang!

The shaft-house bell of the Queen Mystery Mine sent its wild clamor through the startled night.

Clang! clang! clang!

Five persons at the brink of a precipice, which fell in a sheer, bare, rocky face clean to the level of the valley beneath, were electrified by the sudden ringing of that bell.

"An alarm!" cried Frank Merriwell guardedly. "Dick, they've discovered your escape."

Frank's brother, recently drawn up the face of that precipice by a long rope composed of several lariats tied together, turned from Old Joe Crowfoot, whom he had been affectionately greeting.

"Right, Frank!" he panted. "They've discovered it, and the whole valley will be aroused in a moment. Old Billy Bolivar and two guards are down at the foot of the precipice. Throw down the rope. Hurry, Arlington! Hurry, Conrad! We must pull them up at once."

Chester Arlington, who had been leaning over the brink and peering downward, now started back, regretfully crying:

"Too late! too late!"

Beneath them sounded an irregular cracking of firearms, followed by the shouts of men.

By chance the little party on the precipice were in the shadow of a huge mass of boulders, which seemed upflung in awesome Titanic outlines against the starry heavens. One and all, they peered over the precipice and downward into the valley. Beneath them they saw the red flashes of fire and the dark forms of running men. They heard old Billy Bolivar shouting loudly.

"Hold on, gents—hold on! I can't dodge bullets at night. My eyes are not good enough to see them. I've got my hands up. I surrender. Cease firing. Refrain. Be good, please."

Bolivar's companions, the two silent guards, had
dropped flat upon the ground. To old Billy it seemed that both had been shot down, and even as the armed men rushed upon him the bummer regretfully murmured:

"Too bad for the poor boys, but I guess they never knew what struck 'em, and that's better than dying slowly. I believe one of those bullets nicked a piece out of my left ear. They certainly were flying thick and singing sweetly."

"Bolivar is still alive, Frank," said Dick; "but they've got him. They're infuriated, and they may show him no mercy."

Frank placed a hand on Dick's shoulder and asked in a low, steady voice:

"We heard you talking down there before the signal came to pull you up. Who were you talking with?"

"Pinal Pete."

"That ruffian? That scoundrel? Was he there?"

"He stepped out from behind a boulder, but he made no move to interfere with us. He sent you a message, Frank. He declared he was ready for peace. He asserted that never again would he lift a hand against you."

"And lied as he spoke," said Merry indignantly. "Without doubt he expected the earlier arrival of those men who have captured Bolivar and the guards who aided you in getting away."

"Keep still," hissed Old Joe Crowfoot, who was still peering down into the shadows below. "Hark, everybody! Hear what um men say."

A clamor of voices rose to their ears. In the midst of that clamor Dick Merriwell recognized the voice of Hayden Cole, the spy who, pretending to be a consumptive, had followed Frank's party on the journey westward, wiring at intervals to Merry's enemy in the East and at the mine. Cole was fiercely ordering Bolivar to tell what had become of young Merriwell.

"Speak up and tell the truth, you miserable old bummer!" snarled the spy. "Speak lively or we'll fill you full of lead! Where's the kid?"

"I pray thee, be not so impatient," wheezed Old Billy. "Don't squeeze my windpipe. How do you expect me to talk while you're choking me black in the face?"

"I told you this old whealp was dangerous!" snarled the voice of Con Coakley. "I suggested shooting him up. It was Pete who objected. Where's Pete?"

The word came promptly like the sudden report of a pistol. Pinal Pete advanced and joined them. He had taken no part in the attack upon Bolivar and the guards, but had remained concealed near at hand until this moment.

"Were you making some remarks about me, Coakley?" he inquired, folding his arms across his breast and standing with his eyes fastened on Con.

"See what you've done, Pete!" raged Coakley fiercely. "Where's the kid? Where's the boy we held a prisoner that we might bring Frank Merriwell to terms?"

"I sure must confess my inability to answer that question, Coakley," said Pinal Pete in an unruffled manner.

"He's gone!" shouted the other. "We've got this old hobo, and we've caught Whitmark and Coleman. But what do they amount to? Where's the boy? If we've lost him, if he has escaped, how are we going to force Frank Merriwell to terms?"

"How can he escape from the valley?" asked Hyde.

"He can't get out past the boys who are guarding the entrance, can he?"

"How did this trap get into the valley?"

"He stated that he walked past the sleeping guard."

"And lied—you know he lied, Pete."

"Mebbe he did."

"How can you suspect me of such duplicity?" wheezed Old Billy, with an intonation of resentment. "Lie—William Bolivar lie? Nay, nay, my good friends. It may be that he will drink, but outside of that weakness, which harms him more than any one else, his moral character is spotless as the wings of a snow-white dove."

"Shut up!" cried Hayden Cole, striking Bolivar across the mouth with his open hand.

"Dear me!" breathed Billy, "that sets my loose tooth swinging like a pendulum. Such rudeness is wholly uncalled for."

"You've made a fine mess of it, Pete!" Coakley was snarling. "We listened to you, and this is the result."

"Yes, you listened to me," said Hyde, "and you'll listen now. I'm still master here. You're making a big howl, but the boy escaped, and it's a hundred-to-one shot that he's still somewhere in the valley. Scatter, boys, and search for him. Scour the valley from one end to the other."

"How about this man we've caught? How about Whitmark and Coleman?" demanded one of the crowd.

"Five of you will remain with me to take charge of them," said Pinal Pete. "Coakley and Cole can see that the searching of the valley is thorough. If you
catch the boy, don't hurt him unless you're forced into it. Bring him back to the cabin. We'll make sure he does not try a second break to get away."

"I've got a bullet through my left shoulder," said one of the guards. "I'm bleeding right bad, gents. Would you mind getting me to the doc?"

"Oh, don't worry," retorted one of the guards fiercely. "If you bleed to death you'll escape being lynched, and that's what's coming to both you and Coleman."

"Sure! sure!" shouted several of the irate strikers. "We'll swing the traitors. We'll let 'em dance a jig on empty air."

"Swing 'em! swing 'em!" rose the cry.

It seemed that the guards would be given short shrift, but now Pete Hyde's folded arms suddenly straightened out, and his hands brought a pair of pistols from beneath his arm-pits.

"Hold hard, boys!" he cried sharply. "Let's do this business regular. Let's go some slow. They had me foul in Caruso day before yesterday, and they would have lynched me only for Frank Merriwell. He faced 'em all, and he told 'em I was goin' to have a fair and squar' trial. Now, gents, I propose that these here three captives of ours shall have a fair and squar' trial, and when Pete Hyde makes such a proposition it goes. Get that?"

"Peter," wheezed Old Billy, "my admiration for you increases by leaps and bounds. Don't let 'em phase ye. For the love of goodness, don't. If you do, I see my finish."

Suddenly Hyde's weapons covered Coakley and Cole.

"Why are you dallying here, Con?" he smoothly asked. "You made a great rumpus about the boy getting away, but you're giving him lots of time. You, too, Cole. Both you gents take your searchers and hike—hike, I say! Get busy and look for that kid. Shooting you up any wouldn't be pleasure for me, but I'm still master in this valley, and I've never hesitated about pulling trigger if I thought it necessary."

Cole shrank back, for in his heart he feared the man. Coakley, too, was overawed, although his teeth grated together in a manner that betrayed the rage and indignation filling his soul.

"All right, Pete," he said. "Come on, boys. We'll take this end of the valley. Cole, you go t'other way."

The shadows hid the faint smile that curled Pinal Pete's lips beneath the heavy dark mustache. He chose five men to remain with him as a guard for the captives, holding himself ready for any emergency until the others of the crowd had departed, scouring the valley in search of Dick Merriwell.

And all the while Pete Hyde knew that Dick was safe at the top of the cliff which rose sheer and perpendicular close at hand.

CHAPTER II.

BILLY BOLIVAR, THE OPTIMIST.

Dick's hand closed on the arm of his brother, and in a whisper the boy asked:

"What do you think now, Frank—what do you think about Pinal Pete?"

"I must confess that my opinions concerning him are a bit upset," acknowledged Merry, also in a whisper.

"He knows the searchers cannot find me."

"That's true, but it's possible that he didn't care to confess such knowledge. Had he confessed it, Dick, he would have thus admitted he was aware that you were trying to escape and still made no move to prevent it."

"Why didn't he make such a move, Frank? He was hidden down there, and he might have shot both Whitmark and Coleman without exposing himself. His aim is deadly. He could have prevented me from escaping, but he didn't."

"We'll have to give Hyde the benefit of the doubt," decided Merry.

The searchers, having hastened away to scour the valley, Pinal Pete now took charge of the recaptured hobo and the unfortunate men who, while acting as guards over Merriwell, had permitted him to get away. This trio was led away toward the cabins which stood on the western slope of the valley. As they departed Old Billy Bolivar, apparently as light-hearted as ever, broke into song.

"Broadway, Broadway,
' Tis you our hearts hold dear!
By day or night 'tis our delight
Down your crowded paves to steer;
The rich, the poor, the sage, the boor,
The tramp, the soubrette gay,
Will all declare no street so fair
As dear old Broadway."

" Shut up, you old fool!" cried one of the men.

"According to the Good Book," said Billy, "he who calleth his brother a fool is in danger of hell-fire. Be careful, my friend, be careful."

"You talk too much," said Pinal Pete, giving Bolivar a look.
"Strange how inconsistent human nature is," sighed Billy. "Yesterday, when you found me strolling within the fortified confines of your golden valley and questioned me as to my mode of ingress, some of you were feign to proclaim that I did not talk enough. But this world is made up of incongruities and inconsistencies."

"You don't seem to realize," said one of the men, "that the boys are almost certain to lynch you within an hour. They're a whole lot wrought up, and I wouldn't be in your clothes for all the gold there is in this valley."

"Friend," returned Bolivar, "I'm a fatalist. It is my fixed belief that no man passes from this mundane sphere to the great beyond until his hour arrives. When that time comes, no earthly power can save him. Being Gibraltar-rocked in such a conviction, I have never worried about the time, the place, or the style of my demise. Such a belief tends to placidity, optimism, and constant freedom from worryment. I never worry. If I'm to be hanged I won't be drowned, and vice versa."

"He doesn't know enough to be frightened," declared another of the men.

"Indeed, you are in error, my unenlightened one. I know too much to be frightened. It is only the ignorant and the superstitious who fear the unknown future."

"What became of the boy who was with you?"

"The last I saw of him he was floating upward into ethereal air as lightly as a feather is borne upon a zephyr. Wings he possessed not, yet were it my dying assertion I would still maintain that I saw him rise from earth and mount heavenward."

"Aw, what's the use, McNally?" snapped a disgusted striker. "It's impossible to get sense out of an idiot."

Back to the cabin, where he had been confined a short time before, Bolivar was escorted. But now, instead of Dick Merriwell as a fellow-prisoner, Old Billy had Whitmark and Coleman, the former seriously wounded and weak from loss of blood.

The doctor soon came and probed for the bullet in Whitmark's shoulder. He found the piece of lead and extricated it, after which the wound was dressed.

"It's likely you're wasting time on me, doc," said Whitmark, who had made no murmur during the probing for the bullet. "Maybe the boys will swing Coleman and me."

"Maybe so," muttered Coleman, who was nervously pacing the floor. "Still, I know a lot of 'em have read and discussed Frank Merriwell's bulletin, and they're not all united against him. If he could get into the valley with the men he has outside, he'd take care of us. I worked under Merriwell when he owned this mine, and he treated his men white. It was only after the new company got possession of the property that trouble arose. I'm not ready to be lynched, and by blazes I'll fight for my life."

Old Billy Bolivar had found a greasy pack of cards and seated himself at a table on which a lamp burned. He was playing Canfield with an air of comfortable serenity.

"I am going to hit Richard hard this time," he murmured. "If I had a stake—a mere pittance, say five hundred thousand dollars—I'd like to go up against this game in Canfield's gilded gambling-palace. Bet you I'd have him going some before he got my five hundred thousand. Sit down, partner. Cease this restless pacing. What is to be will be, and you can't help it by wiggling. Have you got any loose cash in your jeans? If you have, I'll play you poker, pincush, or seven-up till one of us gets broke or till they take us out to hang us."

"Curse cards!" snarled Coleman. "Only for cards I'd not be here to-night. Twice I've had my own mine-claims. Twice I've owned property that was worth a fortune. Both times I've lost everything by cards."

Bolivar looked at him sympathetically. "I blame you not for your anathema upon the pasteboards. Evidently they did for you what John Barleycorn did for me. Only for drink I'd not be here myself. And, by the way, I'm deuced thirsty this very moment. I say, doc, you don't happen to have a flask upon your person, do you? A drink or two, or three or more, would revive my drooping spirits in a wonderful manner."

The doctor replied that he had no liquor, and Old Billy looked sorely disappointed.

"There's plenty of it here!" cried Coleman. "They've kept the boys supplied with it since the strike started. Time was when no man could get liquor in Mystery Valley. That was when Frank Merriwell controlled the property. I know lots of boys who came here to get away from the stuff. It was as good as a sanitarium. Merriwell is a white man, and I hope to Heaven he beats these scoundrels he's up against."

"Pal," exclaimed Bolivar, "place your lily-white hand in mine and permit me to give it a congratulatory clasp. I have hoped that I might survive until the pack of cards."

"There's an obstacle."

"Some encouragement there for us, I suppose."

"Thank God for the law, anyhow."

"It's an improvement, I suppose."

"If you should see that man at the gate."
CHAPTER III.

IN THE SHADOW OF THE ROPE.

Finally it seemed that the searchers were giving up and returning, for many of them could be heard talking outside. At the door Coleman listened, bending his ear to the crack. His face was pale and set.

"Boys," he said, "they're planning to take us out. Our time draws near."

"And I'm seven hundred and thirty-nine dollars ahead of Canfield," said Old Billy exultantly. "Luck is with me."

"Luck with you!" sneered Coleman. "Perhaps you'll think differently when they have you under a tree with a rope round your neck."

"They won't hang me to-night," asserted the hobo confidently. "My luck is too good."

The sound of voices grew louder. There was no wrangling, however, for the men seemed united in their purpose.

Suddenly Coleman leaped back, a look of terror in his eyes.

"They're coming!" he hissed.

There was the rushing tread of feet. The door was torn open, and into that room surged a crowd of desperate-looking men, among whom were many foreigners. They were led by Con Coakley. Several of them carried ropes.

"We're going to swing you, boys," said Coakley.

"Hold on," protested Bolivar, lifting his hand demonstratively. "I've got Canfield going again. I'm going to skin him once more. This will put me pretty near a thousand dollars to the good."

"What's the infernal old fool talking about?" cried one of the crowd.

"Perchance," said Billy, "you have never played this most fascinating and amusing game of solitaire. If such is the case you've missed a great deal of entertainment for your lonely hours. Didst ever hear of Richard Canfield, the slick gentleman who has skinned a lot of light-hearted Eastern nabobs to the bone? He invented this game, and it's a bird. Stand round the table, gentlemen, and I will show you how it's played."

But now Old Billy was seized and yanked to his feet in spite of his protests. Coleman, true to his word, fought like a fiend until overcome by numbers. Whitmark rose resignedly from the bunk and made no resistance whatever.

They hustled the trio out beneath the stars.

"Lively, gents," commanded Coakley. "Pete may get back from the mouth of the valley any time. We don't want any interference."

Straight toward a tree they hastened, and soon the loose ends of the ropes were flung over stout limbs.

"I would that you could be induced to dally a while," said Bolivar. "Gentlemen, I regret to say that in my thoughtlessness I have not yet made my will. I would name several beneficiaries. For instance, there is poor old Johnny Rockefeller. I feel that I should leave him a small midicum of my fortune, say ten or twelve million dollars. And then that other indigent gentleman, J. P. Morgan. I can't forget him. He needs the coin, and I would mention him to the amount of some twenty millions."

"For Heaven's sake, shut up!" cried Coakley. "Can you jest in the face of death? They're going to hang us! You don't seem to realize it."

"Indeed I do," retorted Old Billy. "I'll be hanged if I don't."

"What you've got to say, boys, you want to say quick!" cried one of the men.

"All right," said Coleman, and his voice trembled the least bit. "Let me have my say, and then go ahead. I've worked with you men shoulder to shoulder. I've never harmed one of you. Perhaps I've worked here in the Queen Mystery longer than any
man present. I worked under Merriwell when he controlled the mine, and I want to say that he was white then, and I believe he's white now. Instead of being the enemy of the laboring man, he's the laborer's friend, and you boys are fighting your friend. You're being fooled by——"

"That's enough!" snarled Coakley. "Pull away, boys! pull away!"

"Stop!" cried another voice. "Let Mark have his say out. It won't do no hurt to listen."

"That's right! that's right!" cried still others.

And so, in spite of Coakley, they permitted Coleman to continue.

"You're being deceived by your enemies, pards," said Coleman. "At the very start the strike was instigated by the men in control of these mines. It's true. They did it in order to manipulate the stock upon the stock market. They did it in order to freeze out Frank Merriwell, who held a big block of that stock, but they made a mistake in their calculations, for they were not aware that there was restlessness and dissent among the laborers here. They did not dream when they started that fake strike that it would soon become the real thing. Instead of squeezing Merriwell, he stole a march on them, took them by surprise, and, backed by certain capitalists, he did the squeezing. You've seen his bulletin, boys, and some of you have read it. He stated the truth in that. Those very men who started this strike and afterward tried to check it are now anxious that it should continue. They're fighting Merriwell, and at the same time they're injuring every man of you. Let Frank Merriwell get possession of this property and he'll give you what you ask here—he'll give you your rights. I'll guarantee it."

"How can you guarantee anything?" sneered Coakley.

"The men who started the trouble in the first place no longer have lawful control of this property," Coleman continued, utterly ignoring Coakley. "It's Merriwell who holds the balance of power, and that's why you're determined to crush him. If you let them fool you, they'll lead you into destroying the shaft-house, the mill, the smelter—they'll lead you into putting the mine out of commission. Then where'll you be? If the mine is forced to shut down, who'll be hurt most? You, men—you! Right among you at this moment are sneaks and spies and traitors. They're urging you on. They're urging you to Lynch us. To-morrow, or at some future date, you'll regret your act—you'll realize how you were fooled. Why not demand a proposition of terms from Frank Merriwell? Why not listen to what he'll offer? If he will give you what you demand, you have nothing more to fight for."

"That's right, that's right," muttered several of the men.

"It's eloquence, logic, and truth combined," said Old Billy Bolivar. "Keep it up, Coleman, old pal, and it wouldn't surprise me any to find myself finishing that game of Canfield twenty minutes hence."

But now Coakley grew suddenly excited, for the regular, rhythmical beat of horses' hoofs came floating to his ears.

"Don't be fooled, boys!" he shouted. "Up with 'em! Swing 'em!"

Several men tried to pull at the ropes, but there was a division of sentiment, and others interfered.

"Give us time," appealed Coleman. "If I'm not right, if you find I'm wrong, I'll ask nothing more from your hands. Give us a little time."

Coakley raged and swore, but he was no longer dominant over the men, and, cursing bitterly, he saw three horsemen approaching.

"What's doing here?" rang out the voice of Pinal Pete, who was the leader of the horsemen.

With Pete was Major Golash and a huge, red-faced man, who puffed asthmatically as he dismounted from the saddle.

"Yes, what's doing here?" demanded this man.

"Mr. Blood!" cried Coakley in astonishment.

CHAPTER IV.

BLOOD MAKES A SPEECH.

J. Bradbury Blood, Frank Merriwell's most bitter enemy in the fight for the control of Pablo-Mystery Consolidated, had reached Carujo two days behind Merry. There he had found Pete Amboy, who gave him a full account of recent happenings. Blood grew apocalyptically violent in his language as he listened to the story, of Merriwell's complete conquest of Pinal Pete the "bad man" employed to turn him from his purpose or kill him. That Pete Hyde still lived few in Carujo dreamed. It was supposed that his body had been quietly removed from the Grand Hotel by his friends.

After hearing all Amboy had to tell and learning that Merriwell and Douglas, with a body of armed men, were besieging Mystery Valley, Blood soon formed his plans. That night, in company with Ma-
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Joker Golash, who acted as his guide, the chief rascal rode out of Cañizo and set forth for the mine.

Amboy was left behind, with instruction to gather a party of paid men for the purpose of harassing Merriwell by rear attacks.

Toward morning Major Golash and his companion approached the mouth of the valley. At a distance they beheld two or three small camp-fires twinkling on the plain, and knew these fires marked the bivouac of Merriwell's forces.

Hugging the shadows and moving cautiously, the two men succeeded in approaching the entrance to the valley without being observed by the besiegers. They were challenged, and responded promptly with a signal that was recognized by the guards.

It happened that Pinal Pete was on hand, and at sight of him with the bandage about his head Major Golash came near having a fit. Over and over the major informed Hyde that he was a dead man, or he should be if such was not the case.

And now the trio had arrived in time to discover, as morning blushed in the east, a great mob of excited and wrangling miners who had three men beneath a tree with ropes about their necks.

Swearing softly, yet with a certain suppressed fierceness, Pete Hyde charged through the scattering crowd and leaped to the ground beneath that tree, facing Coakley and Cole.

"I'll be some pleased, gents," he said, "if you'll kindly inform me who gave you authority to hang anybody hereabouts. While Amboy is away, I sure reckon I'm running things around here, and if there's any hanging to be done, I'll take charge of it myself."

"I've listened to the music of all the great composers, from Wagner down to Reginald de Koven," murmured Old Billy Bolivar, "but never before have I heard anything so sweet to my ears. Methinks I'll soon return to my little game of solitaire, and I fain would be content to do so."

"These men are spies and traitors!" rasped Coakley.

"Who gave you power to sentence and execute spies and traitors?" demanded Pinal Pete, his hands resting lightly on his hips, while his eyes bored into Coakley.

"What in blazes is the matter with you, Hyde?" cried Con. "You certain seem a lot anxious to interfere in everything. Any one wouldn't reckon that you're getting yours for fighting Frank Merriwell."

"Mebbe I'd swung these galoots long ago if you hadn't seemed so mighty anxious to get the job done, Coakley," said Pete, with a challenge and an insult combined in his voice and manner. "Whenever I am running things, I never permit gents of your caliber to butt in and take charge. There won't be any hanging now, and I judge you hear me talk."

"If my arms were at liberty," said Old Billy, "I'd be tempted to clasp you in a fond embrace, Peter."

"Hyde is right," wheezed J. Bradbury Blood. "We can't afford to have quarrels and dissensions among ourselves."

At this there was a sudden murmuring among the men, and one boldly cried:

"Who are you that you come here and tell us what we can't afford to do? You're one of the company, ain't yer?"

The light in the eastern sky was growing and spreading. The rosy glow faded to a faint pink, and shafts of gold shot up toward the zenith. In a few moments the sun would rise.

"Gentlemen," said Blood, "I'm here to clear up this tangle and straighten out the misunderstanding between you and the officers of the company. If you'll listen to what I have to say, you'll soon realize that there is no cause for any misunderstanding."

"They'll sure listen, Mr. Blood," said Pete, as he removed the ropes from the necks of the threatened men with his own hands.

"Yes, go ahead," invited one of the miners. "We'll hear what you have to say."

"That's right! that's right!" cried others. "It won't hurt us none."

Blood cleared his throat and began:

"From the very first it has been a misunderstanding, but it was brought about with malice by a man who cares nothing for the laborers here, and who was working to accomplish his own selfish ends. You have asked certain concessions from the company, such as an advance of wages and a shortening of the working-hours by shifts. The officers of the company had your demands under consideration and were on the point of making concessions when the strike began. I'm told that you were informed that the company refused to do anything. Such is not the truth. That malicious lie emanated from this man whom I call your enemy and the company's enemy. This man planned to get possession and control of Pablo-Mystery Consolidated. In order to do so, he plotted to depress the price of the stock in the market. He was backed by a set of unscrupulous men who possessed millions of money stolen from the people, wrested and ground from the laborers. Naturally the report..."
that a strike had occurred here at the mine must cause the price of the shares to fall, and thus plotters would be able to buy in the stock. That was their game, and they carried it through. They had no thought of right or wrong as far as you, the laborers here, were concerned."

"Who's the man? Who's the man?" cried several.

"I have no hesitation about naming him," declared Blood instantly. "That man was Frank Merriwell. Some of you may have been led to fancy him a square man and just. I could tell you many things about him that would open your eyes. I could go back to his original stealing of the San Pablo Mine in Mexico. My friend, he wrested that mine from the rightful owners whom he ruthlessly impoverished and brutally crushed beneath his iron heel. The title of the Queen Mystery Mine was likewise disputed, but, with the assistance of bribery and rotten crookedness, he swayed the very courts and gobbled up everything. Think of it, men. This man is yet less than thirty years of age, and he is reputed to be the possessor of millions. Your intellect must tell you that such a young man could not become thus fabulously wealthy in an honorable manner.

"Some months ago a combination of capitalists approached Mr. Merriwell and made him a proposition. They proposed to consolidate the two mines under one management, capitalize the consolidation for an amount sufficient to equip everything in a modern, up-to-date manner, and operate on a broad plan. Merriwell drove a hard bargain with them. He raised a fancy sum in cold cash and retained a large block of the Pablo-Mystery Stock. But as he was not chosen to office in the new organization, it was fancied he would permit the company to conduct its business as it saw fit.

"Now what happened? After getting that money and the stock, this Merriwell began scheming and planning in secret to knife the company and regain control of the mines. He entered into collusion with Wyman Barring, a noted financier who has made his millions by crushing the laborer. Those men, through trickery and false representation and dastardly lies, started the strike here at the Queen Mystery. It was not their intention, however, to let that strike get beyond their control. They started it for effect in depressing the price of Pablo-Mystery Stock, and I regret to say they accomplished their purpose. The stock slumped, and these rascals jumped in and bought all they could get of it. Then, when they believed they had secured enough to give them control, they sent a body of armed men under Douglas Saunders to shoot down the very men they had incited to go on strike. Think of that, gentlemen—think of it! It should make your blood boil in your veins. You were led to strike through the lies of this man, who afterward sent armed butchers to murder you. Fortunately you were prepared to meet such an attack, and that bloody scheme proved a miserable fizzle.

"Now, men, even though these schemers have secured much of the Pablo-Mystery Stock, the old company is still in the ring and ready to fight to the finish. The rightful officers of the company have retained their positions, for it chanced that Mr. Merriwell's backers notified him that they could not come out openly as concerned in the dirty game until this strike was terminated and things were straightened out. I am one of the board of officers. I have been sent here by the board to represent it. I've been sent here to tell you the truth. I'm not trying any oratorical tricks. I'm not talking for effect. I'm giving you plain, cold, hard facts. I'm authorized by the company to notify you that every demand you have made will be conceded when this fight is finished and Frank Merriwell is defeated.

"The only way to get your rights is to fight him. If you yield, if you permit him to secure possession of this property, what will happen to you? You know what happened in Colorado. Perhaps some of you—perhaps more than one who is listening to my words has seen the inside of the bull-pen. Perhaps many of you were deported from the State of Colorado. Don't forget what occurred at Telluride. Why did Frank Merriwell send armed men to shoot you down? Why didn't he send unarmed men to confer with you and seek to arrange a compromise? Because, men—because he is of the same sort as the Colorado mine-owners, and he believes the only way to keep a working man in submission is to terrorize him; to rob him, to deprive him of his just dues, the fruit of his labors.

"This is not the course that will be pursued by the company that was organized to operate Pablo-Mystery Consolidated. Every just demand of the laborers will be taken into consideration, and, whenever possible, those demands will be granted. If any demand seems extravagant, the company will arbitrate. Merriwell himself, with a body of armed ruffians, is now besieging this valley. If you let those men get in here, it means ruin for the company and bitter punishment for the leaders in this strike. It means that every Federation man here will be deported. If you hold
Merriwell in check long enough, I'm certain we can bring him to terms. It's up to you, men. I have had my say, and you have listened. I thank you."

That the words of Blood had produced an effect was indicated by the cheer that rose from the assembled miners.

But among those miners were many who did not cheer, for, in spite of everything, they were unwilling to believe Frank Merriwell as black as painted.

CHAPTER V.

FOUR RASCALS.

"If I linger here," mused Old Billy Bolivar to himself at the beginning of the speech of J. Bradbury Blood, "I shall certainly get into a heated argument with that gent. Perhaps I may be led into making some indiscreet remarks. I think I'll take a stroll."

The miners were so deeply interested in Blood's talk that they failed to pay any heed to Old Billy, who slowly edged his way out of the crowd and paused uncertainly upon the outskirts.

"Just about the hour for my morning eye-opener," mused the tramp. "Dawn is blushing in the east like a maiden awakening from sweet dreams, and within me I feel an ardent longing for something stimulating. I'm likewise hungry. Yonder building must be the boarding-house. Wonder if I couldn't find something there in the way of sustenance. Even hardtack and bacon would do, and I would gather unto myself a dozen hard-boiled eggs with a quart of glee. I think I'll snooze around a bit while the asthmatic gent with the apoplectic countenance is rating."

No one seemed to notice Old Billy as he coily sauntered away toward the boarding-house.

When Blood had finished his speech he was congratulated by many of the strikers.

Final Pete took charge of Whitmark and Coleman, and marched them off to the cabin from which they had been dragged by the would-be Lynchers.

Bolivar was missed, and men were sent to look him up. There seemed no reason to believe that the old bum could escape from the valley in broad daylight.

Less than an hour later four men entered a private room in the boarding-house. It was the room of Superintendent Pit Amboy, who had been using it as his office since the blowing-up of the regular office-building. Amboy also slept there, and there was a bed in the room.

"Great speech, suh—great," Major Golash was saying, as the four men entered that room. "I congratulate you, Mr. Blood. You've certainly got the boys with you now."

"I reckon that's right," agreed Coakley; "but I was some surprised when I saw you show up, Mr. Blood. I couldn't figure it out how you were going to fix it with the boys. It looked to me a whole lot as if you were running your neck into trouble."

"I told you he was on his way here," said Cole. "How did you fix it about your bail, Mr. Blood?"

The huge man settled himself on a chair, which cracked a bit beneath his weight, and laughed until his sides shook.

"Didn't bother about bail, Cole," he answered. "Do you mean you jumped it?"

"Well, call it that, if you like. I couldn't stay in the jurisdiction of the court while things were going wrong here, and, as I knew I couldn't get permission to come here, I simply came. Perhaps my bondsmen are disturbed over it, but I can't help that."

"Are you going back, sir?"

"Not unless I get this Merriwell where I want him," wheezed Blood. "Not unless I bring him to terms. I've got to get him foul somehow, for he's the only man that can close the mouth of that woman whose testimony I fear."

"This Merriwell seems a tough sort of a fighter, Mr. Blood," said Cole. "I didn't think it was in him. On my word, I believe he has Pete Hyde buffaloed. I fear Hyde is afraid of him."

"Curse Hyde!" cried Coakley fiercely. "He's made no end of trouble. I don't understand him. Since he got that bullet in the head he seems changed completely. It wouldn't surprise me any if he quit us and went over to Merriwell."

"I don't believe he'll do that, Con," said Cole. "He's irritated because you've attempted to do some things without consulting him. That's what ails Pete."

"Maybe so."

"Gentlemen, gentlemen," said the major, "I must remind you that we were invited here to partake of a drink. I need it."

"And I need it, too," rumbled Blood. "That ride from Caruso shook me up terrifically. Where's the whisky; Coakley?"

"Amboy always keeps something for his own use,"
explained Coakley. "I reckon I know where to find it."

He swept aside a skin rug with his booted foot and seized a ring-bolt that lay in the floor. A pull at this ring-bolt lifted a small square section of the flooring, from beneath which Coakley brought forth a five-gallon jug.

"Here it is," he announced, "and by the weight I should say it's pretty well filled."

The eyes of Major Golash glittered, and his fiery whiskers seemed to bristle with anticipation.

"Ah-ha!" he cried, rubbing his hands briskly. "I had begun to fear that we would be disappointed. Where are the glasses?"

Coakley opened the door of a small hanging cupboard and brought out some glasses.

"And the water?" suggested Cole.

"Water?" squawked Major Golash, looking at him in astonishment. "Water! What are you going to do with water? Do you always wash your hands before you take a drink?"

"I like water as a chaser," said Cole. "What do you drink as a chaser for whisky, major?"

"I usually drink a little more whisky," said Golash. "For goodness' sake, gentlemen, do hurry up and pour the reeeyey被淘汰! Every moment I'm suffering excruciatingly from the increasing torments of a large, healthy thirst."

"Go ahead, major," said Blood. "Don't let us delay you. Perhaps you are entitled to the first drink, anyhow. You brought me here from Caruzo without the trouble I anticipated."

The glasses were filled and passed round.

"Well, here's success!" cried Coakley.

"Success to us and failure for Frank Merriwell," nodded Cole.

"Down she goes," chirped the major.

The little man opened his mouth wide, threw back his head, and actually flung the entire contents of his glass down his throat without any apparent effort to swallow.

"Just another thimbleful," he chirped, as he seized the jug and refilled the glass. "I've got to have my chaser."

Cole was gasping and choking over the fiery whisky. As soon as he could get his breath he regarded Major Golash with an expression of wonderment.

"You must have a copper-lined tank!" he panted.

"Why, major, you never blinked."

"Blinked?" said Golash, in a puzzled way.

"Blinked? Over what? Why, sue, I hope you don't think I would turn up my nose at good whisky, do you?"

Coakley seated himself on the bed, with Cole nearby in a chair. The major placed the jug close by his elbow upon the table and drew his chair as near as possible.

"I'm glad Hyde didn't insist on butting into this party," said Coakley. "Gentlemen, I propose that whatever passes between us shall be maintained as a secret. Hyde must not be told anything. I may be wrong in suspecting him, but there's no need of taking chances."

"Such precautions are wise," nodded J. Bradbury Blood.

"Indeed they are," agreed Golash. "Besides, if we'd brought him along, we'd had to give him a part of the whisky."

"What are your plans, Mr. Blood?" asked Coakley.

"I'm for preparations to destroy every dollar's worth of this property that can be destroyed, in case we're driven to it," said Blood. "I believe in arranging explosives in the smelter, the mill, the shaft-houses, and laying wires so that everything can be blown sky high at the touch of the button. When this work is done, we'll notify Mr. Merriwell. We'll tell him that unless he comes to terms he'll find the property wrecked. Of course, the mine will be here. We can't wipe that out."

"But we can throw some dynamite into the shafts," suggested Coakley.

"I'm likewise for having it so arranged that this building and the miners' houses can all be set afire in the briefest possible time. If we plan the work properly we can execute it in less than fifteen minutes in a crisis."

"But you can't really mean to destroy the property in that manner, Mr. Blood," said Cole.

"Can't I?"

"It doesn't seem possible. You're one of the Pablo-Mystery Consolidated officers, and——"

"And Frank Merriwell and his crowd have possession of stock enough to take control of everything," said Blood. "The fellow beat us in the market. It's a humiliating confession to make, but I am compelled to make it. Somehow he learned in advance all about our plans, and that gave him the chance to outgeneral us."

"Too bad, too bad," said the major. "I feel so bad about it that I'm driven to drink once more. Gents, will you join me?"
Again they drank, the major tossing off his liquor as before, and following it with a second glass as a "chaser."

"But where do we come in—Amboy, Coakley, the major, and myself—if this property is destroyed and the fight against Merriwell is lost?" asked Cole.

"You've been well paid already for everything you've done, haven't you?" asked Blood.

"Oh, yes, but——"

"You'll be paid in future if you stick by me. I give you my word on that."

Cole looked a trifle doubtful.

"According to your own statement, you're going to be pretty well done up if the worst happens," he said. "Already you've been compelled to jump your bail in New York. If your bondsmen get busy and seek to retake you, there's no telling what will happen."

"They'll never take me back there unless I succeed in bringing Merriwell to terms," asserted Blood huskily. "I've made up my mind to that. If I fail, it's over the line into Mexico for me. But I'm not going to fail. When Merriwell realizes what he's up against, when he receives his ultimatum from me and knows this property will be destroyed unless he comes to terms, it's my opinion he'll lay down in a hurry."

"Perhaps so," admitted Cole, "but you never can tell about him."

"Well, I'm hungry," declared Coakley, "and it's time for breakfast."

"I'm hungry myself," said Blood. "Come, gentlemen, let's have breakfast."

"But before we go," piped the major, "let's have just one more thimbleful."

A few moments later they file out of that room, having restored the jug to its hiding-place beneath the floor.

CHAPTER VI.

BILLY BOLIVAR'S MASTER.

In less than a minute after their departure there was a rustling sound beneath the bed. Something moved squirmingly, and the eyes of Old Billy Bolivar peered forth.

"Did ever condemned spirit in the realms of Hades suffer such tortures as I've endured?" groaned the bobo as he hastily crawled forth. "Had barely time to get under this bed when I heard them coming. And then to lie there while they depleted the contents of that jug—to lie there while that two-faced little runt with the gorgeous Burnside whiskers turned good red liquor down his throat like pouring water into a rat-hole—merciful goodness, it was awful! Let me get at that jug!"

With trembling hands he seized the ring-bolt and opened the trap in the floor. In another moment he had the jug. It was quickly uncorked, and, giving it a fling over his arm, the bobo applied his lips to the nozzle and tipped the bottom of the jug ceilingward. His eyes were closed and there was a happy, peaceful look upon his face as the liquor gurgled down his throat. It seemed that Old Billy meant to empty the jug, but after a time he lowered it and drew a long, deep breath.

"There," he said, "now I'm ready for any old thing. With a drink like that under my belt, I can face the world undaunted. Yet it has been truly said that wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging, and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise. This is the stuff that makes men fancy themselves millionaires and keeps them paupers. Take William Bolivar, Esq., for example. Only for booze he might be to-day a decent, respectable, honored citizen. Booze has made him a wretched old bum, worthless to the world and useless to himself. Once let the stuff get its grip on a man and unless he has the iron will of a conqueror he's a gone case. I know how it is, for I've tried to swear off a hundred times. I've quit that. No use. Too late. If I couldn't stop when I had some of my manhood left, how am I going to stop now?"

"Stop—I don't want to stop! Sometimes they'll find me dead in the gutter. They'll bury me in the paupers' lot. They'll erect no headstone above me, and they'll strew no flowers on my grave. No one will waste a tear over Old Billy Bolivar, the bum. At least, I have one satisfaction: I won't cause a great deal of grief when I go up the flue. I won't leave a lot of broken hearts behind me."

"Broken hearts? I've broken enough already. All that is past and gone. Where are the friends I knew years ago? Do they ever think of me now? Not likely. If they do, they probably think I'm under the sod long ago. I wonder if they don't think of me. I wonder if any of the boys ever think of good old Bill, who used to drink his wine with the rest of the bunch; who used to keep it up all night long; who used to sing and hit the high places and live a merry life. Sometimes one of the boys may run across another, and while they're reminiscing perhaps they'll speak of good old Bill. Perhaps they'll tell each other
that he wasn't such a bad sort, after all. Perhaps they'll recall some night at Morey's, or the club, or some other place where we were gay as larks till morning came.

"That was a long, long time ago. I was a good fellow then, but I broke my mother's heart. Well, I tried to brace up. I did my best. Didn't I fight against the appetite like the very devil? But it wasn't any use. Sometimes I thought I had it conquered, and then some good fellow would come along and slap me on the shoulder and say, 'Come on, Bill, have a drink with me,' and it was too much. I couldn't say no. The man who can't say no isn't any use in this world—not a bit. Now look a' here. Here's this booze. If I could say no now, it would be a sign that there was a spark of the real man left in me."

Slowly, as if struggling fiercely with himself, Old Billy reached out and placed the jug upon the table. Then he stood off and regarded it contemptuously.

"You vilest of all things," he whispered, "you destroyer of manhood, you wrecker of homes, you heartless, soulless, bloodthirsty devil in liquid form! You got the best of me, didn't you? You made a wreck and a bummer of a chap who might have been a man, didn't you? You were pleased over it, weren't you?"

"Oh, I've heard you laughing as you gurgled down my throat. Curses on you, how I hate you—how I love you! I swear I believe you're laughing at me now. You call yourself my master. You think you own me, don't you? Now, look here, you devil, I'm going to fool you once. If I stick by you, you'll put me down and out. I'm going to leave you right where you are, for I've business on hand. I've got a little information to carry to a gentleman by the name of Merriwell. If I stick by you, I'll get jagged and forget all about that. So this time I'm going to show you that I've got strength enough to leave you right where you are, Mr. Whisky. I must get to Merriwell as soon as I can. Yes, I'm going. Good-by. This time I'm strong enough to quit you."

Slowly he backed away, shaking his fist in defiance at the jug. Finally, with a last triumphant gesture, he turned toward the door.

With his hand on the latch he paused.

"If I leave it," he whispered, "that little runt with the red whiskers will come back and drink it all up. It's a shame to have a thing like that drink up good whisky. I can't stand for that. I'll take it along with me, but I won't take another drink until I've found Merriwell."

Returning quickly to the table, he snatched up the jug, hissing fiercely:

"Oh, yes, I'm going to take you along, but not a drop will I drink until I've told Merriwell everything. Slop and gurgle if you want to. You can't tempt me. I'll show you that I've got a little strength left. I'll show you that there's a bit of a man left in Old Billy Bolivar."

Two hours later the hobo was found dead drunk in the shadow of the boarding-house, with the jug clasped tightly in his arms.

Whisky was still master of Old Bill Bolivar.

CHAPTER VII.

THE MASKED MEXICAN.

All that day there was a great amount of hustle and bustle in Mystery Valley. Having discovered that the windows of Amboy's room in the boarding-house commanded a view of the greater part of the valley, J. Bradbury Blood took possession of that room as his headquarters, and throughout the most of the day he sat there smoking his black cigars, consulting with Coakley, Cole, or some of their assistants, and occasionally giving orders and urging that all possible haste should be made to complete the work in hand.

What was that work? Electricians were busy stretching wires from various parts of the valley toward that very room in one corner of the big boarding-house where sat J. Bradbury Blood. Every man who could give the electricians assistance had been ordered to take part in the work. At the powerhouse they were preparing to start up. Shortly after midday two electricians entered the room occupied by Blood and began work there. The terminals of the wires were brought through a hole in the wall and secured. Then a switch was installed and attached to the terminals.

Major Golash had hobbed about here and there, watching the work. At length he settled down with Blood in that room, the windows of which were now flung wide open to admit fresh air.

"Will you have a drink, major?" invited Blood.

The little man made one great electrified leap and landed on his feet, fully a yard and a half from his chair.

"Will I?" he cried. "Will I? Why, I've actually been tearing this old valley up in search of something. Have you got anything, Blood?"

"Oh, yes," was the answer.
“What have you?”
“A little whisky.”
“Where did you get it? I thought that drunken hobo got away with everything.”

“Why, the jug was still half-full when they found him with it clasped in his arms,” said Blood. “I’ve had five drinks from that same jug myself since it was recovered.”

“Five? Five drinks?” squealed Major Golash wildly. “And you never told me! You never told me anything about it! I supposed this whole valley was depleted of whisky. I supposed it was dry as the Desert of Sahara. Here I’ve been cracking open for a drink, while you sat all by your lonesome and lapped up good whisky. That’s not hospitable, Mr. Blood. That’s not cordial and generous. Oh, merciful goodness! where is the stuff?”

“Here,” said J. Bradbury Blood, as he pulled the jug out from the corner. “There’s a little left, I think. Help yourself, major.”

“A little left! Let me get at it. My goodness, what a lifesaver!”

As the major was drinking, Blood explained that he thought it a good plan to give out the impression that the hobo had drained the jug.

“You see, if some of the men knew there was whisky, they’d be discontented unless they could get a drink.”

A horseman approached one of the open windows and drew rein. His trappings were gaudy, and the tinkling of tiny silver bells mingled with the jangling sound of his spurs as he galloped up. He was a Mexican, and dressed from head to heels like a dandy. With a sweep, he removed his peaked hat and bowed toward Blood.

“Señor,” he said, “the lines to the True Blue and Stroke Oar shafts are completed. Likewise the one to Bulldog Tunnel. Everything is also fixed at the mill.”

The Mexican wore a black mask, which entirely concealed his face from forehead to chin. Through the mask at the mouth there was an opening, and even as he finished speaking he inserted a cigarette and drew a long, deep whiff.

“All right, Dominico,” grunted Blood. “How about the line to the smelter?”

“It will be completed before dark, señor.”

“And the power-house—will they get the power on to-day?”

“They are firing up now, señor. The power will be ready by the time the wires are run and connected.”

“All right, Dominico. Tell Coakley to keep things moving.”

Blood dismissed the Mexican with a wave of his pudgy hand.

Dominico’s knee pressed the side of his horse, and the animal wheeled sharply. The Mexican clapped his hat upon his head and went tearing away down the valley like a madman.

“Huh!” grunted Major Golash, “he’s a good rider, Blood. But why the devil does he wear that thing over his face?”

“All I know about it is what Coakley tells me, major. He says Dominico was marked at birth in a manner that made his face hideous. The fellow is naturally proud and dandified. He wears the mask constantly, and no man here has ever seen his face.”

“Yeah! these greasers make me sick, anyhow,” snorted the major. “I think I’ll have another drink. What do you hear from Merriwell?”

“Not much.”

“He’s still outside the valley, isn’t he?”

“Oh, yes, he’s out there.”

“Queer he hasn’t made any kind of a move, don’t you think?”

“What can he do? He can’t get into the valley by assault. Lying behind the rocks out there, our boys could wipe out Merriwell’s entire force before a man reached the natural fortifications. He seems to be wise in doing nothing.”

“But what does he expect to accomplish? We got past Merriwell’s party and into the valley. Does he expect to force the strikers to surrender by laying siege? That’s a long road to travel, and I shouldn’t think it would satisfy his impetuosity, for surely he’s an impetuous individual.”

“He’s up to something, you may be sure of that!” growled Blood. “When Frank Merriwell keeps still, look out. He’s preparing to spring like a panther. That’s why I’m hustling things here to-day. That’s why I’m getting ready for anything.”

The electricians who had been working in the room prepared to depart. One of them turned and spoke to Blood.

“This work is finished, sir,” he said. “The switch is ready to operate. It’s disconnected now. All you have to do is to throw it over like this to make the connection.”

Blood tossed each of the men a cigar from the open box that stood on the table at his elbow.

Riding in his usual furious manner, Dominico came
tearing toward the building and stopped short outside the window.

"Señor Blood," he said, removing his hat with that characteristic graceful sweep, "Señor Coakley sends me to say that the commander of the enemy's forces demands the immediate surrender of the valley."

"Oh, he does, eh?" cried Blood. "Well, you tell Señor Coakley to inform the commander of the enemy's forces that he may go to the devil."

"Si, señor," murmured Dominico as he wheeled again, his horse pivoting on its hind legs, and went clattering away.

Major Golash had risen to his feet and was wildly thumping his chest with his clenched right fist.

"The commander of the enemy's forces!" he spluttered. "What do you think of that! He demands the surrender of the valley, Blood. That stirs me. Give me authority and send me forth to take command of the defense. I can remain idle no longer. Give me——"

"Here's what you want," grinned the big man, reaching out and patting the jug. "Help yourself, major."

"Well, now, as long as you remind me of it," said Golash, "I think perhaps just a drop or two more would fix me all right."

The major's "drop or two" proved to be large drops indeed, and by the time he had taken them he seemed to forget his recent thirst for duty in defense of the valley. In a short time he dozed off, sitting on his chair, with his head bowed and his fiery whiskers flowing over his breast. There he remained, snoring and wheezing, until Blood awakened him with the information that it was time for supper.

"Eh? Hey? What? Supper?" gurgled Golash. "Impossible, sir! Why, suh, I haven't had an appetizer. I always take an appetizer twenty minutes before I dine. Then I take another fifteen minutes before I dine, and then——"

"Oh, yes, I know your proclivities, major. Well, you better roll them all into one and have 'em now."

"Just as you say, suh, just as you say. That jug seems to hold out well. But what will we do to-morrow, Blood?"

"We'll let to-morrow take care of itself," returned J. Bradbury. "By that time Mystery Valley may be a place of wreck and disaster."

Served by peon waiters, they dined at a reserved table in the big dining-room. Coakley, Cole, and Hyde were there. While Hyde remained at the table the conversation between the others was guarded, al-

though Major Golash made one or two bad breaks. Pinal Pete finished before the others, rose, lighted his pipe, and sauntered away.

"Wonder what he thinks about being cock-of-the-walk hereabouts now?" chuckled Hayden Cole.

"Whatever he thinks," grinned Coakley, in a satisfied manner, "he isn't making much talk."

"Has he bothered you in your work to-day?" asked Blood.

"Oh, no," answered Coakley. "He hasn't bothered at all, but he's taken more or less interest, and has looked everything over."

"Have you finished?"

"Not quite. The power has not been turned on. If it had, we wouldn't need these oil-lamps here. We could have eaten supper by the light of electricity."

"Was the machinery at the power-house damaged?"

"None to speak of. You see, the boys had taken pains to put it out of commission without doing any great damage. It took the men who stopped it to start it again. They'll have it going before they sleep. They're still hard at work."

"You've heard nothing further from Merriwell?"

"Not a word. One of the boys came down from the mouth of the valley and reported that Merriwell's camp-fires could be plainly seen."

Both Coakley and Cole departed when supper was over, to make sure that every concluding detail of the work was finished.

Blood and the major returned to Amboy's room, where they both lighted cigars.

"You won't have to carry this thing through, Blood," declared Golash.

"I hope not, but I'm getting ready for it just the same," returned J. Bradbury. "You see that switch on the wall, major? Well, as soon as the power is turned on, I'll be in a position to destroy hundreds of thousands of dollars' worth of property by merely throwing that switch over. The wires run from their terminals here to the shaft-houses, the shafts, the tunnel, the mill, and the smelter. At the other end of these wires are arranged masses of powerful explosives. With those wires alive with electricity, the throwing of that switch will turn loose an earthquake in Mystery Valley. It will blow the everlasting stuffing out of the buildings and equipments. It's likely to fill the shafts and the tunnel with tons of caved-in rock and earth. The destruction of property will be tremendous, and it will require a year at least of energetic work to come anywhere near restoring things to their present condition. As soon as I am
prepared for this I am going to send word to Frank Merriwell. I am going to tell him the truth and make my demands of him.

"What if he finds some way of getting into the valley? What if he were suddenly to appear here, backed by his men, and demand your surrender?"

Blood laughed wheezingly.

"I'd simply throw the switch over," he said, "and you can imagine what would follow."

As the man spoke these words he chanced to turn his head toward the door of the room, and there, to his surprise, he beheld Dominico, standing silently, hat in one hand and cigarette in the other.

"What is it?" asked Blood sharply. "What do you want?"

"Señor," said the Mexican, "it is private. I would speak with you alone."

"Private, eh? Something you have to say to me alone, eh? Well, major, I'm sure you won't mind leaving us a few moments."

"Not at all, not at all," declared Golash, rising at once; "but when my supper is digested somewhat I shall return. There's yet something left in the jug. I think a little stroll in the air will do me good. See you later, Mr. Blood. So-long.""
that his words were uttered little louder than a whisper.

"I should hate to be forced into killing you, Blood," he said, "but if you raise an outcry I am going to shoot you where you sit. I'd much rather turn you over to the officers of your bondsmen, who have already been sent in pursuit of you. Oh, yes, Blood, the officers are coming—they're coming to take you back to New York for trial. You know what that means. If you don't know, you should. It means at least twenty years behind the bars for you. You'll be convicted on several criminal counts, and it will be a good thing for society when such a menace as you is taken away."

Blood filled his lungs with a long, deep breath. His half-smoked cigar had fallen at his feet and lay there, with a tiny blue wraith curling upward from the burning end.

"How the devil did you get here, Merriwell?" he finally faltered.

"Your brain is still numb, man. I came here as Dominico."

"As Dominico? Well, where is he?"

"He's safely cared for by my friends. We captured him just at dark. I appropriated his clothes and his mask and came here to find you. Entering this room quietly, I was in time to hear you explain to Golash about the switch yonder on the wall. I don't think you'll use that switch to-night, Mr. Blood. We'll leave it there as an ornament, but you and I are going to make sure that it will serve as nothing more dangerous."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that in a few moments we'll take a walk together, arm in arm. It may surprise some of the men to see J. Bradbury Blood walking thus with Dominico, but I don't think they'll venture to question you about it."

"Curse you, Merriwell! Can no man get the best of you?"

"Oh, I don't know about that, Blood, but I don't believe any man of your caliber can do it. I don't mind telling you that at this very minute my armed men are coming into the valley, one at a time, and long ere midnight they'll all be here—all save four, who have been chosen to keep our fires burning outside, and to march up and down in front of those fires like sentinels. The armed men at the mouth of the valley will be watching a practically deserted bivouac. To-morrow morning I'll have possession of the valley and the mine."

Blood began to swear, but Merry cut him short.

"Your profanity is offensive," said Frank. "It'll do you no good. If it were not that I should arouse the suspicions of your companions and accomplices, I'd rip that switch from the wall and tear those wires loose. I've thought of cutting them on the outside, but even that might be discovered, and I want to give my men time to get into the valley. You and I will visit the terminals of these wires and cut every wire near the point where they are connected with the explosives. That will be our task, Blood. So get ready to accompany me."

Still holding his pistol ready, Merry stooped cautiously and picked up the mask without once taking his eyes off Blood. With that mask in his hand, he advanced to the table. He searched the huge man for weapons and removed a pistol from Blood's pocket. This pistol Frank flung beneath the bed.

"There," he said, "your teeth are drawn. I don't think I need to repeat my assurance that I shall shoot you if you call for help. I'm going to put on this mask."

Blood was terrorized into silence. At last he realized that this man was in every way his superior, and he could not doubt that Merriwell would make good his threat to shoot if forced into doing so.

When the mask was in place and Frank's face was hidden, he commanded Blood to rise.

"Take your hat," he said. "You will walk ahead of me as we leave the building. Don't forget that I have a shooting-iron ready for use. Go on, Blood."

A few moments later they were in the open air. Then Merry passed his left arm through the right arm of J. Bradbury Blood. Apparently Frank's right hand was thrust carelessly beneath the braided and decorated jacket he wore. That hand, however, still grasped a pistol, the muzzle of which was pointed at Blood.

In this manner, like bosom-friends, they walked down the slope beneath the twinkling stars.

CHAPTER IX.

BURIED ALIVE.

A few who saw them were surprised, but only one man ventured to address them. That was Major Golash.

"Hi, there, Blood!" called the major. "Where are you going? I was just coming back, you know, suh."
"Tell him to wait for you in that room," whispered Frank.

Blood did so.

"Very well, suh, very well," said the major; but he continued to stare after the strange couple until they had vanished in the direction of Bulldog Tunnel.

"I wish to see just what sort of an infernal arrangement has been prepared," said Frank. "We'll get miners' lamps and go into the tunnel."

The lamps were procured at the building near the dark mouth of the tunnel. With these lamps lighted the two men proceeded underground. Frank found an electric-wire running along one of the tunnel walls, and he ordered Blood to march in advance until they should reach the terminal of that wire.

The dark, dank silence of a cavern swallowed them. Their lights twinkled faintly as they proceeded deeper and deeper into the bowels of the earth. The rails and ties of a tramway lay near at hand, for cars could be run into the tunnel to its extreme limit. One of these cars, loaded with ore, stood on the track. They passed it and continued on their way. The tunnel dipped somewhat, and they seemed to go down into an awesome region of silence and darkness. Once Blood halted and spoke.

"What's the use of going farther?" he said. "If you're following this wire, you won't find what you're looking for at the end of it."

"Never mind that," said Frank, "we'll look just the same."

When Blood attempted to speak again Merry cut him short.

"Step faster," commanded Frank. "Time is precious. We'll not go underground elsewhere, but I'm going to make sure that the explosives have been planted and that the whole thing is not a bluff."

Finally they came to the end of the rails and the terminus of the tunnel. To Frank's surprise, the electric-wire upon the wall was attached at the extreme end to an incandescent lamp.

"What's this mean?" he cried. "Where are the explosives?"

Blood laughed gurglingly, derisively.

"You've been following the wrong wire," he said.

"Did you think we'd blast explosives at the far end of the tunnel? We passed them near the entrance."

Merry bit his lips in vexation.

"So this is the lighting-wire, is it?" he muttered.

"Where are the other lamps? This is the only one I've seen."

"The other lamps have not been installed yet. They've not arrived."

"Why didn't you tell me?"

"I started to tell you, but you cut me short."

"Well, we'll go back."

Even as he uttered those words the incandescent lamp suddenly flared up into a bright, golden glow. At the same instant there was a tremendous shock, which made the earth reel beneath their feet. A concussion like that of a hundred cannons beat upon their ear-drums. J. Bradbury Blood was flung to the ground, while Merriwell caught at the wall for support. Loosened earth and rocks rained upon them. The very timbers of the tunnel seemed to creak and snap. Then came a rushing, bewildering burst of dust, which nearly smothered them.

The electric-lamp which had glowed golden for an instant had gone out with the concussion, and Blood's miner's lamp was likewise extinguished. Only Frank's small lamp continued to burn.

Following the fearful shock there came a sort of stunned and terrible silence. Gasping for breath, J. Bradbury Blood sat up on the ground, wheezing forth broken prayers and supplications to the deity.

Frank had removed the mask from his face after entering the tunnel, and he now held one hand over his mouth and nose to shut out as far as possible the stifling dust. It was fully a minute before either man spoke to the other.

"Get up, Blood," said Frank, giving J. Bradbury a poke with his foot. "What's happened?"

"What's happened? Merciful Heaven, you ought to know! The dynamite—"

"It exploded at the mouth of the tunnel," muttered Frank.

"It exploded everywhere!" groaned Blood. "Your shaft-houses, your mill, your smelter—everything is destroyed!"

"But how—how did it happen?"

"I don't know. There was a mistake somewhere. Perhaps Golash threw on the switch. You saw that lamp flare up, and then came the explosion. I knew it was coming. When I saw the lamp my heart leaped into my throat."

"Evidently," said Merry, "we're in a scrape, Blood. If the stuff was properly planted at the mouth of the tunnel, it's likely this tunnel is blocked by thousands of tons of earth and stone."

"That's right, that's right," choked the other man. "We're doomed, Merriwell! We're as good as dead men!"
“Let’s investigate. Get up, Blood, unless you wish me to leave you here. I’m going to see what has happened.”

J. Bradbury Blood’s limbs were so weak that they almost refused to bear his weight. He pleaded for Frank to wait until he could recover his strength somehow.

“I know what we’ll find,” he said. “I dread to look.”

Back along the tunnel they slowly made their way. At one place the timbers had partly given way and some of the roof had caved. However, this was not sufficient wholly to block the tunnel, and they managed to creep past it in constant dread that the remaining portion of the roof would give way and bury them.

Beyond this place the tunnel remained unchanged until they had nearly reached its mouth. Finally they saw before them a mass of broken timbers and caved-in earth and stone which completely filled the tunnel.

J. Bradbury Blood stopped in his tracks, staring at the barrier that lay between them and the open air. There was horror in his eyes, and he clutched nervously at his heart with quivering fingers. He was panting like a creature suffering from suffocation.

“I knew it—merciful Heaven, I knew it!” he huskily whispered. “There it is, Merriwell! Look, look! We’re buried alive! There’s no escape! We’re doomed—doomed to die here like rats in a trap!”

Suddenly he began shrieking, while his eyes seemed to bulge from his head. Scrambling forward, he reached the mass of fallen earth and clawed at it frantically with his hands.

That was enough to start it moving. The timbers creaked and snapped. Stones began to fall from the roof of the tunnel.

Merriwell seized Blood by the collar, and, despite his struggles, dragged him bodily away. He was barely in time to prevent the man from being covered by a fresh cave-in.

“I think that’s about all that will fall,” said Frank.

“You came near being buried then, Blood.”

“Buried? I’m buried now! We’re both buried! We’re buried in a living tomb! Oh, why didn’t I tell you? Why did I let you bring me into this death-trap?”

Of a sudden, Blood seized Frank by the shoulders with both hands, and sought to shake him.

“Wake up! wake up!” he shrieked. “You don’t realize what has happened. Can’t you see? Can’t you understand? The mouth of the tunnel is blocked! We’re buried! We’re doomed to die here!”

“It’ll do no good to shriek and howl over it,” said Frank, who, in spite of his apparent coolness, was fighting back a feeling of horror which threatened to rob him of his strength and nerve.

“What are you made of, man?” panted Blood. “If you fancy there is any chance for us to escape, dismiss that fancy. It would take weeks and months for them to open up the tunnel and reach us. Long before they could do it we must die of hunger and thirst.”

“A man can die but once,” said Merriwell. “The least he can do, under such circumstances, is to die like a man.”

Blood glared at him.

“Perhaps you can die that way,” he said, “but it’s different with me. I’m not ready to die. I can’t die. I want to live.”

He began to froth at the mouth and betray symptoms which indicated tottering reason. He shrieked and cursed and prayed all in a breath.

“You’ve destroyed me, Merriwell,” he shouted; “but you’ve destroyed yourself at the same time!”

“This was your work, Blood,” returned Frank. “You may as well calm yourself. It will do no good to rave in that manner, and you annoy me. As you say, you are not ready to die, but it seems that your time and mine has come. I advise you to make your peace with Heaven.”

Before that word Blood cowered, shivering like a leaf.

“Too late!” he gasped. “In the sight of Heaven I’m a thing accursed. I can understand that this is my punishment, but why it should include you is more than I know.”

CHAPTER X.

THE CAPTURE OF DOMINICO.

It was Old Joe Crowfoot, with Billy Bolivar as an assistant, who had planned the escape of Dick Merriwell from Mystery Valley, and it was Old Joe who led the besieging forces under Frank Merriwell’s command by a circuitous and hazardous route to the top of the very precipice where he had clasped young Merriwell in his arms when Dick was drawn up by ropes.

Frank was with the first party to reach the spot, and, burning with impatience, he did not wait for darkness ere ropes were again made fast to huge
boulders and dropped dangling down the face of the cliff. Dusk was gathering when Merriwell and Crowfoot slid down into the valley.

The keen eyes of Dominico, the masked Mexican, caught a glimpse of something moving, like a falling shadow, across the face of the precipice, and Dominico, returning from the mouth of the valley, reined his horse toward that precipice and rode near, pistol in hand.

"That fellow saw us, Crowfoot," hissed Frank. "If we have to pistol him, the whole valley will be alarmed."

But when Merry looked round for his redskin companion, he was surprised to discover that Old Joe was not with him. The aged Indian had vanished like a wraith amid the brush, boulders, and shadows at the foot of the precipice.

Dominico reined his horse to a walk, leaning forward in the saddle and peering intently into the gathering darkness. In Spanish he muttered to himself:

"I swear by all the saints I saw something slip swiftly, yet gently, down the face of the rock. What was it? It was near here that the gringo boy disappeared. It was near here that we found Whitmark, Coleman, and the other gringo. Is there here some method by which men may enter and leave the valley?"

His eyes were fastened on the very rock behind which, pistol in hand, Frank Merriwell crouched.

"He has seen me," thought Frank. "In another moment he is liable to alarm the valley. Yet, if I shoot him, it will do no good, for that shot will serve as an alarm."

"Come forth," called Dominico, stopping the advance of his horse. "I know you are there. Come forth."

Frank remained motionless.

For fully five minutes the Mexican sat fixed in his saddle, leaning forward and peering into the gloom. The spirited horse fretted and pawed the ground, champing at its bit. At last Dominico seemed satisfied that he was mistaken, for, thrusting the pistol into his sash, he reined his horse to ride away.

From the shelter of the boulders something pantherish, something that moved like lightning, shot forth, hurtled through the air, and landed behind Dominico, astride the horse. A bony, muscular hand gripped the Mexican by the throat, but both men remained clinging fast to the back of the horse. Ere the startled animal could gallop away, Frank dashed out and seized it by the bit.

Crowfoot, who had attacked the masked Mexican, seemed to know that Merriwell had the horse, for now he flung himself from the creature’s back, dragging Dominico with him.

When Frank had subdued the startled horse he found Old Joe pinning the man to the ground and still clinging to his throat.

"Let up, Crowfoot," commanded Frank sharply. "You’ll finish him. He must be nearly dead this minute."

"Ugh," grunted the old Indian. "Finish him, he not talk. He no make trouble."

"But we don’t wish to kill him unless forced to do so. Let up, I say."

"All right," said Joe, relinquishing his hold on Dominico’s throat. "I guess mebe he pretty well done up, anyhow. He no go tell how he see something suspicious here. He no bring back men to look. Joe think mebe he too old to catch greaser man. Mebe he too slow. Heap old. Heap slow. Heap weak. He no got-um strength in arm same as he had once."

"The same old song and dance, chief," laughed Merry softly. "In the best days of your warrior youth you were never better than you are to-day. Playing poker has taught you to bluff, and you keep it up continuously, but I can’t be fooled, Joe."

"You talk-um that way to make old Injun feel good," said Crowfoot. "That heap fine of you, Strong Heart. But Old Joe he know how much he go to the bad. He know how much he fail up."

"Well, if you’ve got strength enough left in your withered old body," said Merry, "kindly hold this horse while I learn whether you’ve killed that man or not."

Crowfoot held the horse, and Merry bent over Dominico. The first thing Frank did was to remove the mask. The shadows concealed to some extent the hideousness of Dominico’s face, and yet Merry seemed to feel a sensation of repugnance. With a gasping groan, the Mexican began breathing painfully.

"Not quite done for, Crowfoot," said Merry.

"Mebe you finish him yourself," said Joe. "Me let you have hny knife. You cut his throat, eh?"

"I’m much obliged, chief, but I don’t think it necessary. Give me his rope dangling from the saddle there. I’ll bind him securely, and when he has recovered his breath we’ll force a gag between his teeth to keep him silent."

The Indian unloosed the lariat and tossed it to Frank. Even as Merry started to tie the Mexican, a thought assailed him that led him to hesitate. In an-
other moment he was stripping Dominico's clothes from his body.

"I'll give you enough of my own clothes to keep you from freezing, my friend," said Merry. "I have use for your fine garments."

Crowfoot peered curiously through the gloom, but refrained from asking a single question. He saw Frank remove his own outer clothing and quickly don the garments of the Mexican. Dominico was partly dressed in Merry's clothes, and then securely bound.

"I'm going to leave this fellow whom I know full well in your care, Joseph," said Merry. "You're not to kill him unless he raises an outcry. Gag him, if you wish, but don't strangle or torture him."

"Ugh!" grunted Crowfoot comprehensively.

"I'm going to enter the enemy's camp. As Dominico, I fancy I can do so in safety. I'll wear the man's clothes, and my face will be hidden behind the man's mask. While I am gone, the rest of the boys will be coming into the valley. By the time I return, they should be assembled here, ready to carry out our plan."

"Ugh!" grunted Crowfoot.

Merry gave a signal for those who were above to descend the ropes. Then, clapping the mask to his face, he leaped into Dominico's saddle, and galloped boldly toward the distant twinkling lights which shone from the windows of the miners' cabins and from the boarding-house.

CHAPTER XI.
DICK'S DECISION.

At intervals armed men came sliding down the dangling ropes and joined the others who were gathering in the valley. Dick Merriwell, Chester Arlington, and Rob Conrad were with them. From Crowfoot they learned what had become of Frank. Dick's blood tingled to do something. It was with the greatest impatience that he restrained this desire to act while waiting for the last of the men to arrive.

From the mouth of the valley a few small fires could be seen twinkling afar on the desert. The men who guarded the valley believed Merriwell and his backers had settled down out there for a night of inaction.

Arlington joined Dick, who was restlessly pacing up and down, and Chester's hand fell on young Merriwell's shoulder.

"You're sizzling hot, old man," chuckled Chester. "You're thirsting for the fray."

"Knowing it's coming, I'm anxious to get at it," confessed Dick. "I'm thinking of Frank. I'm wondering what he's doing."

They paused beside a boulder some thirty feet from the nearest men.

"If you'd like to know what your brother is doing," said a low voice close at hand, "I opine I could take you to him."

Weapons in hand, both Merriwell and Arlington whirled in the direction from which the words seemed to come, and there, silent and motionless as if a part of the boulder itself, a man leaned against the dark stone. They could discern his outlines, and through the gloom the grayish white of his face could be seen.

"Who are you?" demanded Dick, his pistol covering the man.

"You ought to know me, kid," came the cool answer. "Never mind shooting me up, for if I'd wished I might have ridled you and your partner before either of you dreamed I was within three yards of you."

"It's Pinal Pete!" muttered young Merriwell, in amazement.

"You've hit my cognomen, kid. I'm Pinal Pete, for sure, and my shooting-irones are in their holsters. My hands are empty."

"How the dickens did you get here without being seen?"

"I've been here a right long time," declared Hyde. "I was waiting, some desirous of speaking with you, but I couldn't seem to get the opportunity without showing myself to the whole bunch, and I allowed that might be foolish of me."

"Pinal Pete! Pinal Pete!" breathed Chester. "That means trouble, Dick. Watch out!"

"Your friend doesn't seem to have much confidence in my peaceful intent," murmured the strange man.

"That's natural enough, Hyde," said Dick, who, although he had lowered his pistol, still held the weapon ready for use. "You crept back into Caruso, and were on the point of shooting my brother in the back when he fired over his shoulder and dropped you."

"You're some wrong," declared Hyde. "I wasn't going to shoot him in the back. I acknowledge I had my gun out and ready for business. Mebbe Amb boy and the others thought I intended salting Frank Merriwell without giving him a show, but I was in the
act of poking my gun-muzzle through a window-pane, to attract his attention, when he got me. I have figured it out that I was a whole lot lucky, or else I had a mighty hard skull to deflect that bullet. A gent who can shoot without turning his head, and plant his lead the way your brother does, sure is a bit too swift for Pinal Pete, and this is the first time I ever said that much of any man. All the same, kid, it's not so much fear of your brother as admiration for his style that's caused me to lean toward him some affectionately. At the same time, other things have had a bearing on me. Certain gents with whom I associate some are inclined to cut me out of their private consultations. They're not trusting me any just at present, and that's enough to make Pete Hyde a plenty sore. I ain't said nothing whatever to them yet, but bimeby I'm allowin' I'll make a few plain and comprehensive remarks."

"Can you trust him, Dick? Do you dare?" breathed Arlington.

It seemed that those whispered words floated to Hyde's ears, for instantly he spoke again.

"Figure it out for yourself, kid. I was here when you were ready to escape, after being captured by Coakley and the rest of the bunch. I might have stopped you. I don't suppose you've forgot that I didn't interfere. I don't suppose you've forgot that, after the others were caught, I kept mum about what had become of you. The gents with whom I have been associating lately may have thought I knew more than I was inclined to tell, but they didn't seem to feel like questioning me, any at all. If I had told what I knew, you would have found this place guarded, and it would not have been possible for you to bring your men into the valley."

"That's right, Chester," said Dick. "I told Frank that. I felt sure Frank would not betray us."

"Thanks, kid," said Pinal Pete. "You made no miscalculation whatever. I reckon you'd be coming in here to-night, and that's why you found me on the spot. It's time you came. Not all the men here are united against Frank Merriwell. I opine full half of them are feeling some sympathetic toward him, and would be glad to see him get possession of the property; but they're not in position to rise against the others until you gents show up to give them courage. Old Blood is here, and he's been a plenty busy to-day. Not that he's worked with his own hands, but he's worked with his brain, and the others have carried out his orders. If you get the advantage of him, you'll have to take certain precautions, and it's my advice that you drop on Blood the first thing you do."

"I am going to trust this man, Arlington," said Dick, as he thrust his pistol into its holster and stepped close to Pinal Pete.

"You won't regret it any, kid," assured Hyde. "If you'll listen to me, I reckon I'll tell you something that may help you to spoil the plans of Old Blood. Even if that gent hasn't taken me into his confidence, I've had my eyes open, and I know what he's doing. When I tell you you'll be some disturbed, I judge."

"Go on, go on," urged Dick. "What's J. Bradbury Blood up to now?"

Then Hyde told how Blood had planned to plant explosives for the purpose of wrecking the property in the valley, and how the wiring had been laid from the explosives to the superintendent's room in the huge boarding-house, where there was a switch so arranged that a single movement would accomplish the work of destruction.

Dick Merriwell felt himself tingling from head to heels as he listened.

"The scoundrels!" he palpitated. "If Frank knew this! He ought to know it, for an attack on the strikers will be the signal for Blood to turn on that switch."

"Just so," nodded Pinal Pete, "and that being the case, kid, I opine it will be best to defer the attack until you've got your paws on J. Bradbury Blood."

"That's the first thing to do," said young Merriwell, "and the next thing is to cut those wires."

"Correct," agreed Hyde. "When you're ready, I'll take you straight to Blood. I judge we can arrive there without interference if you'll trust me and stick by me."

By this time Dick was ready enough to trust Pinal Pete.

"Arlington," he said, "go back there and call Rob Conrad. Bring him here, but bring no others."

Chester hastened to obey, while Dick continued in consultation with Hyde.

In a few moments Chet returned with Conrad. It was Dick who explained the situation to Rob. "I don't know where my brother is, or what he's doing now," said young Merriwell, "but I do know that every moment we delay there's danger of discovery by the enemy. If such a discovery is made, that man Blood will throw on the electric current and destroy the property. I've decided to make an effort to cut those wires. I am going with Hyde."
“And I’m going to stick by you, old man,” said Arlington quickly.

“All right, Chester. Conrad, take charge of the men. Keep them here. Keep them quiet until you get a signal from me. You’ve heard me whistle on my fingers, and you know the signal. If you hear it, charge—charge—with every man at your back and ready for action. That’s all. Back with the men, Conrad. Lead on, Hyde.”

They followed Pinal Pete closely. He led them across the valley to the opposite slope. Amid boulders and brush, he wormed his way, moving swiftly yet cautiously. At times they heard men calling to each other. Now and then they saw moving lights in the valley. Far away, in the direction of the powerhouse, there rose a humming whirr which told that the machinery was in operation.

Down behind the big boarding-house they slipped, and into it they walked with catlike steps. Pinal Pete seemed cool and undisturbed. The nerves of both boys were atingle, and their blood was throbbing with excitement. Pistols in hand, they stole forward to the door of the superintendent’s room. Suddenly, within that room, rose a clamor, a sound of quarreling voices and a shock like a heavy fall.

Hyde’s hand was on the door. He opened it quickly, and the sight they beheld filled them all with unspeakable surprise.

CHAPTER XII.
THE JUG.

Late in the afternoon Old Billy Bolivar awoke to realize that his eyes were burning in his head like coals of fire, his tongue and his throat were dry as dust, while within him there seemed to be a raging conflagration.

“Um-mum!” grunted Old Billy. “I wonder where I got it? It certainly is a peach. What a lovely head! Throw a little liquid into my tank, and I reckon I’ll blow up like a steam-boiler with a red-hot fire beneath it. I must have been drinking. Now, that’s surprising. Really, I don’t understand it. I’m afraid I’ve broken the pledge. It’ll be an awful disgrace. Where am I, anyhow? I ought to be sweetly resting in a gutter, but I don’t seem to be. My surroundings seem strange and unusual. I miss the delicious sensation of soft cobble-stones beneath me. I should say that I’m lying on a plank. Can’t afford such luxuries. Oh, wow! but I’d give two bits for a drink—if I had the two bits.”

Slowly Old Billy turned over, rubbing his burning eyes with his knuckles and staring around him. He found himself lying in the corner of a small cabin, while beside a bunk that same room sat a man who seemed to be watching another man who lay upon the bunk. The latter was tossing and groaning as if in pain.

“Another jag,” decided Billy. “Wonder where that gent got his? I’ll have to make inquiries. Perhaps he hasn’t drunk it all up yet. Mebbe there’s a swallow or two left in his flask.”

With an effort, the sufferer pried himself into a sitting-posture and leaned against the wall. Then he lifted one hand toward the man near the bunk, and wiggled his index finger in an effort to attract attention, finding that his mouth was so dry that he could not speak louder than a husky whisper.

“I say, my beneficent brother,” wheezed Old Billy—“I say, look here. Here’s a fellow-being in dire distress. Never mind that other jag. Get wise to my supplications.”

Coleman was the man sitting near the bunk, on which lay the wounded Whitmark, now tossing with a fever.

Finally Old Billy succeeded in attracting Coleman’s attention.

“Hello,” said the man by the bunk. “So you’ve slept it off, have you?”

“My friend,” wheezed Bolivar, “the intonation of your voice is heartlessly unsympathetic. I’m in need of a drink. If you’ll push one round into my reach, I’ll bless you until my dying day.”

“There’s water in the bucket yonder,” said Coleman. “You can get a drink yourself.”

"But it's all you'll get."

"Excuse these few tears," said the tramp, rising to his hands and knees, and thence to his feet, steadying himself against the wall. "This is a cold, and unsympathetic world."

At this moment Whitmark began tossing and muttering.

"Back, you devils—keep off!" he exclaimed.

"Whew!" breathed Bolivar. "He's got 'em bad. I know how it is. I've had 'em myself—snakes, rats, hobgoblins, and all sorts of squirmy, wiggly things. Poor fellow, why don't you give him a drink? If you won't give me a drink, give him a drink. He needs it worse than I do, perhaps."

With unsteady steps, the bummer approached the bunk.

"Keep away," said Coleman. "He's got the fever. He's out of his head."

"Is that it?" murmured Bolivar. "Why, I thought he had the delirium triangles. What happened to him? Seems to me I remember something about it. Why, yes, I do remember! They took us out to participate as unwilling principals in a hemp necktie-party, but they didn't hang us, did they? I told you they wouldn't. Where did I get this jug? Lemme see, lemme see."

Billy tenderly scratched his head in an effort to remember. After a time it dawned upon him hazily.

"Oh, yes; oh, yes," he muttered. "They had it in a jug, and the jug was concealed beneath the floor. I heard 'em coming, and I crawled under the bed. After they were gone I lay violent hands upon that jug. Methinks I absorbed some of its contents."

"I should say you did," said Coleman. "They found you snoozing, with the jug clasped in your arms."

"And they took the jug away from me?" said Billy regretfully. "How careless! I wonder if they've been thoughtless enough to empty it of its precious contents."

Again Whitmark tossed and muttered, apparently fancying himself assailed by many enemies.

"Get away, Bolivar," said Coleman. "You annoy him."

"I think I'll go out and look for that jug," said the bummer. "There may still be a few drops left in it. But hold. We are captives. Perchance we are under surveillance. Possibly there is an armed guard without. Canst tell me as to this?"

"I don't know whether we're under guard or not," answered Coleman. "The doctor has been here twice to see Whitmark. I don't fancy the boys think there's much chance that any of us will run away."

"I shall investigate with all due precautions," said Billy, as he tiptoed toward the door.

The door opened at Bolivar's touch. He peered out. Darkness was gathering in the valley, and lights were beginning to twinkle.

The bummer could see nothing of a guard, and therefore he ventured to step outside.

A horseman came riding past without giving Bolivar as much as a glance. Apparently it was Dominick, and he continued in the direction of the boarding-house.

Old Billy peered round first one corner and then the other of the cabin.

"I see no guard," he murmured. "Awfully careless of them. Where did I leave that jug? Lemme see, lemme see."

He spent fully fifteen minutes in meditation, aware in a haze way of some project that had moved him at the time he was in possession of the jug.

"I was going to tell Frank Merriwell something," he finally decided. "Wonder what it was? Wonder if anybody can tell me what it was I was going to tell him?"

Finally he started toward the boarding-house. Ere reaching it, he paused and retreated into the shadow of a cabin, for two men approached. They passed within a rod of Old Billy. Another man, coming from the opposite direction, cried out to them, and asked whither they were going.

The voice of J. Bradbury Blood answered, directing the man to wait for him in Superintendent Amboy's room.

Billy Bolivar glared after Major Golash as the little man hurried toward the boarding-house.

"That's the place where I found the jug," decided
Billy, "and that little runt with the danger-signals as whiskers will lap it all up if there's any of the stuff left. Shall I appeal to his better nature? Shall I tell him my distressed condition, and entreat him to spare me a small snifter? Nay, nay; I know the greed of the man. He would turn me down with scorn. But stay, isn't it possible that I emptied that jug? Judging from my present condition, I must have tried hard to empty it. Isn't it possible that the jug still lies where they discovered me holding it in a fond embrace? I'll investigate. I'll search."

And so Old Billy spent more than half an hour searching for the jug. At length he gave it up, but he could not abandon the conviction that there might be more hidden beneath the floor where he had found the jug:

"And this very minute," growled Bolivar, "the gent with the vivid whiskers may be regaling himself in that room. The thought is agonizing. Methinks I'll investigate."

No one appeared to interfere with Bolivar as he stole into the boarding-house. Barely had he entered when he stopped short, listening to the sound of unmusical and untuneful singing that issued from Superintendent Amboy's room.

Evidently, Major Golash was in a happy frame of mind, for he was chanting:

"When I go toiling to my farm
I take little brown jug under my arm;
Place it under a shady tree,
Little brown jug, 'tis you and me.
Ha! ha! ha! you and me,
Little brown jug, don't I love thee!
Ha! ha! ha! you and me,
Little brown jug, don't I love thee!"

"Ye gods and little fishhooks!" gurgled Bolivar.
"That sounds suspicious. That arouses my ire. I'll bet old Burnsides has the jug."

Again the major sang:

"'Tis you who makes my friends, my foes,
'Tis you who makes me wear old clothes,
Here you are so near my nose,
So tip her up and down she goes."

Bolivar's wrath increased. His excited fancy pictured Major Golash as tipping the jug. Quivering with rage, he crept toward the door.

There was a gasping sound from within, and another stanza followed:

"The rose is red; my nose is, too,
The violet's blue, and so are you;
And I guess before I stop
I'd better take another drop."

"Hold on!" snorted Bolivar, as he jerked open the door and stepped into the room. "What are you trying to do, anyhow? Drinking it all up?"

There before him sat Major Golash, with the jug on his lap and both arms clasped round it.

Old Billy closed the door and regarded the major accusingly.

"Such greed is absolutely inhuman," said Bolivar.
"You ought to be ashamed of yourself."
"What's—what's matter with you?" gurgled the major tipsily.
"I'm thirsty, that's what's the matter with me. Give me that jug."
"Never!" cried Golash, rising with the handle of the jug gripped in one hand and the other hand outflung repellantly toward old Billy. "Never! I'll die first!"

"Then your time has come," announced the bummer, as he sprang upon Golash and tripped him.

They went down with a crash and a shock that stunned the major. Old Billy secured the jug and, seating himself comfortably upon the major's stomach, he proceeded to take a drink.

That was the spectacle that greeted the eyes of Dick Merriwell and his companions as they opened the door of that room.

CHAPTER XIII.
FROM A LIVING GRAVE.

They entered, pistols in hand, and ready for use.
Old Billy gave them not the slightest heed until he had permitted several swallows to gurgle down his throat. Lowering the jug, he wiped his mouth upon his sleeve and, with a serene smile, cheerfully cried:
"Good evening! You're a little late, gentlemen. The major and I have practically emptied the jug."
"Where is J. Bradbury Blood?" cried Dick.

From the side.

They turned and the confab continued.
Did you hear that?
"The rose is red; my nose is, too, the violet's blue, and so are you, and I guess before I stop I'd better take another drop."

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"Where is J. Bradbury Blood?" cried Dick.
“Ask me, ask me,” said Bolivar. “I’d love to supply the information, but it’s impossible.”

Recovering somewhat, the major squirmed and attempted to unseat Bolivar.

Arlington seized the old bummer and jerked him off the little man. When the major sat up he found himself looking into the muzzle of Pinal Pete’s pistol.

“Mebbe you can inform us where we’ll find Mr. Blood,” said Hyde softly.

“Oh, say, point that thing s’mother way!” gurgled Golash. “I dunno where Blood is. Lasht I shaw of him he was taking a walk with Dominico.”

“Dominico?” palpitated Dick. “It was not Dominico! It was my brother Frank! Taking a walk? Where were they going?”

Even as Dick spoke the two electric lights in the room burst into a sudden glow.

“The electricity!” cried Pinal Pete. “They’ve turned it on! There’s the switch!”

He pointed to the deadly switch upon the wall.

With a leap, young Merriwell seized the switch and ripped it from the wall with a single wrench of his hand. As he did so there came a tremendous explosion in the valley, causing the building to quiver and the windows to rattle.


Of them all Pinal Pete was the coolest.

“I don’t reckon he fired everything,” said Hyde. “If he had, you’d thought it was a genuine earthquake. You’d heard more than one explosion. Let’s get outside. Let’s learn what’s happened.”

They rushed from the building into the open air. From various parts of the valley came the cries of men, and there were tokens of the greatest excitement and confusion.

Dick Merriwell placed his fingers to his lips and blew a shrill blast that cut through the night.

“That’ll bring Conrad and the men,” he said.

It was not five minutes before those men came at a panting run and were met by Dick.

“What’s happened?” asked Conrad.

“Don’t know yet,” replied young Merriwell, “They had explosives planted to blow up the various build-ings, and at least one of the plants was fired. The strikers are down yonder in the direction of the tunnel. You can hear them, boys.”

“What shall we do? Shall we attack them?”

“Wait,” urged Pinal Pete. “Give me a chance. Let me go down there and tell them the truth. Let me tell them you are here armed and ready for them. Let me tell them you’re not anxious to fight. I opine more than half of them will join you if we give ’em a chance. The rest can’t stand out against such numbers. They’ll surrender.”

“I’ll go with you, Pete,” said Dick. “Arlington, remain here with Conrad. Let every man be ready to come if I signal again.”

No words were spent in parleying. Together Pinal Pete and Dick Merriwell ran swiftly down the slope and away toward Bulldog Tunnel.

In the vicinity of the tunnel they found a great gathering of excited men. The mouth of the tunnel was blocked and choked by a mass of earth and stone.

At the call of Pinal Pete the men faced him. He stood there in the starlight, with Dick Merriwell at his side.

“Gents,” said Hyde, “this yere youngster has something to say to you, and I opine you’d better listen.”

Then Dick spoke up quickly, fearlessly, clearly.

“Men,” he cried, “you have been deceived by your former employers! You’ve been led into a needless strike. J. Bradbury Blood and his associates no longer control the Queen Mystery Mine. My brother controls this property, and he’ll give you all a square deal. We’ve got more than a hundred armed men here in the valley, but we’re not here to fight you unless you force us to do so. We’re here to negotiate with you and to satisfy you that we mean to treat you right. Why should we fly at each other’s throats? Why should there be bloodshed? It’s needless. The reasonable ones among you know it’s needless, and there’s no cause for them to fear unjust treatment at our hands.”

“The kid speaks straight, gents,” confirmed Pinal Pete. “Merriwell’s entire force is within call at this moment. I know a whole lot of you don’t want to fight. I know a whole lot of you believe Merriwell
should have a chance to prove that he will give you
the square deal you ask. Give him that chance and
he'll prove it. J. Bradbury Blood is the only man
who'll suffer."

"Then," said one of the miners, stepping out from
the rest, "I opine there won't be anything coming to
him. He's got his already."

"What do you mean?"

"One of the boys saw Blood and Dominico enter
the tunnel a while ago. They're both buried in there."

"Dominico! Dominico!" cried Dick, with inexpressible
horror. "It was not Dominico; it was my
brother Frank!"

There was no battle between the two forces. The
supposed death of Blood and Merriwell united those
men in the fixed purpose of opening Bulldog Tunnel
as soon as possible. Coakley, Cole, and Major Go-
lash improved the opportunity to get away while those
men were laboring like fiends to bore a hole through
the debris that blocked the tunnel.

Daylight found Dick Merriwell, hatless, coatless,
his shirt torn open at the throat, laboring with the
men.

The wires running to the other explosives had been
cut and the explosives removed.

It was Arlington who investigated and found that
in ripping off the switch Merriwell had inadvertently
made connection with a single terminal which pro-
jected slightly beyond the others. This terminal
proved to be the end of the wire that led to Bulldog
Tunnel. That explained why only one explosion had
occurred.

In the valley there was a huge steam-shovel that
had been brought there for the purpose of stripping
a recently discovered and undeveloped ore body. The
shovel was moved to the entrance of Bulldog Tunnel
and put in operation. It proved of great assistance
in clearing away the loose debris.

For two days and three nights Dick Merriwell lab-
bored without rest and without sleep. Arlington
stayed by him until ready to drop from exhaustion.

Not until late the second day did the laborers find
tokens of encouragement. By that time they had bored
deep enough to discover that the cave-in of the tunnel
did not extend far beyond the mouth. Still, few be-
 sides Dick had any hope that either of the men buried
there would come forth alive.

It was Dick, begrimed and dirt-covered, who crept
to the far end of the excavation and called for silence.
With a pick he hammered upon a boulder that lay in
his path.

Faintly, yet distinctly, as he listened he heard some-
thing like a knocking upon the opposite side of that
boulder.

"He lives!" shouted Dick joyously. "My brother
is alive in there! We'll bring him out alive!"

The steam-shovel was now silent. It could do no
more, but in relays those men bored cautiously round
the boulder, fearing every moment that through some
carelessness they might produce another cave-in. It
was Dick, with a miner's lamp in his hat, who drove
his pick through into the open space beyond. It was
Dick who shouted Frank's name and whose hand
reached through and clasped the hand of his brother.

The stars had paled and the gray dawn was in the
valley when, amid the wildest cheering, the men who
had been buried alive were brought forth. Frank
Merriwell came out, pale but steady and unshaken of
nerve.

J. Bradbury Blood was dragged, fighting and snar-
ling like a wild beast, into the open air. From his eyes
the light of reason had fled never to return.

THE END.

The Next Number (617) Will Contain

Frank Merriwell's Proposition

OR,

CAPTAIN BALDWIN'S SECRET WORK.

Frank at Home—The Story—The Visitor—The Guiding
Star—Tom Baldwin's Secret Work—The Man for a
Great Work—Making Ready—The Deadly Cheese—
The Craft of the Far East—The Yellow Peril—The
Call is Answered.
Catching a "Lucieve."

By C. A. STEPHENS.

One afternoon, while I was up in New Hampshire, I saw a party of men with rifles and snow-shoes slug over their shoulders, coming slowly down the street, drawing a sleigh upon which the body of a poor, made Tired enough they appeared as they turned into old Tony Felt's, the fur-dealer.

Feeling somewhat curious to see their game, I went over. The hunters were lounging about the shop, and on the floor, where they had thrown him, lay an odd-looking creature. The head was large and round, with erect-pointed ears, each tipped with a tuft of black hairs. The yellow eyes were partly un- closed, and in the face there looked something of fear. Its body was nearly four feet in length, and its legs long and powerful, with large feet and long curved claws. The back and sides were clad with fur of a beautiful stone-gray color, while the under parts of the body and breast were white, beautifully mottled with black spots.

The tail was very short, not more than four inches in length, and also tipped with black. The broad white breast, flecked with black, was often deep gapping wound which told how he had received his death.

"What sort of beast is that, Mr. Felt?" I asked.

"A lucieve; yes; a very good one."

"Because they have such short tails, Felt presume."

"I suppose so."

"It is the Lynx Canadensis. They call it lucieve, from Loup Cervier, the French name, meaning wolf stag or stag wolf," said Felt, not entirely looking a personable looking fellow, whom I now recognized as a "Harvard man," one of Professor Agassiz's pupils. And much pleased at having stumbled upon such a good specimen of the "Boreal Lynx" of Northern Europe. It is peculiar to Canada and the northern portions of the United States—particularly to New Northern England, where it is often confounded with the wolverine and wildcat, though entirely distinct. It would, therefore, of interest to several of those which Virgil calls, "Maculasis Lynces," the mottled lynxes.

Raising its lips by the stiff, wiry whiskers, I saw that its teeth were very long—fully an inch—and sharp as needles.

"Well, yes, then."

"Well, we've had the bounds after him several days. They treed him two or three times. When he got tired of running, he would jump into the bushes but he refused to shoot, he was down and off again. He didn't care much for the dogs, as we could see by the tracks where he had turned and faced them occasionally. They didn't dare to go near him—except on the black hound, with several long, ugly scratches about the neck and shoulders, came forward. "Spot" sailed into him once, I take it. Didn't you, Spot?"

Spot gave a yawning bark, drawled out into a whine, which seemed to say, that if he did he regretted it.

"Well, look at that dog's shoulder; scratched clean to the bone. But that's nothing to what poor Zip got. I never pitied a dog so. We had to kill him to put him out of his agony. You see, the lynx wouldn't leave the vicinities, but always circling upon the hills and mountains around here. And so we had been trying to get a shot at him by cutting him off at some point. Well, this afternoon we knew by the flurry the dogs were making that the old fellow had faced about again. He was coming in the swamp below Shorry's logging camp. The dogs were making a tremendous uproar; and we hurried in on our snow-shoes.

There the old gentleman sat among a clump of little spruce, sitting up just as you've seen a cat while washing her face," after dinner. The dogs stood in a semicircle round him, about a rod off,iti-ting good. Now and then one would rush up to him, and jump back, when the cat crouched down as if to spring. We got up within a dozen rods, and Dave Holden here fired at him with his rifle; you see where he hit him, that's in the stone. But that didn't hinder him from jumping at one of the dogs in its attention, he would strike him. He caught poor Zip by the throat, and drawing up his hind legs, just as you've seen a kitten, ripped him all to pieces with his claws. When we got to them the lynx was stone dead but still clinging to the dog; and Zip was writhing about with his inside all scratched out."

"I expected he'd jump when I fired at him," said the man then called Holden; "they don't want his brush. You don't get very near them when you shoot, or they'll get a dig at you somehow. I've seen a deal of them first and last. They're always ugly customers."

"They're always ugly customers."

"Let's hear about that, Dave," said the Cambridge sportsman.

"Oh, I was twenty years ago, when the town was new," continued Holden; "Father and I were a little nuts. We used to clear up at the old place, about three miles above here. I wasn't more'n fifteen, and my brother Ezekiel was younger. There were plenty of these luciees all about then. We used to hear the screeching almost every night; and on the evenings we could see them crossing the cleared land. In the winter-time their tracks were everywhere. I used to see where they were to follow a scent. They were up to two inches apart, but as large as your hand. You see what feet that fellow's got. They either walk or leap, striking all their feet together. When they walk, their usual step is quite short, cat-like, not more than six inches; but in leaping, and clearing from eight to ten feet at a bound. We used to see where they had jumped into trees or upon stumps, ten or twelve feet from the ground. They are up to two or three inches under the water as well as a dog. I've frequently seen them swimming in the lake up here; and have known them to swim across it in less than two miles, and as fast as one could paddle a boat. Father once saw one lying stretched out on the limb of a tree directly over his head, but as he moved quietly along, the creature did not seem inclined to attack him. Indeed, it's my impression that a lucieve's sense is so acute that it can cornered up, or surprised while devouring its prey. They watch the deer from the trees, lying hidden among the leaves, along the banks, and upon their backs as they move. They snow once saw a deer bound into our clearing with one fastened upon his back. But they never troubled us much, until father began to raise-raising; then we had to look out for the young lams pretty sharp. The time was getting to be when the spring and the second spring we were here. We had one lamb quite early in the winter; and the girls had brought it up in the house; and when the snow began to go off, it started to nibble about. One noon as we went in to dinner, I saw the lamb on a little knoll, behind the house, not more than three inches away. Well, mother never said anything about it; we never saw it again, but could guess pretty near what had become of it. One of our neighbors afterward told us that he saw a large animal crossing the fields about noon, but thought it was a dog and so let it go. We found it might be, after getting such a nice taste, would be likely to hang about for a while. We had a large bear-trap, and going close to our house, we were content on behind. Boylike we were highly excited, and had a great deal more zeal than wisdom. After following for about half a mile, we came out into an open place, and were leaning forward on a dog-trap, one behind the other, while we were nearly upset, by the lucieve, trap and all, coming against us with a rush, a spit, and a growl; quick as thought I was knocked flat, and went rolling over and over in the brush, with the catch top of me finding growing, and the old bear-trap clanking. One pull of his long claws had stripped my stout, home-made jacket clean off, except the arms; and if the dog had not sprung upon him and caught his feet in the trap, he would have dragged back out of his reach pretty quick. He had one foot in the trap, and there he stood at bay, rattling the chain and screeching at us. His big round eyes seemed to shoot out flashes, he
was so mad. The usual color of their eyes is like bright silver; but when mad they flash strangely. In a few moments father came up and shot him. It was the largest one I ever saw; monstrous bigger than this one.

"I was pretty cautious about chasing a trap after that, you'd better believe.

As Holden finished, another of the group, a hale old backwoodsman, who for the last few minutes had been looking brimful of "yarns," began to tell us one of his own experiences. He was one of those "historical" old fellows who believe that stories look a lot better told by other persons.

"When I was trapping in the Moosehead Lake region, over in Maine," he said, "I recollect coming out one night into an opening known as "Dolman's clearing." The place had a bad name, and was generally shunned by hunters. A murder was said to have been committed there some years before, and there was the usual bush about the old-log-house being haunted. It was a dismal sort of place, and commonly I should have preferred camping out, to spending the night there. But it had been raining several days; every bush was a shower bath, and I was thoroughly soaked—a fact which made any kind of a shelter, where a fire could be kindled, look inviting. The old house was in a very tumble-down condition. The doors and windows, if there ever were any, were gone. But the loft, having a loose floor with a trap-door hole, where there had probably been a ladder some time, Well, I built a fire, cooked my supper, dried my clothes, and, being pretty well tired out, I went to sleep. I don't know how long I slept, but some time along in the night I found myself awake with a terrific scream ringing in my ears; such a peal that I was on my feet before I was fully awake. My fire had gone out, and it was dark as Egypt. I confess I was a little scared. All the nonsense I'd heard about old Dolman's ghost popped into my mind, and there in the night I felt half-inclined to swallow it. I hadn't seen a single human being for more than three weeks, and had got kinder lonesome, I suppose.

"All was still enough now. It had slacked up raining, and the fire seemed to have a smoldering glow. Everything seemed quiet and regular, and after poking and harking around a while, I began to think that perhaps I might have been fooled by a bad dream. So I lay down again, and by and by dozed off into a drowse. I think, for I thought I was being charmed by a black snake, and starting, found myself staring up at the hole in the chamber floor, where I saw two bright spots, about a hand's breadth apart, that shone and glowed like coals of fire. It took me a moment to collect my wits, and then I knew it must be some animal of the cat kind. I put my hand out for my rifle, and the moment I stirred, there came a most piteous, wailing, whining, whining. I laid down, and, putting my hand to the hole, I found a big, black, hungry cat. I could put it; and, knowing the creature would jump, I sprang up, just as he leaped down through the hole.

"I'd got hold of a rifle by which I thought I might have shot him, for he stood glaring at me a moment, with his back up, making a queer whining noise, then bounded through one of the square holes left for windows, and disappeared.

"Looking among the garbage, I found a half-eaten fish. He was probably up in the loft when I came in, and had been watching me all night, until getting uneasy, or hungry, he began to scream."

**Motor Roads in Africa.**

In the Congo Free State, under the direction of a central automobile department, more than a year's work has been done in the construction of special highways and the establishment of the forerunners of a network of automobile freight lines.

The road on which work is being most rapidly pushed, and on the completed portion of which freight is now being transported, will be the longest and most important of these enterprises. It will connect the Congo with the Nile at Rejaf, only a short distance south of Gondokoro, which is now reached regularly by passenger and freight-steamers from Khartum.

When the freight road is completed, in about two years, the upper Congo will have automobile, steamboat, and rail connections with the Mediterranean, and as steam transportation to the Atlantic and Europe. The starting-point is about 600 miles up the Congo above Stanley Pool. There are some long stretches of navigation where the road may be worked on small steamers, but the total length of the freight road will be 500 miles.

The attitude of the natives along the Welle Maku toward the advancing enterprise is highly gratifying to the authorities. They give a hearty welcome to the whites. The chiefs have complained that the carrier service between the Belgian posts takes too many men from their usual pursuits, and the whole region is happy over the fact that the freight road will entirely do away with the caravans of porters carrying loads on their backs for hundreds of miles.

Meanwhile, the most important chief of this section, on his own initiative says that if they pay his subjects the usual price for work by the day the whites need not bother themselves with the question of labor supply. He will provide the men and take them from the villages near where the road is being built.

The entire road will be first-class for the heavy hauling intended and perfect drainage is being provided at every point. For some years the government has been experimenting with two or three types of automobile freight carriers.

A well-known English machine was finally rejected, chiefly on account of its excessive weight, and a Belgian wagon, especially built for tropical service, has been adopted and is said to be satisfactory in all respects. The only change in it which the report recommends is that certain Congo instead of European woods be used in the construction of the machines now being built for the service.

As fast as the road is completed the wagons are hauling materials and supplies to the road-bed, giving the machines and road-bed a thorough test. The loaded wagons travel at the rate of ten to twelve miles an hour, and it is expected that this will be the average speed between the Congo and the Nile when the system of highways is completed and the traffic is fully in operation.

**India Ink.**

Laughelk of the finest quality is ground to a paste with very weak liquor of potassa, and this paste is then diffused through water slightly alkalized with potassa, after which it is collected, washed with clean water, and dried. The dry powder is next mixed with a smooth stiff paste, with a strong flavored decoction of carrageen or Irish moss, or of quince seed, a few drops of essence of musk, and about half as much essence of ambergris being added, by way of perfume. The mass is, lastly, molded into cakes, which are ornamented with Chinese characters and devices as soon as they are dry and hard.

**The Bell of a Lost Ship.**

In the rooms of the National History Society, in Boylston Street, Boston, was displayed for many years, and may be there yet for aught we know, a ship's bell which had an interesting history. About the year 1852, Mr. Whipple, the noted submarine marine diver of the day, fully equipped with armor and divers to explore the hopes of the bell, was lost in the matter of Mexican silver. The divers by the peculiar screech the bell was probably up in the loft when I came in, and had been watching me all night, until getting uneasy, or hungry, he began to scream.**
NEW YORK, February 1, 1908.

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TIP TOP ROLL OF HONOR.

Following the suggestion of Mr. Burt L. Standish, that appeared in his letter to Tip Top readers in No. 480, the following loyal Tip Toppers have won for themselves a place on our Honor Roll for their efforts to increase the circulation of the King of Weeklies. Get in line boys and girls and strive to have your name at the head of the list.

Harry Gibney, New York City.
Minnie A. Winslow, Mass.
Oakes Worl, New York City.
Sidney B. Pope, Arizona.
Thos. P. Conboy, Conn.
Ernest Rowland, Conn.
John Rowe.
John Kelly.
David Parkhurst.
Dick Stanley, Penn.
Eddie M. Drummond, Virginia.

The names of other enthusiastic Tip Toppers will be added from time to time. Send in the result of your efforts to push the circulation of your favorite weekly and win a place on the Roll of Honor.

APPLAUSE.

Owing to the number of letters received, the editor of Tip Top cannot undertake to secure their publication under six weeks. Those who contribute to this department must not expect to see them before that time.

SPECIAL NOTICE—There has been such a continuous call for the series of Tip Top postcards which we issued about two years ago, that we have reprinted the set, and any boy who writes us, telling why he loves Tip Top, and what the magazine has done for him, as well as what he is doing to increase its circulation, will, upon request, receive a set of these fine cards free by mail. Write early, as the supply is limited, and may not last long and be very sure to address your letter "Tip Top Weekly, Post Card Offer." Having read so many of your letters in the Applause column, I thought I would like to add mine, also.

The only one of Tip Top Week for a short time—that is from where Dick entered Yale. I am saving all the copies and intend having them bound, because I think so much of them. I have induced my cousin to be a subscriber of your handsome weekly. I would also favor the plan, of one of my fellow countrymen, which is that Mr. Standish would have a Canadian character added to the other characters in Tip Top.

This is the first time that I have taken the privilege of writing about "Tip Top," but I think so much of the weekly that I couldn't help saying something. Wishing Mr. Standish, Frank, Dick, and all their pards a long and happy life, I remain yours, a "Tip Topper,"

R. W. Berlin, Ontario, Canada.

We are of the same opinion, and hope ere long to meet a good manly representative young Canuck in the pages of "Tip Top." Thousands of readers over the line would welcome such a character we feel positive.

("Some Doggerel," written expressly for "Tip Top" by a Hoosier Boy.)

I set right down the other day, an' took my pen in hand, To write a verse or two about the best yarn in the land; My fancy took me back to when I borrowed one to try it, And then, by jinks, I had to go, each Friday night, to buy it.

I bought that yarn, night on six years, I swan, would you believe it, I go plumb daffy, on "Tip Top," each week 'till I receive it; My ma, she tries to get my ma to let me to ignore it, But I loan them to my boy chums, and they all go wild over 'em.

Just look at good old "Tip Top" and the part that she has played In the molding of young manhood, and the athletes she has made, And there's learnin' in them "Tip Tops," for the people young and old, And the pleasures of good readin' has increased a hundredfold.

Now, a friend of mine, last week, expressed my sentiments to a "T." When he said, "The Tip Top Weekly is good enough for me," For Street & Smith make all the others look like thirty cents. And I'll give them both the "glad hand," if ever meet them.

Now, here's to good old "Tip Top," here's to Street & Smith, by gum, Here's wishing them "all kinds of luck" in the time that is to come; And boys, for fear you'll think these lines are just a shade outlandish, I'll close my note with one more vote of praise to Burt L. Standish, Herbert E. H. Matthews, Ind.

(A letter from Mississippi.)

As I have not seen a letter in the Applause column from this town, I thought I would write and let you know what I think of the king of weeklies.

I have just finished No. 607, "Frank Merrimell's Captive; or, The End of the Chase," and I think it is "Great," with a big "G" and old.

In the six months that I have enjoyed "Tip Top," I have got five boys to read it, and every boy says it is the best weekly published, and I think they are right.

Of all the characters I like Frank, Dick, Brad, Tubbs, and Young Joe the best.

As I do not want to take up too much space and hoping it will not find its way to the "scrap-basket," I will close, with three cheers for Burt L. and Street & Smith. I remain, a loyal "Tip Topper,"

Edwin Carmichael.

Six months or six years, it would make no difference, Edwin, for "Tip Top" once read, possesses a peculiar charm that seldom allows of backfiling. Your words of good cheer are very grateful, and we hope you will continue to scatter the good seed broadcast, so that the harvest will return to us many fold.

(A letter from New Brunswick, Canada.)

I have never before taken the opportunity of writing to the Applause column of "Tip Top," although I have read the magazine for several years. I have read from number one to the
present date, and some I have read several times, because I liked them so much. In fact, I am something of an authority on "Tip Top." I tell them about the old stories of Frank and his "set" and they become interested. "Tip Top" is, indeed, the king of weeklies. It is the only publication of that sort I read, and I would readily recommend it to anyone. I know of several ministers and a priest who often read them. This is quite a long letter for the first time and if it escapes the waste-paper basket you will have my eternal gratitude. I can only say in closing, that I like all the characters in "Tip Top," although Frank and his set seem like older friends. I hope to hear from Old Joe Crowfoot before long. He is the "goods." Thanking you in advance, I remain, ever a constant reader,

ROBERT STEWART WHITE.

Catalogue mentioned in your postscript has gone forward. There is no home in the world, where English is spoken that could not welcome "Tip Top," and with profit, moral and physical, to its younger element. What you tell us about ministers approving of its work is nothing new, though always gratefully received.

I have been a reader of "Tip Top" for some time and have enjoyed it thoroughly. Some other boys seemed to be of the same mind as I was, and so we formed the Ekik "Tip Top" Club. Hoping to see this in print, we remain, yours truly,

THE EKIK "Tip Top" CLUB,
IRVING COHNISKY, Sec.,
MOSES ASINOFER, Pres.,
HARRY BARTHOLOWITZ, Sec.

New York City.

"Tip Top" wishes you great success in your club, and trusts that your admiration for Frank Merrilwell will influence you to pattern your lives after his high principles as much as possible.

I have been enjoying "Tip Top" for nearly a year. It is fine. I think the latest "Tip Top," No. 607, "Frank Merrilwell's Captive," shows Frank's generosity by releasing Jean Laporte, the poacher. Since I have been reading the king of weeklies I have induced nine boys to read "Tip Top," seven of whom get it regularly. Hoping to see this in print, I remain, a cheering and loyal "Tip Topper."

HARRY GINSKY.
New York City.

Which is certainly the kind of work that counts, and Harry will doubtless be pleased to see what liberties we have taken with his name elsewhere.

(A letter from Kansas.)

I have been reading the "Tip Top Weekly" now for about one year and a half, and I want to praise Burt L. because of his famous work. I have induced six boys in my town to take it. It is the king of weeklies harrin none. I believe I like Frank and Dick the best, although Tucker is all right.

Send me both catalogues if you please, as I have missed a few of the weeklies.

Trustin I will see this in print, I remain, as ever,

C. R. Mack.

Catalogues have gone forward, and we trust our young friend will continue to enjoy his weekly "Tip Top."

Having read your crackerjack magazine, "Tip Top," for a period of over three years, I would like to express my sentiments of this weekly. I think that it is one of the finest and cleanest magazines I have ever read, barring none. In Dick Merrilwell, Burt L. has built up the finest specimen of the American boy ever known. I also like Brad, with his breezy Western way. Wishing a long life to Burt L. and his characters, I remain, a stanch Merrilwellite, MILTON E. SCHWARZWALD.
Chicago, Ill.

Thanks many times for your kind words. Catalogue has been mailed as per request.

As I have never seen a letter in Applause from Kansas City and have read the king of weeklies from the time Frank started to school, I think I will let you know how I like it. I don't

think any one character could be any better than it is, and I don't know which I like the best, Frank or Dick. And for the rest of the boys and girls they are all just fine. I just can't write how well I like "Tip Top." But I do know that when I pick "Tip Top" up I can't put it down until finished; and I often read the old ones over again. If Frank and Dick could marry all the girls that go with them they would have to go to Utah. I think if I wasn't married I would be one of them, but as I am young, married, and happy, I will stay at home. Hoping that you will escape the basket, I close, with a cheer and a half for all concerned.

A LOYAL "TIP TOPPER" AND MOTHER.

Kansas City, Kan.

Many thanks. We cannot receive too many such letters from the mothers of "Tip Top" coming readers.

As I have been a reader of "Tip Top," or the great American boys' weekly, for four years, I take the liberty of wasting a little of your valuable space in your Applause column. "Tip Top" is the only weekly fit for an American boy to read; it's the only publication containing splendid stories calculated to influence its readers to stop smoking, gambling, drinking, etc. My brother, for example, he used to smoke, but since I lent him a "Tip Top" he is improving; he is stopping. I like Frank, Dick, Chester Delston, Brad Buckhart, Liberty Fulmore and all the characters except Ditson. Will you please send me a catalogue of "Tip Top Weekly" and Medal Library? With long life for B. L. Standish and Street & Smith, I remain a true "Tip Topper."

A. KAUFMAN.
New York City.

Here is a Gotham lad who knows what he is writing about, and who appreciates the value of the lessons that "Tip Top" contains. Besides its entrancing stories, our publication has a value far beyond all other juvenile weeklies combined.

(A letter from Massachusetts.)

I have written to the Applause column once before, but I guess it reached the waste-basket, all right. I will try my luck once more, and see if I can succeed. I have read "Tip Top" three or four years, and it is the very best magazine ever published. I have loaned my copies to children after I've read them, and they like them the same as I do. I've gotten a number of people to buying them from the news-dealer where I trade. I like Richard and Frank best. I ordered my post-cards now please let me know for my post-card album won't be completed until I get a set of "Tip Top." I wish Mr. Burt L. Standish could continue to write these "Tip Tops" for me. I would like to meet Mr. Burt personally some day. I hope Dick will marry June, instead of Dale doing so. I have read "Tip Top" and worked hard enough getting people to buy them, to have my name on the Roll of Honor. I would like to be where Dick was, under the palms at Meadowly for a while. Sincerely yours, a loyal "Tip Topper."

MINNIE A. WINSLOW.

We will certainly have to put it there and are pleased to say that Minnie shall have a set of the new supply of post-cards.

(A letter from Georgia.)

I have been reading the great and only "Tip Top" for four years and think it the king of all weeklies. I am very sorry to hear of Capt. Wiley's death. I like Chest Arlington since he has reformed. I have just finished No. 604, and think it fine. "Tip Top" has saved many young boys from ruin. Some say they like Dick best. I do not. Was it not Frank who found him and taught him good ways, and put him through college? Yes, it was, dear old Frank. I have got four boys to read "Tip Top." I did not want Frank to marry Inza. I liked Edie the best. My favorites are Frank, Dick, Burt, Jack, Bruce. The girls: Elsie and Inza. June is the girl for Dick. Three cheers for Burt L. and Street & Smith. Hoping to see you soon,

CEMIO CRUSHER.

We like your young friends to give free expression to their likes and dislikes, always within reason, of course; but it would be absurd to imagine that the half-million boys who read "Tip Top" every week could all think alike. The only thing upon which they are all agreed is that "Tip Top" is king.
NOTICE—So many inquiries reach us each week concerning the various manuals on athletic development, which we publish, that we have decided to keep a list of them at the head of this department. Any number can be had by mail by remitting 10 cents, and 3 cents postage, for each copy, to the publishers.

FRANK MERRIWELL’S BOOKS OF PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT. THE ART OF BOXING AND SELF-DEFENSE, by Prof. Donovan. U.S. ARMY PHYSICAL EXERCISES, revised by Prof. Donovan. PHYSICAL HEALTH CULTURE. — by Prof. Fourmen.

(A letter from Minneapolis.)

PROF. FOURMEN: I have read “Tip Top” for six years, and I now take the liberty of asking you a few questions. I am 15 years old and my measurements are: Height, 5 feet 10 inches; chest, normal, 36 inches; expanded, 37 inches; waist, 33 inches; calf, 14½ inches; thigh, 21 inches; forearm, 14 inches; neck, 4 inches. I weigh 130 pounds. How are my measurements? What are my weak points and how can I develop them? Am I built for an athlete, especially a football-player? Yours truly, WALTER LUNDQUIST.

An average athlete of your stature would weigh 155 pounds and have a chest measuring 39 inches, so you see you are quite slender. Study up a manual on physical development and lay out a program of exercise. You must pick to religiously for six months. Then compare measurements, and send in your thanks.

(A letter from Massachusetts.)

PROF. FOURMEN: I have been a reader of the “Tip Top” for the past three years, so please give your opinion of the following measurements: Age, 10 years 3 months; height, 5 feet 7½ inches; weight, 130½ pounds; neck, 13½ inches; chest, normal, 30 inches; expanded, 33 inches; biceps, normal, 9 inches; expanded, 10½ inches; waist, 27 inches; wrist, 6½ inches; forearm, 9 inches; ankle, 9½ inches; calf, 13 inches; thigh, 19 inches; shoulders, 15½ inches. Please tell me how I can increase my weight, and broaden my shoulders. I remain, yours truly, A LOYAL “TIP TOPPER.”

Weight a little shy but your chest should receive your unceasing attention if you aspire to become a vigorous healthy man. Never mind your shoulders, but just devote yourself by deep breathing to adding inches to the 30 you measure. 37 is the average measurement.

PROF. FOURMEN: I have read “Tip Top” for about seven or eight years, and would like to ask some questions. I know my measurements are poor. Here they are: Age, 16 years; height, 5 feet 2 inches; weight, 103 pounds; chest, normal, 31 inches; expanded, 33½ inches; neck, 12½ inches; thigh, 17 inches; waist, 27 inches; calves, 12½ inches; wrist, 6 inches. How can I increase all my measurements? Could you tell me a good gym to go to, and what I should do there? I am working from 7:30 A.M. to 6 P.M. I sleep about six hours every night. I would like to go to college but cannot pay for it. What would I have to do to work myself through college? Is there any way I can go to college without going four years to high school? If there is, would you please let me know. I am very fond of playing Rugby football. Is it a healthy game to play? Hoping to hear from you soon, GUSTAVE WARSZAN.

Brooklyn, N. Y.

You are somewhat short in height for your age, but you need not worry about your measurements. Weight and chest are close to what they should be. Join the Y. M. C. A. and have the use of their gym each evening. Football is surely a healthy game. To work your way through college you would have to hustle. There are scores of different ways of doing it. It is possible to get there without a high-school career but few do so.

PROF. FOURMEN: Below are my measurements. Age, 12 years; weight, 101 pounds; height, 5 feet; wrists, 6½ inches; forearm, 9½ inches; biceps, normal, 9½ inches; expanded, 10½ inches; neck, 13 inches; chest, 31 inches; expanded, 33 inches; waist, 20 inches. What are my weak points? What is the best method of reducing a large waist? What are the measurements of a boy 5 feet? Thanking you in advance, I remain, G. B.

Los Angeles, Cal.

I fail to find any weak points, save that your waist is large. You are a good feeder, doubtless, son. Try cutting down your supplies a bit, particularly in fattening food, and this with increased exercise ought to help. A boy of 5 feet should weigh about 92 pounds, and his chest measure between 29 and 30 inches.

PROF. FOURMEN: Having been a constant reader of “Tip Top” for eight years, I take the liberty of sending my measurements and records for your inspection. I am 20 years old; height, 5 feet 7 inches; weight, 142 pounds. My measurements are: Chest, normal, 39½ inches; expanded, 43½ inches; waist, 29 inches; biceps, 14 inches; forearm, 12½ inches; neck, 15 inches; thighs, 21 inches; calves, 15 inches; wrist, 7½ inches; ankles, 9 inches. I pitch on my high-school team; have speed to burn and magnificent control, but very few curves. I seem to be very effective, however. I can run a hundred yards in 10 3-8 seconds; 440 yards in 52 seconds flat; pole-vault, 9 feet 2 inches; standing broad jump, 9 feet 2 inches; running broad jump, 19 feet 1 inch. What chance have I to become an athlete? What are my weak points? Hoping to see this in print in the near future, I remain, ONE OF THE LOYALIST.

Denver, Colo.

Every chance in the world, with such splendid measurements. You excel in weight, and your chest is equal to that of the average athlete of 5 feet 10 inches. I can see no weak spot in your make-up, and only hope you will continue to carry the principles of Frank Merrwell all through life—“a sound mind in a sound body.”
THE TIP TOP WEEKLY

ISSUED EVERY FRIDAY
HANDSOME COLORED COVERS

Never has Burt L. Standish written such interesting tales of the adventures of the Merriwell brothers, Frank and Dick, as are now appearing in this weekly. Mr. Standish has a world-wide circle of friends and he is putting forth his best efforts to amuse and entertain them. Boys, you have no idea of what a grand feast he is preparing for you. Tip Top’s stories are going to astonish you. Do not fail to buy this weekly.

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621—Dick Merriwell’s Condition; or, An Affair of the Heart.

If you want any back numbers of our libraries and cannot procure them from your newsdealers, they can be obtained from this office direct. Postage stamps taken the same as money.

STREET & SMITH, Publishers, 79 Seventh Avenue, NEW YORK CITY.
HOW TO SECURE THE EARLY NUMBERS OF

TIP TOP WEEKLY

To the boys who take interest in the adventures of Frank Merriwell and want to read everything that was written about him, we desire to say that numbers 1 to 350 of the Tip Top Weekly containing his early adventures are entirely out of stock and will not be reprinted. These numbers, however, were published in the Medal Library beginning with No. 150 which is entitled "Frank Merriwell's Schooldays." We give herewith a complete list of all the Merriwell stories that have been published in book form up to the time of writing. We will send a complete catalogue of the Medal Library, which is just full of good things for boys, on receipt of a 1c. stamp to cover postage.

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205—Frank Merriwell at Yale.
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422—Frank Merriwell's False Friend.
425—Frank Merriwell's Strong Arm.
428—Frank Merriwell as Coach.
431—Frank Merriwell's Brother.
434—Frank Merriwell's Marvel.
437—Frank Merriwell's Support.
440—Dick Merriwell at Fardale.
443—Dick Merriwell's Glory.

Published About January 13th
446—Dick Merriwell's Promise.
Published About February 3rd
449—Dick Merriwell's Rescue.

Published About February 24th
452—Dick Merriwell's Narrow Escape.

Published About March 17th
455—Dick Merriwell's Racket.

Published About April 7th
458—Dick Merriwell's Revenge.

Published About April 28th
461—Dick Merriwell's Rose.

Published About May 19th
464—Dick Merriwell's Delivery.

Published About June 9th
467—Dick Merriwell's Wonders.

Published About June 30th
470—Frank Merriwell's Honor.