No. 615  JAN. 25, 1908  DICK MERRIWELL'S PREDICAMENT  FIVE CENTS

TIP TOP WEEKLY
An Ideal Publication for the American Youth

STREET & SMITH, PUBLISHERS, NEW YORK
DICK MERRIWell’S PREDICAMENT;

OR,

FRANK MERRIWell FACING HIS FOES.

By BURT L. STANDISH.

CHAPTER I.

BENEATH THE STARS.

Like many-pointed burnished bits of cut-steel a million stars filled the blue void of the sky. Across the dim gray expanse of desert, with rhythmic hoof-beats, rode seven armed men. Upon the plain the only shadows, besides the moving shadows of the horsemen, were those made by cactus clumps and bunches of mesquite and greasewood. Behind them to the west sank the mountains; ahead of them to the east rose the hills, in the heart of which they would find Caruso. The night wind streamed against their faces with a chill touch. They wasted no words, but were, one and all, keenly alert with eye and ear. The distant, doleful bark of a coyote passed unheeded. The horses were perspiring and dust-laden. The riders were dust-covered, with the taste of it in their throats and the smother of it in their nostrils.

"Whoo-oo-oo-ee-ee!"

The peculiar cry which floated through the starry night sent a thrill over every man, and caused the leader to rein sharply, while his free hand fell on the butt of a holstered pistol.

Out from the shadow of a mesquite clump came two other shadows, and again that cry was sent ringing across the plain.

"Who the devil is it?" said the leader. "Is it Hyde? They’re not mounted."

"Can’t be Hyde, Mr. Amboy," declared one of the speaker’s six companions. "You’d never find him here and afoot. They are but two. Hyde had the nigger and the greaser with him."

The unknown ones seemed to halt as if in doubt. Evidently they were consulting. Possibly they fancied they had made a mistake and were contemplating a dash back to the cover of the mesquite where they could defend themselves from attack.

"Whoo-oo-oo-ee-ee!" called the leader of the horsemen.

Instantly there was a joyous answer, and the two men afoot came on at a run.

"They’re our boys, Mr. Amboy, sure enough," said
the man who had ventured to consult with the leader; “but it sure doesn’t seem possible it can be Hyde.”

Followed by the others, the one called Amboy rode forward slowly. The men on foot were panting as they came up.

“It’s Buck and Miguel,” muttered Amboy in perplexity. “What are they doing here without horses? Where is Hyde?”

This last question he spoke loudly in a tone that demanded an instantaneous answer.

“Ah reckon dat he’s sho’ hangin’ from a telegraph-pole by dis time, Mistah Amboy,” was the reply of the larger man of the two, who was colored.

The other man swore and snarled in mongrel Spanish.

Amboy leaped from the saddle and stepped toward them. Suddenly he halted, lifting his hand to his nose. “What in blazes is that odor?” he asked. “It’s a frightful smell. What’s the matter with you, Miguel?”

But even though Amboy understood Spanish, it was difficult for him to make out what the excited and infuriated Mexican was saying. He caught a few words like “eggs,” “mob,” “prisoner,” and “hanged.”

Two or three of the other horsemen had dismounted and advanced. They likewise stopped in their tracks, sniffing the air, and muttering their disgust.

“Here you, Miguel!” cried Amboy sharply, “shut up that infernal chattering and let Buck explain!”

“I opinz,” said the man who had spoken to Amboy previously, “that these here gents have been pelted with rotten eggs.”

“Dat’s it! dat’s it!” snarled the huge colored man. “Dey done nailed us right in der lookers wif dem eggs. Yes, sah! Dey had no’n fo’teen barrels of dem eggs and dey chased us clean out of de town a-nailin’ us wif ‘em. Ah’d ruther stan’ up befo’ a whole regiment of soldiers dan befo’ a bunch ob men armed wif rotten eggs.”

“Well, what do you think of that?” asked one of the horsemen, laughing hoarsely.


“Ah reckon dey’ll celebrate his funeral in Caruzo to-morrer, boss,” said the colored man. “De las’ we see ob him dey had him wif his arms tied behind his back, and Ah’d sholy bet mah las’ dollar dat he’s danglin’ by de neck long befo’ dis.”

“Well, what do you think of that, Mr. Amboy—what do you think of it?” cried the man at the leader’s shoulder.

“It seems incredible that such a thing could have happened to Pinal Pete,” said Amboy. “We have friends and sympathizers in Caruzo, and they should look out for him. But how did they ever get him? That’s what sticks me. Half the town must have risen and jumped on him at once.”

“No, sah; no, sah,” denied the colored man. “Dat’s not de way ob it. Yo’ see de boss he took it on his own shoulders to scare dat Frank Merriwell maan into sebenteen kinds of fits. We had plenty ob time befo’ de train arribed in town what brought dat Merriwell maan. So we circulated through Caruzo and tol’ the people what was gwine to happen to dat pusson. We tol’ dem dat Merriwell was a-comin’ on heah to interfere wif de rights ob de honest laborin’ men at de mine, and we proposed to show him right off de reel dat he’d tackled a job dat was about ‘leven million times too big fo’ him to handle.

“Pete he done said to folks dey better keep away from de station, fo’ he was goin’ down dere by hisself and chaw dat Merriwell pusson up. And when de train whistled we was habin’ a drink, and Pete he says for us to stay behind and enjoy ourselves while he goes down and takes care of Mistah Merriwell. So he rides down to de station to take care ob de tenderfoot. De next thing we knows he comes marchin’ up de street wif his arms tied behind his back and dat Merriwell pusson a-saunterin’ along at his heels as cool as yo’ please. Right behind dem two comes a long line ob people a-lookin’ on and a-grinnin’ and a-sayin’ dat Pinal Pete had done run up ag’in his master at last. And de people ob Caruzo dey sticks dere heads out ob de windows and de do’s and dere eyes git big as saucers and dey begins to cry, ‘Lynch him! Lynch him!’

“Den Mig and I we gitz busy. Yes, sah! We sails right out wif our shootin’-irons and prepares to mingle some. Yes, sah! But jes’ when we was goin’ to git into action somebody done flings an egg dat strikes me right between de lookers. Immejel followin’ dat de air was plumb full of eggs, Mr. Amboy. Yes, sah! No libin’ maan could stand ag’in such a fusiliade as dat. Why, sah, mah eyes was plumb full of de sticky stuff and I couldn’t see. How was I gwine to do any shootin’ if I couldn’t see? Mig he was in de same fix, and so we had to turn and leg it as fast as we could. And what do you think, boss? Skin me if dat crowd didn’t chase us wif eggs and pelt us until we was clean out ob de town. Dat’s what happened, boss. Dat’s de whole story.”

Pit Amboy swore beneath his breath.
“And you ran away and left Hyde in the hands of the mob, did you? You ought to be proud of it, both of you! Hyde picked you himself. He said, ‘Give me Buck and Miguel, and I can clean out the whole of Caruzo.’”

Again the Mexican snarled a volley of fierce Spanish.

“They trapped Pete somehow, Mr. Amboy,” declared a man named Coakley.

“I didn’t fancy they’d dare try it,” said Amboy.

“This is bad business, gents. It’s evident Saunders has succeeded in getting away. If they’ve lynched Hyde—”

“Listen!” cried one of the party.

Silence fell upon them.

“Who is it?” muttered Coakley.

“It must be Pete Hyde,” decided Amboy.

CHAPTER II.

PINAL PETE EXPLAINS.

When they had answered the call the horseman came on fearlessly. They had made no mistake, for the man proved to be Pinal Pete. He drew rein and leaped to the ground almost before his horse had stopped.

“Well, you’re rather lively, Hyde, for a man who has been lynched,” said Amboy, with an intonation of satisfaction.

“Howdy, Amboy,” called the thin-haired, pantherish man, who wore, as the starlight showed, a long dark mustache and imperial. “What are you doing here?”

“First tell me what you’re doing—or, rather, what you’ve done,” urged the leader of the horsemen.

“I certain regret to admit that I haven’t done anything worth bragging about, and I’m congratulating myself right smart that I’m here to tell that much. Only for friends I judge I’d be swinging at the pleasure of the zephyrs just now.”

“Then it’s true that they trapped and captured you. I could hardly believe it when Buck told me. How did you ever let them play such a trick on you, Hyde?”

“I’m a whole lot ashamed to confess it,” said the man, with a touch of bitterness, “but I have to own up that I misjudged that gent, Merriwell, some.”

“Merriwell? But he was only one. It took more than one man to get Pete Hyde foul.”

“If it was a bit lighter, Amboy, you’d observe that I’m looking as ashamed as a common town dog that’s tried to run down a jack-rabbit. I can’t just explain it, sir, but that fellow did the trick by his lonesome. I had him under my gun, too. I had the drop on him. Suddenly he looked over my shoulder and cried for some one to grab me. Then, right in my ear, sounded the voice of a man who ordered me to throw up my hands. I allowed some gosoot was behind me with a shooting-iron, and I ducked and turned. There wasn’t a blamed soul there, and before I could recover from the surprise of it that tenderfoot-looking gent jumped me and had me down.

“Even though he took me by surprise, Amboy, I’m some strong, and I thought I could give him a hustle for it. There’s where I made another mistake, for he seemed to have the strength of twenty men rolled into one. He sure near twisted both my arms off, and, with the assistance of his kid brother, he tied my hands fast behind me. I hate to tell the truth about this thing, but it ain’t no use to lie. For the first time in his life Pete Hyde was bested by one man. If I’d sized him up right, Amboy, he’d never got me that way in a thousand years, but, as I before remarked, I made the mistake of reckoning him an easy tenderfoot.

“When I had to march up through Caruzo I sure felt some cheap. I sure felt a heap ashamed. I was counting on Buck and Miguel. The moment I saw ‘em I yelled for ‘em to open up with their shooting-irons. If they’d done so, everything might have come out all right, but while they were hesitating the crowd got after them with rotten eggs and chased them out of the town. That’s the story fair and square and straight, Amboy, without no lying. I thought mebbe Buck or Miguel would try to sneak back to give me a helping hand, but they didn’t.”

“Well, how did you get away, Hyde?”

“One time,” confessed the truthful bad man, “it looked like there wasn’t a chance in a thousand for me. When the citizens found they had me and that I was helpless they began to snarl for my blood like a lot of hungry curs. This here horse, which doesn’t belong to me, was standing in front of the Grand Hotel and a rope was hanging over the pommel of the saddle. They grabbed that rope and threw the noose around my neck. About that time it seemed like a
fare-ye-well for Pinal Pete. Right there the same
gent who had caught me, pushes me up onto the steps
of the hotel and faces the crowd. He talks mighty
bold and commanding. He tells them that I certain
belonged to him. He tells them they can’t swing me
without a fair and square trial. Then some of our
friends get in with me and manage to run me into
the building. They take me up to a little room and
say they’ll keep watch of me while the citizens get
ready to try me sort of formallike. You likely know
what a trial would mean.”

“Swinging for you, Pete,” said Amboy.

“Sure,” nodded the bad man cheerfully. “There
wouldn’t be any chance of packing the jury so that a
majority of them would give me a chance, and if more
than half of the jury pronounced for hanging, that
would settle it. It never would take the verdict of
twelve men united to suspend Pete Hyde in Caruzo.
My only show was to get away right soon while Mer-
riwell was down-stairs seeking to reason some with
the crowd. The boys who were friendly to me fixed
things. One of ‘em brought this horse round under
my window. Another cut me clear suddenlike and told
me to jump from the window. They interfered with
two chaps who might have grabbed me, preventing
them from bothering. I jumped. Somebody fired out
of the window, but I don’t opine he fired at me. Any-
how, I straddled the horse, and here I am.”

“Well, you certainly had a hot time!” cried Amboy.

“I sure did,” nodded Pinal Pete. “It was a rather
close call, and no dispute about that. They chased me
hotfoot, but I found cover in the hills and fooled
‘em. They’ve all gone back now. I kept under cover
until I was sure of that. One of the galoots who took
part in the chase was this same Merrriwell’s kid brother.
His critter went lame on him, and he had to turn
back before the others gave it up. I held him up.”

“And shot him?” cried Amboy.

“Not any whatever. Instead of that I asked him
to take a message to his brother. I told him to state
to his brother that I might have shot him up, but inste-
dead of doing so I was going to let him go, which
certain made us square and even so we could begin
over again. You see, gents, that leaves me so that I
don’t feel any at all indebted to Mr. Merrriwell. Our
account is balanced proper. Next time we meet we
can meet as enemies, without no feeling of unsquare
dealing between us.”

At this point the man called Coakley burst into a
sneering laugh.

“Well, you certain made a mess of it, Pete,” he
scoffed. “I reckon you was scared blue. They’ve
called ye a bad man, but I allus ’lowed there was a
streak of yeller in ye.”

Like a flash of lightning, Hyde whipped forth a
pistol and thrust the muzzle fairly against the teeth of
the speaker.

“Stiddy!” he rasped. “Don’t try to draw that gun
of your’n! And now, Con Coakley, you swallow your
words, or by blazes I’ll blow the top of your head
off!”

Coakley had shown his folly by speaking such words
without having his own pistol ready for use in his
hand, as Hyde was a man who could draw and shoot
in the twinkling of an eye.

And Coakley knew on the instant that he would
have to speak without the wasting of a breath unless
he wished to die in his tracks. Therefore, he quickly
said:

“Well, you’re sure hard to see a joke, Pete, old
pard. I didn’t mean it, and you know it.”

“Didn’t you mean it?” murmured Hyde. “And
you was jokin’, eh? Well, I’ll take your word for it,
but let me give you a little warning, Coakley—don’t
joke on such topics with me. You’ll find it mighty
onhealthy, mighty unhealthy.”

Saying which, he quietly returned the pistol to its
holster and disdainfully swung his back on Coakley.
Had the latter dared, he might have shot Pete Hyde
then; but, even though he longed to do so, a certain
fear restrained him. Even though Hyde acknowled-
ged that for once in his life he had met his match
in a single man whose name was Merrriwell, Coak-
ley had not the courage to bring forth a weapon and
send a bullet crashing into the back of Pinal Pete’s
head.

“At first,” said Hyde, continuing to speak to Am-
boy, “I was a bit wary about you gents; but I figured
it out that you couldn’t be any one from Caruzo, and
so I allowed you must be a party from the mine. I’ve
told my story, and now if you don’t mind you might
tell me your’n. What brings you here to-night, Am-
boy?”

“Saunders has skipped us.”

“Saunders, eh? Got away?”

“Yes.”

“How?”

“He must have had assistance. The guards swore
he did not get out of the Valley by the regular exit;
but a horse was missed at the same time, and I’ve
thought it over until I’m satisfied that there are traitors
in our own camp.”
"Can't be any of the association men?"

"Oh, no. Those fellows are not the ones to do a thing like that. We all know the strike was started as a bluff. It began as a fake strike. I've figured it out that the people who planned that strike and gave us our orders were expecting to do some manipulating of the Pablo-Mystery stock, but the Federation butted in and took things out of our hands and upset our plans. Now they've got full control. In order to save my own standing, I had to make a pretense of sympathizing with them. You know there was a time when I was eager enough to find a way of bringing the strike to an end. Then I received further orders from the East. Those orders mixed me a bit at first, for I was told to incite the strikers and keep the strike going. This after I'd wired that the strike had gone beyond my control.

"We got warning that Douglas Saunders had raised a body of armed strike-breakers, and it was necessary to break up that expedition. You know how we did it. You know how we had friends in the party, and we bribed others to turn against their comrades. They brought Saunders into Mystery Valley a captive, but he's free now and he's a dangerous man. With Merriwell on the ground, there's going to be something doing. Without Merriwell I doubt if Saunders could act with any show of authority. That being the case, as soon as we were satisfied that Saunders had succeeded in getting away I told the boys that we would continue on to Caruso to make sure that you had carried out your part of the job in dealing with Merriwell. Evidently the whole thing is a fizzle."

"Not yet!" cried Pinal Pete. "I've explained that my debt to Merriwell is squared. Now, I'm ready to go back to Caruso. I want one more chance at that gent. Next time I'll get him if I have to fill him full of lead in order to do it."

CHAPTER III.

A NEW ARRIVAL IN CARUSO.

After returning to Caruso and seeing that his lamed horse was cared for, Dick Merriwell hastened to find his brother and tell him of the surprising meeting with Pete Hyde and the message the man had sent Frank.

"So he considers the debt squared, does he?" muttered Merry, frowning. "That means that he'll not hesitate to shoot me down the next time we meet."

"Do you think so?" asked Dick.

"My experience with men of Hyde's sort has led me to comprehend in part their peculiar code of honor. Instead of seeking to hurt me and to wreak vengeance on me for the humiliation that he received at my hands, Hyde felt that he was in a great measure indebted to me for the preservation of his life, and, therefore, he did not shoot you down when he had you at his mercy. On the contrary, he was determined to get even, and so he demonstrated the fact that he might have killed you, and then urged you to let me know it and state at the same time that he considered the account balanced. That was his method of telling me we would begin over again. He has not forgotten that I tricked him at the railway-station and conquered him single-handed. He knows that the people of Caruso have not forgotten it, and unless he can retaliate in some manner, he'll never again regain his former prestige as a bad man in this town. I shall hear from Hyde."

"But why did he warn you of spies and dangerous men? Why did he urge me to caution you to be on your guard?"

"Possibly because he has chosen me as his particular victim, and he does not wish any one else to finish me off. If that happened, Pinal Pete could not regain his standing by proving himself my master. His opportunity would vanish with my demise."

Dick looked regretful.

"And I've been thinking there was a streak of surprising decency in the man. I've been thinking he spared me and sent you the warning because of that decency. Frank, isn't it possible that you're wrong about him?"

"It's possible," admitted Merry, "but not probable. Nothing infuriates a genuine bad man, a 'big chief,' as he likes to be called, as much as being outwitted or bested in any manner by some one else. He never forgets it. Invariably he lays it up against his conqueror and bides the time of his vengeance. When that time comes he is relentless and remorseless in retaliation. But we'll not worry about Hyde at present. There are greater problems to trouble me, yet I'm not going to fuss over anything to-night. Let's have supper, for it's being served. Arlington and Conrad are eating. I've waited for you, Dick."

They washed up and entered the dining-room of the hotel, where at the long tables were lines of men hungrily devouring the food that had been placed before them.

Arlington and Conrad were at the table with the vaudeville performers who had arrived in Caruso that day. It happened there were seats at the same table
for Frank and Dick, and by chance Frank took his place beside Meta Fay, the child he had protected from her father's brutal badgering upon the train. Fay himself was scowling, but Merry gave no heed as he smiled upon the child. Kit, the soubrette, beamed upon Frank, shaking her peroxide locks and laughing as she remarked:

"Goodness gracious, Mr. Merriwell, I was nearly frightened to death when that big tough came at you the minute we stepped off the train! And he pulled a pistol on you, too! Why, I felt like climbing a tree. You didn't seem to mind it a bit. You just stood there and looked him in the eye and talked as cool and calm as a cucumber fresh from the ice-box. Says I to myself, thinking of you, 'It's a fare-you-well for him.' Ginger, but I was frightened! Then you just jumped at that man and slammed him down and handled him like he was a kid. Say, you're the goods! You're the real stuff! You're a man! You're about the first real man I've seen in a month of Sundays—present company always excepted," she hastily concluded.

"Aw, don't make no apologies, Kit!" growled Harry Fay. "I know ye fired that shot at me. You're always rubbing it in."

"Come off your perch, Harry," chirped the soubrette. "You're getting awfully fussy since you took to hitting the bottle so hard lately. Why don't you quit? Why don't you climb aboard the sprinkler for a while and give your stomach a chance to grow a new lining? Say, you people coming over to the show this evening? I'll hit the manager up for comps for the whole crowd of ye if you'll come. I'll jolly him into handing out the passes."

"Your invitation is appreciated, I assure you," smiled Frank, "but I'm afraid I'll be too busy myself. Perhaps my brother and Arlington would like to take the performance in, but don't bother about comps. They're able to pay their own way, and they wouldn't enjoy the show a bit if they had to dead-head it."

"That's right!" cried Dick immediately.

"Sure," said Arlington.

"Whew!" whistled the soubrette, in surprise. "Is it possible? Well, take my word for it, you're the first people I ever knew who refused a comp. Why, I know bunches of geezers who can't enjoy any sort of a performance if they don't go it dead-head. The thought that they had to cough up the price of admission would be enough to keep them writhing and squirming inwardly through the whole show. Well, say, boys, are you coming over?"

"Perhaps we will," laughed Dick.

"Do it. I'll show you a quick-change act that will scalp you. You ought to see me in my sailor-boy rig. Just you wait until I do my turn and come out as the jolly Jack Tar! Oh, I'm a peach! I'm the sweetest boy you ever saw."

"Aw, cut it out! cut it out!" growled Fay. "You're always blowing about yourself, Kit. Give us a rest, for heaven sake."

"Sorehead, sorehead," laughed the soubrette. "Why, I wouldn't have that disposition for the millions of old John Rockefeller. Harry, you certainly have got an ingrowing grouch."

She was not to be suppressed, and she rattle on in this manner throughout the entire meal, which, truth to tell, was rather unsatisfactory, although the hearty appetites of the diners prevented any of them from making much complaint. Fay finished as soon as he could drag little Meta away. The other performers, with the exception of Kit, likewise left. Kit, having finished, placed her elbows on the table, with her hands at either side of her face, while she continued to talk and laugh in her free-and-easy way.

"Once I met an old, broke-down performer, who told me he used to travel in a company owned and managed by Frank Merriwell. I forget the old boy's name, but he was always blowin' about you, Mr. Merriwell. Thought you were the greatest guy that ever breathed air. You was in the business once, wasn't ye?"

"Oh, yes," answered Frank. "I had my ups and downs in the theatrical profession."

"Say, why don't your brother get into it? It's all right for a feller if he can deliver the goods. It's all right if he has somebody behind him to give him a start. Now, we poor dubs have to get our own start, and knock around in places like this till we can attract the attention of some of the big managers and land on a decent circuit. I'm going to get there. I'll bet anybody my whole pile I'm on Keith's circuit in less than two years. You can't keep me down. This bunch I'm tied up with now gives me a cramp. They're a lot of old ham-fatters—all except Meta. There's a shame. Why, Fay ain't got no right to treat that kid the way he does. She ought to be going to school instead of bumming around the way she is with a poor father. I never got much of any chance to git no schoolin' myself, but now I wish I had. If I do say it, I'm pretty clever, and if I was educated proper I might make the legit some day. I might become a real actress, like Veeola Allen or Virginia
Harned, and mebbe some time I'd rope a steel magnate and tie up to him, and have di'monds and dresses fit to kill you to death."

The loquacious Kit was still talking when Frank finished and left the dining-room. Dick and Conrad followed, and Arlington lingered behind.

A little later Chester found young Merriwell, and gave him a wise wink.

"We'll have to go over and see Kit do her turn, Dick," said Chester. "She's quite a girl, she is. Hang it all, it's a shame she's had to follow such a life! She was cut out for better things."

In spite of himself, young Merriwell could not conceal a smile of amusement.

"Chester! Chester!" he remonstrated. "Is this another?"

"Another what?"

"Another case."

"Oh, go on, Dick! She interests me a bit, that's all, and it's mighty hard to find a girl that's interesting in this part of the world, unless one goes to the big towns."

"Perhaps you'd rather attend the performance alone, Chet."


"If Mr. Merriwell doesn't need me for anything this evening, perhaps I'll take in the show," said Conrad.

Frank was interviewed. They found him writing a letter on a card-table in the barroom.

"Go on, boys. I'll be busy this evening, but you can't help me any. You might as well take in the show."

And so when the hour for the performance to begin drew near, Conrad and the boys proceeded to the half-slab, half-canvas building which was to serve as a theater.

Left behind at the hotel, Merry went up to his room for some article which he wished to obtain from his luggage. While he was rummaging in his traveling-bag, there came a knock at his door.

Facing the door, and standing ready for anything, Frank invited the one who had rapped to enter.

The door swung open, and a solidly built, square-jawed, pockmarked man of middle age advanced. The man's clothing was loaded with dust, and his appearance was that of one who had recently made a long and tiresome journey.

"How do you do, Mr. Merriwell," he said, in a low-pitched yet full and resonant voice.

"By all that's wonderful, Douglas Saunders!" cried Frank, springing forward and seizing the man's hand.

CHAPTER IV.

THE PLAN.

The scarred face of Douglas Saunders was grim, but there was a twinkle of pleasure and satisfaction in his steady, steel-gray eyes.

"Wasn't sure just how you'd meet me, Mr. Merriwell," he confessed.

"Why not?" asked Frank.

"Well, you see I've been told you would be led to believe that I had sold you out."

"And I've been told," returned Frank, "that you did sell me out."

"And yet you gave me your hand."

"Because I didn't believe it."

And now Saunders smiled the least bit.

"I was in hopes you would know that story to be a lie, but I felt that they'd fix it up so it would look mighty black for me."

"I confess that I was a bit puzzled over it," acknowledged Merry, as he closed and bolted the door.

"I don't wonder," admitted Saunders, as he accepted the chair toward which Merriwell motioned.

"Excuse me, I'm tired. You see, it's been quite a strain on me to get away from Mystery Valley."

"Tell me about it," urged Frank.

"I've been pretty sore, Mr. Merriwell—pretty blamed sore!" growled Saunders. "When I thought of my pledge to you—my pledge that I would put an end to that strike in a hurry—and I realized what a fizzle I had made, it caused me to squirm a-plenty. I raised the strike-breakers, just as I wired you I would, and I raised them in a hurry. I picked out men I allowed were on the square, and saw that every man was armed, but my moves were watched and reported to the strikers. When we arrived in the vicinity of the mine, they had the entrance to the valley barricaded and were ready to defend it with an armed body of men. Had I got into the valley I'd had control of things in short order, but I couldn't get in without sacrificing a good many lives, and it seemed, even then, that I might not get in."

"I was up against it, and I took time to consider. I took time to plan strategy. I didn't know that pretty near half of my men had been bought by the people who were anxious to keep that strike going. Therefore, when I dozed off that night I fancied myself
secure. They jumped me in the night, choked me into submission, tied me, gagged me, and carried me into the valley. A lot of men who were with me went over to the strikers. They told me a few days ago that you were bound for these parts, and they further added that you would be led into believing that I had sold you out. I allow I cussed some about it, but that didn’t do any good. They simply laughed at me. Then I made up my mind I’d get away somehow, and meet you. I’m here, but I’d never made it only for the assistance of an Injun. He stole a horse for me and helped me get out of the valley by a path I never dreamed existed. I’m here, Mr. Merriwell. I’m right glad to find you all whole and in condition to put up a fight. I heard them planning to do you up. They talked about sending Pete Hyde to take care of that job. Have you seen anything of Hyde?”

“Yes,” smiled Frank, and he related the story of his experience with the bad man.

Saunders’ gray eyes gleamed with satisfaction as he listened.

“Merriwell, you’re to be congratulated,” he said, “although you made one mistake.”

“What was that?”

“You should have let them Lynch that man. He deserves hanging.”

“But no man deserves to be hanged without a semblance of a trial.”

“In some cases the delay of a trial is the worst thing that could happen. It was a bad thing in this case, for it gave Pinal Pete’s friends an opportunity to get him off.”

“I know every man that was in that room when Hyde made his escape. I have them all spotted.”

“Well, watch out for ’em. It’s likely they’re against you, one and all.”

“So I’ve fancied.”

“You’ll have to be on your guard constant while you’re in Caruzo. Do you travel armed?”

For reply Merriwell produced two pistols with astonishing swiftness.

Saunders nodded.

“A couple of guns,” he said. “But you carry them in your pockets. You ought to have at least one shooting-iron where you can get it out ready for business without reaching into your pockets.”

Smilingly Frank restored the revolvers to his pockets, and then, with a snap of his wrist, he flung a small, short-barreled, double-shot pistol into his hand.

“Ah-ha, I see,” nodded Saunders. “Up your sleeve, eh? and attached by an elastic cord. That’s a good idea, if you can always produce it as quickly.”

“I’ve practised the trick,” said Frank. “I’ve prepared this weapon for use after getting up against Mr. Hyde, for I fancied I might need it any moment.”

“Level-headed,” nodded the man with the scars. “Now, tell me your plans.”

“At present my plans are somewhat unformed,” confessed Frank. “They may shape themselves after I hear your report. What do you think of this strike? Tell me what you can about it.”

“Of course you know the strike was a fake to begin with?”

“Yes, but it’s no longer a fake.”

“No. Pit Amboy worked the thing up at the start, but he didn’t count on what might happen, and the strike got away from him when the Federation took a hand in it. The Federation is a tough organization to butt against. There came a time when Amboy was mighty regretful on account of the way things were going. He was forced to pretend sympathy for the Federation men in order to save his own skin. If he hadn’t, he might have been put out of the way. Now, since I’ve been held at the mine, I’ve found out that Amboy is working secretly to get control of things once more. The men he bought over from my bunch are at his command, as well as a number of the original strikers. Evidently later developments have made it important that the strike should be protracted even while Amboy is getting into position to end it by a sudden move. Why this is, I don’t know, for I understand that the rotten old company has lost control of Pablo-Mystery.”

“But they’re still fighting me,” said Frank. “J. Bradbury Blood is the man at the head of the movement, although he’s under indictment in New York and may go to Sing Sing. Just now he’s out on bail and is putting up a fight against me.”

“What’s his object? Does he expect to get hold of Pablo-Mystery again?”

“His principal object is to force me into a compromise. He believes this is the only way he can save his own skin. He thinks that by putting me in a desperate situation, so that I’m forced to cry for quarter, he’ll be able to dictate terms. For one thing, he’ll demand that I use my influence to turn aside the crushing testimony that must overwhelm him. It’s possible that I might do this, but I don’t propose to do it. Blood should go to the jug for twenty years, and I hope to see him get his just deserts.”
"Then if you could stop this strike and get possession of the Mystery Mine, Blood would be defeated?"

"He would be down and out."

"All right," said Saunders, "we'll find a way to stop it. Those strikers have been led to believe they are fighting against the oppressors of the laboring men. They don't understand that they are playing right into the hands of the men they think they are fighting. If they could be led by any method to comprehend the exact facts, it might not be difficult to terminate that strike in less than twenty-four hours. But how are you going to make them realize the truth? How are you going to make them understand they are working their own harm instead of the harm of the men they fancy they're injuring?"

"Is there a printing-office in Caruzo?"

"Yes, a sort of printing-office. It isn't all fitted out yet. The man who runs it is thinking of starting a newspaper here, but he hasn't an outfit extensive enough. He has set up type and presses."

"Has he no type, no presses?"

"Oh, he's got a limited supply of type and a hand-press."

"That's enough," said Frank.

"Enough for what?"

"I'm going to write a bulletin. I'm going to explain the situation as clearly and concisely as possible. If there's any way of getting copies of the bulletin into Mystery Valley and into the hands of the miners, it's possible I'll succeed in opening their eyes to the facts. The one hard thing will be to get those bulletins in there."

Saunders gave his thick shoulders a slight shrug.

"You write your bulletin and have it printed, Mr. Merriwell," he said. "I'll get as many copies into that valley as you wish to send, and I'll guarantee that they'll be distributed."

CHAPTER V.

THE WINNER.

"How will you do it?"

"The Indian who showed me the way out of the valley will take your bulletins back into it."

"Where is he now?"

"Down-stairs."

"Let me take a look at him."

They left the room and descended the stairs.

The vaudeville performance had drawn away the usual patrons of the Grand Hotel bar, and the barroom was almost deserted. At one of the card-tables, however, two persons were sitting, engaged in a game of poker. One of them was old Billy Bolivar, the tramp. But how changed in appearance! Somehow, since arriving in Caruzo, Bolivar had succeeded in purchasing a complete outfit of clothing from head to feet, and verily he had blossomed forth like an opening flower. The shoes upon his feet were patent leathers, and in Caruzo they had not cost less than ten or twelve dollars. The pattern of his trousers was most striking, consisting, as it did, of broad, alternate stripes of purple and gray. His waistcoat was a low-cut garment of stunning red-and-black plaid. He was wearing a white shirt and a stand-up collar. Likewise, a brilliant red four-in-hand necktie. His face had been shaven and massaged. On his head, cocked rakishly over his left ear, was a high silk hat. He was smoking a huge black cigar, and his countenance wore an expression of serene satisfaction and contentment with himself that was amusing to behold. Involuntarily Frank stopped near the door, putting out a hand and restraining Saunders.

"Great Scott!" he breathed, with a soft laugh.

"Look at that, Saunders—look at that!"

But an instant later his surprise redoubled, for Bolivar's opponent, whose back was turned toward the door, was an old redskin about whose shoulders was draped a soiled red blanket. Even though he could not see the Indian's face, Merriwell knew him.

"Old Joe Crowfoot, as I live!" he whispered.

It was indeed Frank Merriwell's aged redskin friend. At that moment Crowfoot was quite unconscious of Merry's proximity. The cards were his, and he was dealing.

Bolivar picked up his hand and looked it over.

"This two-handed game of poker is a vexation to the spirit, indeed," he observed. "It gives the wrong one the first say. What are you going to do with my ante, my noble redskin friend?"

"Ugh! Me see him and go five better."

"Raising the ante, eh?" said Bolivar. "Now, that exasperates me exceedingly. I fear me much you are trying to steal my yellow simoleon."

"What you do?" demanded Crowfoot. "You make good, or you let me take money? Which?"

"Soft and slow, noble chief. Be not in such unseemly haste. Let's play this game with the dignity that becomes two exalted personages like you and me. You are a representative of a once grand and glorious race, now fast fading before the blighting influence
of the paleface and his fire-water. I am a representative of the conquerors, and in me you see illustrated the truth that he who deals out evil unto a brother shall be sorely stung by the same evil. Joseph, I'm going to make good by putting up another five, and I'm going to add a ten to it."

"Ugh!" said Crowfoot. "You raise me ten, uh?"

"That's precisely it."

"Then I raise you ten back. How you like it?"

"Joseph, you're bluffing, but it won't go with William Bolivar not a little bit. However, I'll simply make the pot level and take cards. You might give me three. How many are you going to take?"

"One card nuff for me," said the Indian.
Saunders betrayed impatience.

"Wait," urged Frank. "I'm interested. Let's see the outcome of this. Let's see who wins the pot before we interfere."

Deflty Crowfoot tossed off the cards. Bolivar picked them up and looked them over with a pretense of calm unconcern.

"You're a good dealer, my grand old warrior," he observed. "I hope you've filled your miserly little flush. Go ahead and bet."

As he made this remark, Old Billy lifted his hand containing one card and scratched the back of his neck. While doing this he slipped that card down behind his coat-collar and pulled out another card in place of it.

"I bet ten," said Crowfoot, pushing the money into the pile.


"White man talk heap," said Crowfoot. "What you do?"

"I'll have to see your ten and raise it twenty," said Bolivar, as he rang two gold pieces on the swiftly growing pile of coin.

"Then I see your twenty and make him fifty more," said Crowfoot.

"La! la!" murmured Old Billy, again lifting a card and scratching the back of his neck with it, again deftly exchanging it for another card as he had exchanged the first. "La! la! How careless! Now you're beginning to play like a real poker-player. If you keep up this pace, I'll soon have all your loose coin and you'll be drawing on your bank-account."

"You not mind me," said Joe. "I play-um my game. You play-um your game."

"It shall be even as you say, Joseph. If you're bluffing, I am going to bump you this time, for I shall see your fifty and raise it a hundred."

"He's cheating the Injun," whispered Saunders. "It's crooked playing, Merriwell. I can't stand still and see Old Crowfoot robbed."

"Wait," again urged Frank. "The man who robs Old Joe Crowfoot at poker has to be slicker than Billy Bolivar, or I'm greatly mistaken."

"Mebbe you bluff some," sneered the Indian.

"Maybe so," blantly admitted Bolivar. "You never can tell unless you have the nerve to call. Still, having a tender heart and a sympathetic soul, I'm inclined to warn you that I've got you skinned to the bone. Better heed this warning and lay down your flush. It's the cheapest way out of the difficulty."

"Mebbe so, mebbe not," grunted Old Joe. "Look. I put in one hundred. Then I put in hundred more. How you like it, uh? Mebbe that make-um you go some."

"It's like taking candy from the baby," chuckled Old Billy. "It's like getting money from home. Why, I've never struck such an easy thing as this. Joseph, behold my eyes filled with sympathetic tears. I'm on the verge of weeping for you."

"No talk. Bet, bet," urged Old Joe.

And then, as the Indian was speaking, Frank's keen eyes perceived that he had thrust his cards carelessly beneath the fold of his blanket. When he drew his hand forth Merry felt sure he did not hold the cards he had concealed a moment before.

"My overweening sympathy for you, Joseph, leads me to call," said Bolivar. "If you were not a worthy representative of a maligned and downtrodden race, if you were one of my own people, I'd sink the knife in you to the hilt and turn it round. I'd not spare you in the least. As it is, I'm going to be generous. Here's my money. Now, let's see your cards."

"Sympathy all rot," said Crowfoot. "You bet-um much as you like."

"I can't do it. My tender soul revolts against the thought of sending you back to the reservation without the price of a drink in your jeans, Joseph. I call. As long as you're so reluctant to show your own cards, I'll show mine. Here they are, chief. Four large, beautiful aces. Just look at them. Aren't they handsome? Aren't they the boys to win on? Never mind, Crowfoot, I'll buy you a snifter with my winnings. I'll show you there's nothing mean about me. I'll fill you up with Caruso tanglefoot."

"Wait some," invited Crowfoot, as Old Billy seemed on the point of raking the money in. "Mebbe you like
to see-um my cards. Look at um. You see how you like um.”

Saying which, Crowfoot spread out a royal straight flush, ace high!

Bolivar stared at the cards and gulped down a lump that rose into his throat.

“That wins,” he said sadly. “Joseph, you’re the candy. You’ve got me. I don’t know how that fifth ace got into this pack, but you hold it. It’s useless to kick against fate.”

Crowfoot coolly raked the money in by the handful and dropped it jingling into some hidden receptacle about his person.

While watching this performance, Bolivar drew forth a bright silk handkerchief and blew a bugleblast upon his nose.

“’Twas ever thus since childhood’s hour,” he murmured. “Whenever I’ve had a good thing within my grasp it has slipped through my fingers. Joseph, if we’re going to continue this game, I’d suggest that we count the aces in this pack.”

Saunders, a man not given to much laughter, was now chuckling softly.

“You were right, Mr. Merriwell,” he acknowledged. “It’s evident that you know Joe Crowfoot better than I do.”

“I doubt if any man knows him better than I,” said Merry, as he advanced and placed a hand on the old Indian’s shoulder.

Crowfoot looked up. In a moment his wrinkled face took on a sudden expression of pleasure, and a light of joy leaped into his undimmed dark eyes. He sprang up with the elastic nimbleness of a youth and flung his arms about Frank, saying:

“Strong Heart! Strong Heart! Crowfoot heap glad to see you!”

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CHAPTER VI.

THE SHOT THROUGH THE WINDOW.

Outside of that one embrace, the old Indian was not demonstrative. Still his pleasure was betrayed by many other tokens.

“Crowfoot,” said Frank, “you seem to stand up well beneath the hand of time.”

Old Joe shook his head.

“Crowfoot heap old,” he protested. “He much used up. He got bad rheumatism in him hips. Not much good any more.”

“I don’t believe a word of it,” said Frank. “That’s the song you’ve been singing for the last five years, and I can’t see that you look a day older than you did the first time we met.”

“Flattery not become Strong Heart,” protested the old redskin reprovingly. “Joe him know he git old. Bimeby he kick bucket, he go up spout, he croak. He much glad to see you one time more before he die. How Injun Heart?”

“Fine,” said Frank. “He’s here.”

“Here? Where?”

“In Caruzo. He’s taking in the show to-night.”

“If Crowfoot should die to-morrow he not make much kick, for once more he will see Injun Heart.”

“Excuse me, my noble son of Eli,” said Billy Bolivar, who had also risen. “Pardon my unseemly amazement at the discovery that you are on such friendly terms of comradery with this red warrior. He has just skinned me out of nearly all my loose change, but still I’ve got enough to blow. I’ll treat the crowd.”

“Permit me to do that,” said a voice at the door, as a booted man strode into the room. “The treat is mine. Everybody line up at the bar.”

This man was followed by four others, and all were dust-laden.

Saunders clutched Merriwell by the elbow.

“Pit Amboy!” he hissed. “Look out! On guard!”

Pit Amboy it was, and with him were four of his companions, who had made the journey from the Queen Mystery Mine to Caruzo.

Amboy’s eyes quickly discovered the man with the scarred face.

“Saunders!” he cried, with an expression of surprise. “How the devil do you come here?”

“Oh, I got some tired of hanging around the mine,” answered Saunders coolly, “so I hiked out.”

“But how did you get away? I thought the boys were watching you tight sharp.”

“They were watching me some,” admitted Saunders; “but I found my chance, and I took it, Amboy.”

“Congratulations,” said the superintendent of the Queen Mystery. “I was afraid some of the men might take a notion to snuff you out. You see, I couldn’t interfere, for such a thing would be a whole lot unhealthy for me.”

“I see,” nodded Saunders; but there was a peculiar look upon his rugged face and an intonation of sarcasm in his voice. Nevertheless, Amboy did not seem to notice this.

“Who’s your friend, Saunders?” he inquired, with a gesture toward Frank. “Introduce him.”
“This is Frank Merriwell,” said Saunders. “Merriwell, Pit Amboy.”

“Howdy, Merriwell,” said Amboy, with a curt nod. “I’ve heard of you, of course. You owned the mine one time, I believe. You’re some interested in it now, aren’t you?”

“Some,” answered Frank shortly.

“Well, things sure are in bad shape here. The miners’ association has control of the property, and there’s no telling what day they’ll put everything to the bad. I’ve done my best to restrain them, and thus far I’ve been fairly successful, although they did blow up the office and kill a couple of the boys. What are you doing here, Mr. Merriwell?”

“Mr. Amboy, I’ve come on to put an end to that strike.”

Amboy rested his hands on his hips and measured Frank with his eyes from head to heels and back again.

“You,” he said, with a touch of scorn that was insulting—“you put an end to that strike? Man, you don’t know what you’re up against. Seems to me I heard that you employed Saunders and a bunch of butters-in to do that trick. Perhaps Saunders has told you the truth concerning his attempt.”

“Yes,” said Frank, “Mr. Saunders has told me how he was betrayed through the treachery of men in his own party, who sold themselves out to the strikers. No, not to the strikers, Amboy, for those men are being basely deceived. They are being led by the tools of certain unscrupulous rascals to believe they are fighting against enemies and oppressors, when the real truth is that every day they protract this strike they are playing into the hands of the rottenest band of stock-manipulators who ever sought to rob the public.”

“That’s what you think, is it, Merriwell?”

“No, sir; that’s what I know.”

“You’re a very knowing young man. Look here, my friend. Let me tell you something. You’ve bitten off more than you can chew. You’ve cut out a job for yourself that is far beyond your ability to accomplish. Do you realize what it is to buck up against the miners’ association. If you don’t you ought to. Take warning by the happenings in Colorado. You never can tell what day, what hour, what minute a mine will explode beneath your feet and blot you out of existence.”

“Do you belong to the association, Amboy?”

“No.”

“Are you in sympathy with it?”

“When honest miners are oppressed, I sympathize with them whether they belong to the association or not.”

“And you sympathize with men who seek to accomplish their ends through intrigue, treachery, and assassination, do you?”

“The association is simply defending itself. The mine-owners always combine to crush the miners. It was so in Colorado, and it’s so here.”

“Pretty fine talk for a man who holds your position, Amboy.”

“If you don’t like my talk, Merriwell, I can’t help it, and I must say that I don’t care.”

“You are bold enough just now, but before long you’ll be talking in a different vein. You have sneered at me because I am here to stop this strike. I shall accomplish the work, Amboy, and when it’s finished you’ll get what’s coming to you.”

“Is that a threat?”

“Take it as you like. If your actions have been such that it strikes you as a threat, then it’s meant for that. If you’ve been on the level and aboveboard, it can be no threat.”

Amboy folded his arms and grinned derisively.

“I don’t suppose you can be reckoned as a tenderfoot, Mr. Merriwell,” he said, “for you operated the Queen Mystery and the San Pablo before the present company was organized. Still, you’re very young and optimistic. You’ve had a certain amount of success, and it has swelled your head. You don’t realize that for all of your previous success you’re nothing more than flesh and blood, and a bit of lead can put an end to your career in an instant.”

Amboy’s companions stood near, apparently on the alert and ready for anything. Frank kept his eyes on them all, as they were between him and the bar. Behind the bar were a number of long mirrors, and these mirrors aided Merriwell in making sure whether or not he was threatened by an enemy from behind. In some measure he depended on Saunders, Crowfoot, and old Billy Bolivar; but, as on scores of other occasions, he felt that his main reliance lay in himself and his alertness.

“Words go for very little here, Amboy,” he said. “Let’s not bandy them further.”

“You’re right!” cried the mine superintendent. “I invited everybody to drink. Come on. Come up to the bar. Still, Merriwell, I should hate to see a promising young man like you cut off in his prime. I should hate to see you killed without a chance. You never can tell when the association is going to strike.
Even at this minute you may be under the muzzle of an enemy's pistol."

"In which case," said Frank, "I shall have to shoot that enemy."

And then, without turning, with his eyes still fixed on the mirrors behind the bar, Frank snapped forth the small pistol into the palm of his hand, lifted it, and fired backward over his shoulder.

There was a tinkling crash of glass as the bullet cut through the window. Outside there was a fall like that of a human body dropping heavily to the ground.

"Gentlemen," said Merriwell, "you'll find a man outside who was about to shoot at me through the window."

CHAPTER VII.
THE FATE OF PINAL PETE.

Dead silence followed, broken finally by the somewhat husky voice of old Billy Bolivar, who exclaimed:

"By the white war-plume of Henry of Navarre, he has eyes in the back of his head!"

All this while Frank's eyes were fixed calmly and steadily upon Pit Amboy. The man returned Frank's look, but finally he began to quail beneath it in spite of himself. In that look he saw a defiance and a challenge. It told him that Merriwell read him with ease, knew him for what he was, and, instead of being awed in the slightest, held him in open contempt. It told him, also, that Frank knew the man lying outside the window was one who had been attempting to execute a dastardly plan which had originated in the mind of Amboy himself. Pit realized now that he had made a grave mistake in fancying he could overawe this calm, steady-nerved, quick-witted, fearless young man who had openly announced his determination to break the strike at the Queen Mystery and baffle the scoundrels who were responsible for that strike.

Standing like a statue, with his old red blanket wrapped about him, Old Joe Crowfoot remained stolid, unconcerned, and apparently unmoved by what had happened. Nevertheless, there was in his black eyes a deep gleam that bespoke his admiration for this white man whom he had first hated and then learned to love. Never had the Indian known a human being, either red or white, who was so thoroughly capable of taking care of himself under any and all circumstances.

Saunders had been a bit startled by Merriwell's action, but he recovered instantly and held himself alert for the next move Frank's enemies would make. They made no move then. The challenge passed without acceptance, for Amboy forced a laugh, and cried:

"You're quick on the trigger, Merriwell, that's evident; but I doubt if you could hit the side of a house by shooting over your shoulder in that fashion."

"As proof of your misjudgment, sir," said Frank, "you will find that my bullet struck the man who lies outside of the window squarely in the forehead, just at the roots of his hair."

"Well, let's investigate," said Amboy. "Let's see about that."

Then they hurried out, and under the window they found the man. He was lifted and carried into the hotel, being taken straight to the dining-room, where they lay him upon one of the long tables.

"It's Pete Hyde," they said.

Pinal Pete it was, and, precisely as Frank had stated, the bullet that cut him down had struck in the center of his forehead close to the roots of his hair. Amboy turned to Merriwell.

"I've got nothing further to say about your marksman ship, sir," he observed. "It's evident you knew where you were planting that bullet."

Apparently Pinal Pete had died instantly. The fingers of his right hand were still gripped upon the butt of a Colt .45. Saunders called general attention to this fact as undeniable proof of the murderous purpose of the man at the moment Merriwell shot him.

"Self-defense is nature's first law," said Saunders.

"Mr. Merriwell fired in self-defense."

"But no man has to make an excuse for shooting down Pete Hyde if he catches Hyde with a gun in his hand," said Saunders. "Further, this same Hyde made his boasts that he would do Merriwell up. It's plain he sneaked back into town with the intention of making good his threat. He has annoyed Caruzo in the past, but he'll bother no one in future."

"Gentlemen," said Amboy, "I believe I was on the point of treating when the interruption took place. I move we all adjourn to the bar."

They left that silent figure stretched upon the long table, and tramped heavily back to the bar.

"What's yours, Mr. Merriwell?" inquired Amboy, bowing politely to Frank.

"I trust you'll excuse me," smiled Merry, with cool courtesy, "but I am an abstainer. I do not drink."

The men glanced quickly at Amboy to see how he would take this, for a refusal to drink was often-
times constricted in that country as an insult. Evidently Amboy was not ready to accept it in that light from Merriwell, for he betrayed no token of offense.

"On this occasion you might make an exception to your usual custom, sir," he suggested.

"I'm sure you'll pardon me if I do not," returned Merry. "While I am not fool enough to fancy I can inaugurate such a reform that the drinking public will be led to abstain from indulgence in intoxicants, I hold that it is my right to abstain under any circumstances, without being regarded as a prig or a crank because I do so."

"Perhaps you'll accept a cigar?"

"I neither smoke nor drink."

"Ugh!" grunted Crowfoot. "Joe he take what Strong Heart not want."

"Gently, gently, my noble warrior," interposed old Billy Bolivar. "Such eagerness and greed is most unseemly on your part. There may be others who are willing to sacrifice themselves by drinking Mr. Merriwell's drinks and smoking his cigars. At this moment you have the bulk of my fortune jingling in your jeans, and that should satisfy you. Back up, Joseph, and amuse yourself by watching the scientific manner in which I can drink two drinks without stopping to take a breath between them."

Saunders, being a man who sometimes drank, did not see it to arouse Pit Amboy by declining now. He took a small one, lifted the glass, and cried:

"Well, here's to the man of nerve, who can't be frightened or driven, and who shoots over his shoulder as well as any other man shoots straight ahead."

"Which is Mr. Merriwell," bowed Amboy. "Here's to Merriwell!"

Frank made acknowledgment with a bow, and Billy Bolivar kept his word by tossing off two drinks without catching his breath between them.

"I presume, Mr. Merriwell," said Amboy, "that Saunders has already informed you how matters stand at the mine. I don't fancy I can add anything further of interest. The strikers still hold possession, and it would take a small army to invade the valley and get control of the property. You've got your work cut out for you."

"Sometimes these affairs may be adjusted and settled without bloodshed, if one goes about it properly," returned Frank. "I hope Pinal Pete may be the last one to suffer. I have some business that demands my attention, Mr. Amboy. Therefore, I trust you'll excuse me for the present."
they left the hotel and made their way to the huge building, half-wood and half-canvas, where the show was being given. Approaching, they heard a girlish voice, accompanied by music, singing a sentimental song. At the conclusion of the song there was a tumultuous burst of applause, the furious clapping of hands, stamping of feet, and shouting of masculine voices.

"I fancy that’s Kit," said Frank. "Evidently she has made a hit with the audience."

As Saunders knew the printer, whose name was Tom Clark, he purchased a ticket at the door and crowded his way into the hall, which was packed to suffocation.

Frank had made no mistake in fancying the singer to be Kit, the soubrette. She had been recalled and was bowing her thanks, while the delighted spectators rained handfuls of coin rattling upon the stage. One or two of the other performers assisted her in gathering up the shower of money.

It was Chester Arlington, however, who made the great hit with Kit, for on his way to the theater Chet had discovered a potted plant flowering in a window, and had knocked at the door and purchased the blossoms at a fancy price. These he made into a bouquet, and this bouquet he now found an opportunity to fling at Kit’s feet.

She picked it up, kissed the flowers, and gave Chester a flashing smile.

"Hold on!" shouted a big man humorously. "Stop the performance and put that dude out. If you don’t, he’ll sure carry off our girl."

Saunders paid no heed to what was taking place. His eyes searched the crowd, and in a few moments he located Tom Clark. With some difficulty, he crowded his way nearer and attracted the attention of the man, to whom he beckoned.

Clark responded, and shook hands with Saunders, but instantly raised a remonstrance on being told that he was wanted outside.

"Wouldn’t miss this performance for fifty dollars," he asserted, "no, not for a hundred. If there’s any one wants me, he’ll have to wait until after she is over."

But Saunders finally succeeded in inveigling Clark outside the building, where Merriwell was waiting.

"Not to-night," said Clark, when he had listened to Frank’s proposition. "Not until after the show, anyhow."

"I’ll pay you well," said Merry. "You can be stick-
everywhere, on the buildings and the trees, so many of them that one or more must fall into the hands of the men I wish to reach."

Meantime, while those bulletins were being printed, the vaudeville performance let out, and the citizens of Caruzu were heard talking on the street as they passed the little printing-office in groups.

Arlington was inclined to linger at the door of the hall, but Dick's chaffing finally led Chester to abandon that idea.

Arriving at the hotel, the boys and Conrad were surprised to learn of the sensational thing that had happened during their absence. In the bar a number of men were discussing the shooting of Pinal Pete. In the dining-room more men had gathered about the table on which the body lay stretched.

At the head of the table a brawny miner stood, addressing the crowd.

"Gents," he was saying, "Pete sure had his faults, like other humans, but I say he warn't given a square show. I say this yere galoot who shot him took him by surprise. Otherwise, he'd never got Pete."

At this one of the men beside the table reached out and took hold of Hyde's right hand, which still grasped a pistol, and lifted hand and weapon so that all might see.

"When a gent pulls his gun," said this man, "it's up to him to dodge bullets. Here's what shows that Pete was intending some to do a little shooting himself. They say, this young gent, Merriwell, was standing with his back toward Pete, and fired over his shoulder."

The big man at the head of the table smashed his bony right fist into his left palm.

"As I before remarked," he cried, "Pete may have had his faults, but he certain had his decent qualities, likewise. He was some interested in the welfare of the working man, Pete was. Out there at Mystery Mine a lot of the boys have gone on a strike to get their rights. Pete come here to Caruzu to turn back the gent who has come on to stop that strike. Accordin' to reports Pete might have filled that same gent full of lead the first time they met up with each other. He didn't do it, which was rather unusual for Pete. He held his hand; and what's the result? You see it before you, gents. Pete is dead, and this yere Merriwell is responsible. I allow the most of you know Big Andy. That's me. I've always been for the laboring man against the mine-owners and the corporations. I'm one of you. This yere Merriwell represents the mine-owners. Are we going to let him come here, gents, and browbeat the whole of us? I opine not. If this yere Merriwell, or any of his friends, is within the sound of my voice, I invite them to step forard like men and state the reason why Pete Hyde warn't given a square show. Where is this Merriwell, gents? Who's seen him lately? After shootin' Pete he hunted his hole in a hurry, like the coward he is. Nobody knows what's become of him. I reckon he's hit the high places, and got out of Caruzu, knowin' what was comin' to him if he lingered."

"I think you must be mistaken, sir," said Dick, advancing. "I'm sure my brother is still in Caruzu."

"Your brother? your brother?" roared Big Andy, glaring fiercely at the boy. "So the gent is your brother, eh? And you acknowledge it without no blush of shame."

"Indeed, I acknowledge it with some pride," said the boy.

Conrad sprang to Dick's side.

"Careful! careful!" he whispered in the lad's ear.

"You'll stir up trouble. You'll get into a mess."

"That's right," agreed Arlington, who was likewise alarmed. "That man is looking for trouble."

But Dick foolishly seemed not a whit disturbed, for he continued to address Big Andy.

"I fancy you're amenable to reason, sir," he said.

"I assure you my brother would never shoot down any man unless he did it in self-defense, and even then he would regret being forced into such an action."

But Big Andy was not amenable to reason.

"You're his brother, are ye, kid?" snarled the man, advancing on Dick. "You dare to tell it here before me, Pete's pard! Why, I'll skin ye alive! I'll wring your neck like I'd ring the neck of a chicken!"

For the first time, young Merriwell showed alarm.

"Please don't do that," he entreated. "I simply want to reason with you, that's all."

"Oh, ye want to reason with me, eh? Well, I'll show ye how I reason with your kind. Frank Merriwell's brother, ye say? Well, when I'm done with ye he'll know what I think of his brother and him."

As the man reached a huge hand to seize Dick by the shoulder, the boy retreated. Immediately Andy lunged forward.

Then something happened. Still seeming to retreat, Dick Merriwell, athlete and master of ju-jutsu, obtained a sudden hold on the ruffian and sent his heels whistling through the air as he pitched him fully half the length of the dining-room.
The spectators were thunderstruck. Had an earth-
quake shaken Caruso to its foundations, it could not
have awakened more surprise than what had hap-
penned before their eyes in that room. Of them all,
it is probable that Arlington was the only one who
was not astounded. Conrad had been on the point
of grappling with the giant, and now he stood back,
holding his breath and staring first at Andy and
then at the boy. A chorus of cries rose from the
crowd.

"Did ye see that?"
"The kid threw him plumb over his head!"
"He threw Big Andy!"
"How did he do it?"
"Look out for Andy!"

With a roar of fury, the giant gathered himself
and leaped to his feet. At first he seemed on the
verge of drawing a weapon, but the sight of the
slender-looking lad, who still seemed shaken with
terror and ready to flee, caused him to change his
mind.

"Burn your hide!" he shouted, "I'll wring your
neck this time!"

Once more he charged at Dick. Once more the
boy seemed to retreat. In ju-jitsu, this retreating,
this giving way before an attack, is a part of the
game. It leads the assailant to exert his own strength
in his undoing.

And thus it was in this case. Once more Big Andy
was met by a retreating opponent, who suddenly,
captured him with a clever hold, and again snapped
his heels into the air and sent him spinning. This
time Andy's head struck with a crash against a par-
tition, and he dropped stunned to the floor.

Again the crowd shouted, but now their cries were
more of admiration than wonderment, for at last they
knew it was no accident. They realized that the
beardless boy was a worthy brother of the man who
had conquered Pinal Pete.

"Look out for Andy!" cried one. "Don't let him
pull a gun when he gets up! Don't let him shoot
the kid!"

"Look out for Andy! Look out for Andy!" cried
others.

"Kid, you're sure a Jim-dandy!" exclaimed one of
the men, giving Dick a slap upon the shoulder. "But
mebbe that gent will feel like shooting you some."

"I hope not," said the boy, "for it would be too
bad if they had to plant him along with Pinal Pete
to-morrow."

Even after he recovered somewhat from the shock
he had sustained, Big Andy seemed dazed and be-
numbed. Apparently, his brain was jarred into such
condition that he could not realize what had taken
place, and therefore it was easy to induce him to
depart.

Conrad congratulated Dick.
"My boy," he said, "you're a wonder. I swear I
thought we'd all be in a general mix-up in a minute."
"I wish you'd find my brother, if you can, Con-
rad," said Dick. "I don't understand what has be-
come of him. Go look for him."

"But I don't like to leave you. There may be fur-
ther trouble."
"I'll take care of myself. Find Frank."
Conrad obeyed with some reluctance.

Dick was anxious to get away from the crowd of
admiring men. Already many of those men were
predicting that the Merriwells were the right sort
to straighten out things at the Mystery Mine.

Some one touched Chester Arlington on the shoul-
der and whispered something in his ear.

Chet flushed and laughed. Then he turned to
Dick, saying:
"Excuse me a few moments, old man. I'll be back
directly."

"Where are you going?"
"Oh, the little-girl wants to see me. She's sent
word that she's looking for me."

"Cut it out, Chester," was Dick's advice.

But Arlington, proud of such a conquest, as usual,
waived a hand as he hurried away.

Less than thirty minutes later, Conrad found Mer-
riwell, Saunders, and Bolivar returning to the hotel.
Already Old Joe Crowfoot, with the printed bulletins
in his possession, was astride a horse and headed for
Mystery Valley.

When Frank learned what had happened at the
hotel he was concerned.

"I fancied I'd have this work over before the
performance let out," he said. "Under ordinary cir-
cumstances, I might take care of myself, but here it's
different. There's no telling in what manner our
enemies will strike."

At the hotel they came upon Chester, who greeted
them with relief, and cried:
"Here you are! Been looking for you. Where's
Dick?"

"Where's Dick?" said Conrad. "I left him with
you."

"Yes, he was here the last I knew, but I can't find
him now."
"How did you get separated from him?"
"Oh, some practical joker brought me a fake message, and I answered it."
Merry seized Chester’s arm.
"What sort of a fake message?" he demanded.
"Tell everything, Arlington."
Chet was compelled to acknowledge the nature of the message.
"The little girl was glad to see me," he said, "but she hadn’t sent word for me. I talked with her a while, and then I went to look Dick up. Couldn’t find him anywhere. Nobody seems to know what’s become of him."
"Perhaps he’s in his room?" said Frank.
"No," declared Chet. "I’ve been there. The room is empty."
"Then we’ll look in my room, although I have the key here in my pocket."
They mounted the stairs, and found Merriwell’s door in the darkness. Old Billy Bolivar struck a match as Frank sought for the lock with the key.
"What, ho?" cried the bummer suddenly, as he held the blazing match above his head. "What’s this I see?"
Upon the door was a sheet of paper, pinned there with a knife driven through it.
There was writing scrawled upon the paper, and by the light of the match Frank read:
"You won’t find your brother in Caruzo. Come to terms in a hurry if you wish to see him alive."

CHAPTER X.
THE CAPTIVE.

"Dick Merriwell! Dick Merriwell!"
The excited call was broken by a hollow cough, as an excited young man rushed up and seized Dick by the arm.
It was Haden Cole, the "lunger," who had traveled from Nevis Junction to Caruzo on the same train with the Merriwell party. He seemed in a most agitated state of mind, for he was breathing heavily, and the boy felt the hand upon his arm quiver.
"What’s the matter?" asked Dick, as Cole choked and gasped and stammered.
"Your friend—your friend Arlington——"
"What about him?"
"He’s in trouble!"
"What sort of trouble?"
"That brute Fay has been beating the child Meta. Arlington caught him at it, and pitched into him.
Oh, there’s a dreadful fight! I’m afraid your friend is badly hurt."
"Then that drunken brute will suffer for it!" cried Dick. "Where are they?"
"Follow me," coughed the lunger. "Arlington met him out behind the building."
Still gasping for breath, Hayden Cole led the way. The moon was just peeping over the eastern hills, but there were yet black shadows lurking in Caruzo. Dick kept at the heels of the almost staggering consumptive as they turned the corner, and ran swiftly toward the crude stable at the rear. There was no suspicion of treachery in Dick’s mind, for he could not fancy the unfortunate invalid as otherwise than on the level. Cole had seemed a pitiful subject for compassion, one of those unfortunate victims of the "white plague," who seek the arid Southwest in hope of improved health and prolonged life, if not of entire cure.
Being thus unsuspicious, the boy was taken wholly off his guard when suddenly leaped upon and flung to earth, with a heavy blanket wrapped and twisted in muffling folds about his head. He fought for a few moments with all the strength and desperation at his command, at the same time trying to shout for help, but the blanket smothered his cries. He felt his arms twisted behind his back, and knew they were being tied there. He gasped for breath, and was filled with despair at his inability to squirm clear of the blanket’s folds. Lightninglike pains shot through his chest and pierced his brain. His head seemed to whirl chaotically, and he realized at last that his senses were swimming and leaving him. The pains of death could scarcely have been more intense, and finally darkness and oblivion came upon him.
It was the cool of the night air that finally revived him. It was sweeping across his face. A benumbing sensation possessed him in every limb, and for a time he but vaguely realized that he was being carried through the moon-softened night by some living creature whose frame and muscles moved beneath him. Something like the rhythmic throb of a distant drum-corp sounded in his ears, growing plainer and more distinct with the passing moments. He filled his collapsed lungs with the cool air with a sensation of mingled pain and pleasure that was almost too great to bear. For a time, his sluggish brain refused to offer him any explanation, but finally, with a shock that thrilled him from head to heels, he remembered the sudden and unexpected thing that had happened behind the Grand Hotel in Caruzo. Then he tried to move, but in vain. His arms were bound at his...
sides by a rope knotted many times about his body. His feet were tied, and he knew at last that he was securely strapped upon the back of a galloping horse. Above him the stars, dimmed somewhat by the lately risen moon, twinkled and winked derisively. The throbbing music he had heard was the continued hoof-beats of many galloping horses. He was not alone; all around him were other horses and other riders.

Slowly he took in the situation. He had been made a prisoner, and, while unconscious, fastened upon the back of the horse that was bearing him through the night. He was a helpless captive, and these silent horsemen who accompanied him were his captors and guards. Already they had traveled so far that they were swinging out from the hills and striking onto the gray desert that stretched away to the mountains.

"They mean to strike at Frank through me," thought the boy. "That's their scheme. They're going to hold me captive until they can force him to terms."

At last one of the riders spoke:

"Ah, guess we ain't got no mo' to worry 'bout bein' follered, chilluns. Dey sholy couldn'totch us between here and de mine, if dey tried."

It was the voice of Buck, the big negro partner of Pinal Pete, the man who lay silent and ghastly in the dining-room of the hotel at Caruso.

"That's right, Buck," agreed a soft, musical voice. "Señors, we can now ride much more slowly."

And this was Miguel, the Mexican.

"We'll be half-way to the mine," declared a man who seemed the leader of the party, "before they miss the kid."

"And den dey won't know what has become of him, Mistah Coakley," chuckled the colored giant.

A slower pace was settled into, and suddenly one of the men, who had a beautiful tenor voice, began singing:

"Over the Rio Grande
There lies the land of sunshine;
Over the Rio Grande
There lives a love of mine;
In the evening on the plaza
My little Mex-i-can-a queen,
With her elderly duenna,
Is often seen.
There I plead to her with glances,
And she heaves a little sigh,
And I whisper to her softly
As she goes by."

Dick felt that he knew the singer, and yet somehow he could not at once name the man.

As the singer struck into the chorus, several others joined him, and through the night floated the song:

"Mexico, my dark-eyed Mexico!
Though years may come and go,
I'll constant be.
Oh, Mexico, I dearly love you so!
And I would like to know
If you love me."

With redoubled intensity and feeling, the singer who carried the air followed with another stanza:

"Mexico, with the shade of midnight in your hair,
Your smile like sunny Southern skies;
Mexico, with the coral lips so fair,
And the glow of starlight in your eyes,
Mexico, can you tell me will it ever be
That your love and your heart will be my own?
Mexico, I'll be happy if you promise me
That you'll love me alone."

Again the others took up the chorus:

"Oh, Mexico, my dark-eyed Mexico!
Though years may come and go,
I'll constant be.
Oh, Mexico, I dearly love you so!
And I would like to know
If you love me."

To hear them singing as they rode across the moonlit desert, one could never have dreamed that these men were desperadoes of the most dangerous sort. And the leader, he who had carried the air, he with the beautiful, bell-like tenor voice, one might have thought him a sentimental lover pouring-out in fancy the emotions of his heart to the fair one he held most dear.

"Bravo! bravo!" shouted one of the men. "Fine work, Cole, old boy. Give us something else."

Again an electric thrill shot through Dick Merriwell.

Cole—that was the name of the pitiful consumptive at whose heels he had rushed to the assistance of Chester Arlington. It could not be the same man—and yet that voice, that voice!

The boy twisted his head round, and looked toward the man in question. By chance the man was riding near, and the moonlight fell fair upon him. There was no mistake; it was Hayden Cole, the lunger!

For a little while young Merriwell was dazed by the bewildering fact. This man, whose voice had sounded weak and hollow, and had seemed to hold the echo of doom in it, could sing in tones as strong and clear as those of a bell. He was not coughing now. His rounded shoulders were thrown backward,
his hollowed chest expanded, and he rode as easily and as lightly as any of his companions.

Forced at last to accept the fact that this man had deceived and trapped him, Dick questioned himself as to the possibility of trusting any one.

"The man was a spy in the employ of Frank's enemies," thought the helpless lad. "He followed us on our journey to Caruzo, and doubtless he wired news of our progress many times between New York and Nevis."

They were urging Cole to sing again, and he responded with another sentimental song that pleased them all.

Dick's limbs were paining him, and it seemed that the backbone of the horse was sawing through the blanket and the clothing between him and the cantering animal. With every passing moment, young Merriwell's distress grew, but he set his teeth and made no sound, no groan, no murmur. Many times he was compelled to exert all his will-power to prevent an outcry.

"How's the kid coming? Is he still unconscious?" asked the leading horseman.

"I will see. I will tell you, Señor Coakley," said the Mexican, as he reined his mount close beside the horse upon which the lad was bound.

A moment later a low laugh escaped Miguel's lips, for he had bent sidewise from the saddle, and looked into young Merriwell's eyes.

"He ees wide-awake, señor," was the assurance.

"He ees all right."

"Good," said Coakley. "I was beginning to wonder if we'd finished him, for the little devil fought like a fiend, and we had to keep him muffled in that blanket until we got him out of Caruzo."

On the other side, Hayden Cole reined close and took a look at Dick.

"Well, young man," he observed, "I hope you're enjoying your ride. Don't worry about your friend Arlington. I can assure you that he is all right, and that you need not distress yourself."

"Thank you," said Dick coolly. "You are too kind, Mr. Cole. Your cough seems greatly improved."

The man laughed.

"It's astonishing, isn't it, what a change this bracing air has brought about? I'll guarantee you never witnessed a quicker cure."

"But still," said Dick, "I should hate to be in your place. Even though consumption may not claim you as a victim, there's a strong probability that you'll die of lead-poisoning. Even that, however, would be preferable to the loss of breath by strangulation."

"Well, you certainly are the chippier little cub!" cried Cole. "Don't worry about me, my boy. I'll take care of myself. Meanwhile, we're all going to take care of you until your obstinate brother comes to his senses and realizes that he is wholly unable to carry through the purpose that brought him down into this country."

"No matter what happens to me," said Dick, "you'll find in the end that my brother is more than a match for all of you."

At this point one of the horsemen, who had been turning at intervals to search the plain behind them with his keen eyes, made the announcement that they were pursued.

CHAPTER XI.

THE DREAD PURSUER.

These words electrified them all.

"You must be wrong, Ridpath!" cried Coakley, the leader. "I'm dead sure you're wrong."

"And I'm dead sure I'm right, boss," said Ridpath.

Coakley swung out from the lead, and drew rein, facing backward as the others swept past him. Sitting there, he waited some moments. Finally he spoke to his horse, and dashed after the party, which he soon overtook.

"Your eyes, or your ears, were better than mine, Ridpath," he confessed. "Some one is following us."

Miguel swore in Spanish as he loosened his pistols in their holsters.

"How many pursuers are there, Coakley?" questioned Cole.

"Well, I couldn't make out but one."

"Only one?"

"No more."

"Only one!" laughed Cole. "Who's fool enough to follow us alone? It can't be Amboy, for he has business that will keep him in Caruzo."

"It's not Amboy, and, therefore, it can't be a friend," said Coakley. "It must be an enemy. One has struck out our trail, and means to track us."

They were riding fast now, with the dust of the desert rising behind the clattering heels of their horses. Silent and motionless clumps of greasewood, or cacti, seemed to pass them and retreat as they
swept on. Away yonder to the west lay the mountains and their destination.

Cole fell back, and lingered at the rear for some moments. When he spurred up with them he had satisfied himself that there was, indeed, a pursuer, but no more than one.

"And he's coming like the Old Boy was after him. He's gaining on us fast, gentlemen."

"I judge we'll have to give that gent notice that he's getting too close," said Coakley. "Some of you boys serve notice on him."

The horseman could be seen through the moonlight. Cole had spoken the truth, for he was gaining with every stride.

"Ah guess Ah'll serve dat notice mahself," said Buck, pulling a .45 and turning in the saddle.

The pistol barked six times, and six bullets went whining through the night.

"Never phased him!" growled Ridpath. "I swear he's coming faster than ever!"

"Then don't waste lead until he gets near enough to hit," advised Coakley.

A strange feeling of awe for this reckless pursuer began to creep over many of those men. That any one man should follow them with such foolhardy and open defiance was enough to fill them with mingled wonderment and alarm, in spite of their numbers.

The Mexican swore in Spanish, and then he prayed. One of the others cursed him and told him to keep still.

"Dat's right!" cried Buck. "What's de matter wit yo', Mig?"

"Madre de Dios!" palpitated Miguel. "Who ees it? What ees it? In my bones I have a chill."

"Aw, g'wan!" growled the colored man. "What de debil yo' think it is, Mig?"

"May the saints preserve us! I fear it ees no living man. It ees a spirit."

"Wh-what's dat?" gasped Buck. "G'wan, Mig, yo's foolin'. Bah golly, dat gibes me a shiver mahself."

It gave him more than a shiver, for, like the Mexican, he was now seized by a sensation of dread and terror that was wholly unaccountable, but which completely mastered him.

It was singular that this feeling spread through the entire party; although they knew not why, those men grew afraid and pressed their horses hard in flight.

The solitary pursuer came on steadily, although more slowly, and he continued to cut down the distance between them.

"Blazes take him!" shouted Con Coakley. "Some of us ought to get him with a bullet now. He's near enough."

Coakley's heavy Colt spat fire and barked. Others joined in shooting at the fearsome pursuer. Thus, as they tore swiftly and madly through the night, they sent a spasmodic, irregular rain of lead behind them.

"Listen!" cried Cole suddenly. "Hear that cry!"

One of the men emptied his pistol, and with that the shooting ceased.

Weirdly it came to their ears, astonishing one and all:

"Who-oo-oo-ee-eeel!"

"By thunder," shouted Coakley, "it's one of the boys! It's one of our own men!"

He answered with a similar cry, drawing rein and commanding his companions to stop.

"Don' yo' do it!" implored Buck. "Dat ain't no friend ob our'n. Dat's a ghost!"

Miguel chattered in Spanish, his teeth rattling together.

"Stop, you infernal cowards!" snarled Coakley. "I don't know who it is, unless it's Amboy; but it's sure one of our men. Stop, Buck, or I'll bore you with a bullet!"

This command was sufficient. One and all, they drew rein and swung round to face the man who came galloping straight upon them. He was sitting in the saddle as if a part of the horse he bestrode. There was a singular grace in his riding, that reminded them all of a comrade whose name not one of them ventured to speak just then.

On, on he came. The horse, breathing heavily, was flung to a sudden stand, even as he seemed on the point of continuing straight through their midst.

The man was hatless, and the moonlight fell, ghostly white, upon his face. There was dotted blood upon his forehead. They knew him, and Miguel shrieked his terror. Fear froze the lips of the others.

For the man before them was the man they had left stretched silent and gory upon a dining-table in the Grand Hotel at Caruzo!

It was Pinal Pete!
CHAPTER XII.

MORNING AT THE MINE.

The shivering, shuddering Mexican was gasping forth prayers to the saints. The others stared and stared at the dread rider, who grimly surveyed them all. Then the lips they had believed cold in death parted to give vent to a laugh.

"What's the matter with you, gents?" demanded the calm, well-modulated voice of Pete Hyde. "You sure hit it up right hard for a while, and I had to push this horse a-plenty."

"Land ob ghosts!" gurgled Buck. "Dat sho am his voice. Go 'way dar, Mistah Hyde. Go 'long back to yo' grabe, whar yo' b'long."

"On my word, Buck, you're scared," sneered Pinal Pete. "You're afraid of me."

"Dat's 'cause you're a dead man," chattered the darky. "Yo' ain't gut no right ridin' round dis yere way, Mistah Hyde. Yo' ain't gut no right chasin' folks wif a bullet plumb through your hade. What fo' yo' want to do it, anyhow?"

"I judge you gents reckoned me dead," said Pinal Pete. "You're wrong, boys. I'm a whole lot alive, though I've got a cracking old headache, and I opine I slept quiet and peaceful for a long time. Woke up to find myself all alone, stretched out comfortable on the dining-table in the Grand Hotel. Soon as I could get up, I did so, and I heard some gents talking about my funeral as I sneaked out of the ranch by the back door. I didn't wait round any, but stole this horse and hiked out right lively. I've been up against Frank Merriwell twice, and got off alive both times. I'll admit I'm a bit leery about the third time. The second was too close a call for real enjoyment. You can't beat a man with eyes in the back of his head, and Frank Merriwell sure has 'em."

Con Coakley reined his horse alongside Pinal Pete, reached out a hand, and grasped Hyde's shoulder.

"He's the real thing, boys," said Coakley, with a husky laugh. "He's here in the flesh."

But even then Miguel was overcome with fear to such an extent that he would not approach Hyde.

"He's too much for me," admitted Cole. "I saw you lying dead in the hotel, Pete. The bullet struck you just at the roots of your hair, and must have gone clean through your head."

"I don't know about that," admitted Hyde, "but my head feels as if it had been bored by a bullet. Who's that?"

He flung out a hand, pointing toward the captive.

"That," said Coakley, "is the great Merriwell's brother. Mr. Merriwell has proved to be right obstinate, and so we decided to carry off his brother and force him to accept our terms."

Hyde spoke to his horse, and reined the animal close beside the one upon which Dick Merriwell was bound.

"Evening, kid," he said. "You seem to be in a mess. I hope you're comfortable."

"I can't say that I am," returned the boy. "I'm far from it. In fact, I'm nearly dead from being tied in this position so long."

"Is that so? Well, we'll fix that. Here, somebody cut the boy free and put him astride this horse. You've got him, all right. Now, what the devil do you mean by causing him a whole lot of unnecessary discomfort? Get busy!"

His was now the master mind, and they obeyed him without demur. With unspeakable relief, Dick stretched his freed limbs, expressing his thanks to Hyde.

"That's all right, kid," nodded the man. "When I have to kill an enemy I do it without causing him any more discomfort than is absolutely necessary. Now, gents, we'll go on our way rejoicing."

The night was waning when they reached the mountains and came at last to the narrow mouth of Mystery Valley. There they were challenged by the armed guards, but these guards were soon satisfied, and into the valley rode the entire party.

They came finally to the mine, and the many buildings which constituted one part of the plant. On a sloping hillside miners' houses were scattered, with a huge boarding-house in the midst of them. Opposite these buildings, and slightly farther down the
valley, could be seen the shaft-houses and the mill. Almost a mile away, near the farther end of the valley, stood the smelter, which, however, could not be seen from the mine. A tramway ran from the mine to the smelter.

Everything seemed peaceful and quiet in the valley. One or two men, aroused by the sound of horses’ hoofs, came out to investigate. To these men Coakley finally explained the situation, and Pinal Pete demanded that the doctor should be awakened, to examine his wound. Long ere this, the wound had commenced bleeding afresh, and Pete’s head was now wrapped about with bloody handkerchiefs.

"Make the kid comfortable," said Hyde. "Give him a whole cabin by himself, but keep watch of him. Good night, boy. I opine you may be tired. Possibly you’re nervous. Don’t let your nerves keep you from sleeping. It wouldn’t do us any good to kill you, so I reckon you’re all safe."

"Thanks," said Dick. "I don’t believe I’ll be troubled with insomnia, in spite of my misfortune."

Nor was he. In the cabin to which he was taken he lost little time in rolling into a bunk, and was soon fast asleep.

The next Dick knew, some one was knocking at his door.

The moment he opened his eyes he remembered what had happened, and a faint smile flitted across his face.

"They’re extremely polite," he said to himself; and then he called aloud:

"Come in."

The door opened, and a Chinaman appeared, bearing a huge tray upon which were dishes and food.

"Lo Sling blingee breakfast," said the Celestial gently. "Missah Pinal Pete he say blingee boy good breakfast."

"Well, I’m certainly much obliged to Mr. Pinal Pete," said Dick. "Is the hour late, Lo Sling?"

"Pletty late, pletty late," answered the Chinaman, as he arranged the dishes and food on a rough table.

"You sleepee pletty hard. Lo Sling he knockee, knockee, knockee till skin most knockee off knuckles. He think mebbe he makee mistake. He think mebbe bloy not be in here; mebbe bloy somewhere else."

"Well, I’m here, I regret to say," said Dick. "Al-ha, I spy a pail of water and a wash-basin. I’ll make my morning ablutions."

Dick lost few moments in washing up and combing his hair. He sat down to the table, with Lo Sling waiting to serve him.

"At least," he observed, "they seem to be treating me rather decent. From what you said, I infer I have Pinal Pete to thank."

"Me clookee flood," said the Chinaman. "You hungly you eatee it. Mebbe you likee it."

Dick did like it, and that was one of the breakfasts that he never forgot. He had nearly finished when Pinal Pete himself came sauntering in, his head swathed in bandages and a pipe in his mouth.

"Morning, kid," said the man politely. "I hope I’m not interrupting."

"Oh, not in the least," returned Dick. "I’m quite through. Here, Low Sling, is something for you."

He flipped the Chinaman a silver dollar, which was deftly caught and accepted with chattering thanks.

"Then, if you’re through," said Hyde, "I’ll stop and converse with you a bit. Gather up the débris, Sing, and chase yourself."

"Vellee well, vellee well," said the Chinaman, as he hurriedly piled everything on the tray. "Me gitte pletty quick."

When the Celestial had disappeared, Pinal Pete coolly seated himself on a chair.

"Apparently, you did sleep well, kid," he said, "for you’re looking slick as a daisy. I got a few winks myself, though my head is still humming a bit. Doc gave me the pleasant information that your brother’s bullet had glanced upward, and followed a course over the top of my skull beneath the scalp. That was some lucky for Pete Hyde."

"Lucky, indeed," said Dick, "and I’m sure Frank will be glad that he did not kill you."

"Do you think so?" asked the man, with a queer expression on his face.

"I’m sure of it."

Pete shook his head.
"I dunno but you're right," he admitted; "but I don't see just why he should feel that way. I was after him, and I had my gun in my hand."

"But my brother has an aversion to taking human life. Had he been facing you, I'm sure he would have fired to maim you, and not to kill."

"Do you think so?" repeated Hyde. "Well, I reckon he had a license to shoot me up, and I ain't makin' no kick. Between you and me, boy, that brother of yours is certain a hard man to down. Mebbe you remember my saying last night that I had taken two chances at him, and I wasn't anxious to try the third. I'm still feeling somewhat that way. I've got the notion that the third time might be a grand fare-yeh-well for Pinal Pete."

At this point the man thrust his hand into a pocket and produced a folded paper, which he slowly opened.

"I haven't had the advantage of an education," he said slowly. "It's something of a puzzle for me to read print. This yere document is one of more than fifty we found scattered through the valley this morning. Some were tacked on the buildings, some stuck upon trees, and others folded and thrust under doors. They've caused some argument among the boys. Coakley and some others are trying to collect 'em all and destroy 'em. I opine it's a bit too late, for the boys all knows what's printed here. Your brother's name is at the bottom of these documents, but how he got them into Mystery Valley is something no man can tell. That he did it is enough to prove that he can do other things we're not expecting of him. Would you mind taking it and reading it aloud to me?"

It was Frank Merriwell's bulletin to the miners. Dick took the paper from Hyde's hand, and read it slowly and distinctly, while Pinal Pete, still puffing at his pipe, sat listening with a look of uncertainty upon his face. When Dick had finished, Hyde remained silent some moments, as if meditating.

"There's sure logic in that," he finally said, "and I opine it may be straight goods. I've seen enough to satisfy me that the boys who are striking have been fooled by these yere gents your brother speaks of as being the real enemies of the laborers. I'm one of them, though I ain't never bothered myself to work very hard. I was engaged to help the thing along, and my sympathy was with the strikers, of course. But it's been mighty queer that Amboy should turn around and sympathize with the strikers while he was dealing all the while with the mine-owners, or the representatives of the company."

"At the present time the original Pablo-Mystery Consolidated Company, the men who are anxious to see this strike continue, are not the real owners of the mine. They attempted to squeeze my brother out of his holdings through the stock market. He fought them, with the assistance of other capitalists, and beat them. To-day he is the principal stockholder in Pablo-Mystery Consolidated, and these men who are keeping up the strike are doing it to injure my brother."

"That's what it says in the document you've just read, boy. That's what the men are discussing and arguing over now. Coakley and some others are doing their level best to make the boys believe it a lie. I dunno how it will pan out."

Hyde seemed plunged into meditation once more. Suddenly a somewhat husky voice, singing a cheerful song, floated to their ears. Evidently, the singer was approaching, for the words became more and more distinct.

"Of all the sporty, sporty boys that sport around the town I used to be the sportiest and wore the king sport's crown; 'Twas, Johnny, set 'em up again when any one I'd meet, I drank most anything that wasn't thick enough to eat. The brew'ries all worked overtime to satisfy my thirst, Of all the human reservoirs I must have been the worst. I bought an automobile, but I ruined the machine, For every time I started out I'd drink the gasoline.

"But I'm on the water-wagon now, I never get a jag on now, I'm riding smooth and lightly, To my seat I'm strapped on tightly, For I'm on the water-wagon now."

Ere the chorus was finished, Dick was in the doorway, for, amazed and bewildered, he knew the voice of the singer.

Old Billy Bolivar, his silk hat cocked over one ear, escorted by several of the strikers, was sauntering carelessly toward the cabin.
CHAPTER XIII.

AT THE TOP OF THE PRECIPICE.

"Morning, Richard the First!" cried Billy, with a flourish of his hand. "I hope I see you, and I think I do. Being sober, I'm not under the hallucination that I see more than one of you."

"How the dickens did you get in here?" cried Dick, accepting Bolivar's proffered hand.

"That's what I'd like to know!" cried Ridpath, who was one of the bummers' escorts. "We found him sauntering along the trail in the valley here, and singing to himself in a very happy frame of mind. Who is he? What is he? And how did he get here?"

"He says he walked past the guards just before daybreak," said Hayden Cole; "but we don't believe it. He couldn't do it."

"Is it possible you could suspect me of prevarication, my friend?" cried Old Billy, with an injured air. "Your guards were dozy. They were snoozing so serenely that I actually stepped over a couple of them as I came into the valley."

"Well, you were in Caruzo last night. How did you get here?"

"I'm like the little birds that flit from tree to tree. First I'm here, then I'm there, and then I'm somewhere else. You never can keep track of me. I can hardly keep track of myself. Indeed, under the potent influence of ardent liquor, I have sometimes fancied myself not myself. My memory recalls the time, after a protracted spree, that I fancied that I was a big pink bulldog, with a bright green doughnut for a collar. Strange what peculiar delusions alcohol will stimulate."

"Well, what the devil are we going to do with him?" cried Ridpath. "We decided to ask you, Pete. What do you suggest?"


And so Old Billy was left with Dick, both being warned to keep inside the cabin, unless they were anxious to be shot by the two men who stood guarding it.

"You must be hungry, Bolivar," said Dick. Billy drew the remnants of a sandwich from his pocket.

"This is my seventh," he said. "I think I will finish it."

"How did you get into the valley?"

The bummer winked slyly.

"Ask the winds," he murmured. "I have come to tell you that you should rest in security until the hour of your deliverance. Worry not at all. Let's not talk too much, for it may be that prying ears are listening at this moment. I have spent a restless night, and I would slumber. Wake me up in time for dinner, Richard."

Saying which, Old Billy rolled into a bunk, and was snoring soundly in less than a minute.

* * * * * * *

There was excitement in the valley before the day was over, for outside its boundaries appeared a large body of armed men, headed by Frank Merriwell, who sought an interview with the head strikers. This interview was prevented by Coakley, Cole, and others. Merriwell's party was notified that they would approach the valley at their peril, as fully half a hundred armed men lay waiting for an attack.

The day waned, and no attack came. Night again spread her starry mantle across the heavens.

Not far from midnight, while Dick waited, wakeful and wondering, feeling sure that something was destined to occur, Old Billy Bolivar suddenly sat up and reached out a hand to touch his companion.

"Are you awake, Richard?" he asked.

"Sure."

"Then prepare to emigrate. We're going forth for a little stroll."

"What do you mean?"

"Don't ask questions. It's all right. Didn't you hear that owl hooting a few moments ago?"

"Yes, I heard it; but——"

"That was the signal."

"How about the guards?"

"They're all right, my boy. That's fixed, or else the owl would have been silent."
Doubtful and filled with double wonderment, Dick followed Bolivar to the door. Unhesitatingly, the tramp lifted his knuckles and rapped on that door, as if peremptorily demanding that it should be opened.

To Dick's surprise, it was opened from the outside.

"All right?" questioned Old Billy, thrusting his head forth.

There was a murmured answer, and then Bolivar again whispered for Dick to keep close at his heels.

The two guards were outside the door, but neither lifted a hand to molest them when they came forth. Instead of that, the men fell in with them, and the four hurried silent-footed down across the valley, and away toward the eastern side, some distance from the mine-shaft. Apparently, the strikers who were not on guard at the valley's mouth were all asleep in the various cabins.

More than half a mile the quartet proceeded, arriving at last beneath the face of an almost perpendicular cliff.

"Here's where we leave the valley," said Bolivar, fumbling along the face of the rock with his hands. "Ah, yes, here is the latch-string that will open the door."

His hands had found a dangling rope.

"You go first, Dick," he said. "Just let me make this fast beneath your armpits, and I'll give the signal. All you have to do is hang on and wait until they pull you up."

"They? Who?"

"Never mind asking questions, for time is valuable. We might be interrupted."

"That's right, gents," said a well-known voice, as a man rose from behind a boulder. "Get busy, for you can't tell what may happen."

"Pinal Pete!" exclaimed Dick, in dismay. "The jig is up!"

"Don't worry about me, boy," said Hyde reassuringly. "I'm not going to bother you any at all. I've been thinking a-plenty since we talked together this morning, and you read that there document to me. I admire your brother a heap, and I wish you to take him my compliments. Tell him I've got a bad case of cold feet, and I'm not bothering him any whatever in future. As far as the strike is concerned, it won't make any great difference to me whether it continues or comes to an end. I've been paid for what I've done—or, rather, what I've failed to do. I'm some tired of being used as a tool. I figured it out that the gent you called Bolivar didn't get in here the way he said, and wasn't here for nothing, and so I've had my eyes open, waiting to see what would happen. That's how you find me here. Good night, kid, if you're ready to depart. Mobbe we'll meet up with each other again. Who can tell? I judge I'll retire now, and get some sleep, for I'm satisfied."

Saying which, Pinal Pete sauntered away, without once turning his head, and finally he was swallowed by the shadows of the valley.

Bolivar gave a soft, low whistle. Almost immediately the rope tightened beneath young Merriwell's arms, and he was lifted clear of the ground. Up, up he was drawn, until at last strong hands grasped him and drew him to the top of the precipice. There, in the starlight, he saw four men. They were his brother Frank, Chester Arlington, Rob Conrad, and—"

"Injun Heart, Old Joe much glad to see you," said the voice of Crowfoot.

And Dick found himself in the embrace of the aged redskin.

THE END.

The Next Number (616) Will Contain

Dick Merriwell in Mystery Valley;

OR,

BURIED ALIVE IN BULLDOG TUNNEL.

The Master of the Valley—Billy Bolivar, the Optimist—
In the Shadow of a Rope—Blood Makes a Speech—
Adventures of Two Young Stockmen.

By JOHN N. WHARTON.

(IN TWO PARTS.)

PART II.

THE RISE TO FORTUNE.

Harland was at first astonished to hear Curtis talk of making a thousand dollars out of buffalo skins; but he soon caught the spirit of the project, and they both set to work to collect the heads and carry them down to their camp. In two days they gathered up four hundred and twenty heads from which they selected three hundred or more which they thought would do to polish.

Going down to Fort Yates, they procured a quantity of glass, a bowl and a small copper pot, as well as a tin cup for their utensils. They also bought a second-hand mule and hired a man to guide them down the Big Horn River.

They worked at this job through July and the most of August, although changing their camp there on the Cannon Ball River; and they did not fare very sumptuously, for they had nothing to eat save the dried meat and a very scanty supply of hardtack from Fort Yates. They were forced to eat prairie-dog stew most of the time, which they caught on the plains of Wyoming, and even on the plains of the Black Hills, where they found them in abundance.

During this hard struggle they found it necessary to change their camp every week or so, and to travel over the same region several times. They were constant visitors at Fort Yates, where they often stayed for a week or more, and where they found many large cattle-farms. Here they bought a second-hand mule and hired a man to guide them down the Big Horn River.

In November came rough weather; there was snow but once, however, which remained for more than twelve hours, and until the 20th of December. The two men had spent the winter in the two plateaus. On that day there came a storm, which lasted a week, and from this time forward they occasionally fed hay to their stock.

In December till late in February the weather was so uncomfortably cold that our two settlers— as we may now call them— abandoned their shack and constructed for themselves a small house.

The sides of the buttes here are often of a soft, half-formed sandstone; and in this, on the south side of the bank above their shack, they cut a cave, with an old ax, having an entranceway, about five or six feet in length, opening into a room some ten feet square, back in the bank. Here they had a fireplace with a flue leading up through the strata of the roof. For fuel they had only to dig out the lignite coal from the side of the butte, sixty or seventy feet below, and bring it up in a basket to their cave house.

This was as good as having a dry wood-PILE close at one's door, so that, on the whole, they managed to live quite comfortably. Game was plentiful; they caught the blacktail deer; and they had brought with them an abundant supply of cartridges for their two Winchester rifles. During storms, deer frequently entered their shelter. They killed some of the deer and kept the hips which had driven into the yard along with a herd of the yearlings; and these became so tame that they would come into the shack of their own accord and eat dainties from the hands of the two young men.

Their cattle lost flesh somewhat during the winter; only one died outright; however, but the snow and the severity of the season proved to the boys the necessity of cutting a liberal supply of hay, and also of having for their cattle an occasional feeding of green vegetables, either turnips and beets or else potatoes. They determined to cultivate a few acres in these crops every season, and also a plot of sweet corn, melons, tomatoes, etc., for their own use.

Early in April, therefore, Curtis set off to ride to Deadwood, and in the Black Hills country, to purchase a stock of seeds for planting. He took one of the pack-mules along with him, and assured Harland, who remained in charge of the shack, that he should be back in four days, if the weather held bright.

The cold of this time had made all the redskin, and had little fear of an attack, believing that there had been no trouble of late by the Sioux.

Curtis had been gone two days, I think they said, when Harland who had just driven the pack-mule to the yard of the plateau, and was distributing to them the last few handfuls of salt which they had in store— was startled by hearing a shout. When Curtis returned, the Indians were already on horseback, the Indians had apparently run off two-thirds of their entire herd.

Each had uncomfortable news for the other. Curt had been waylaid and shot at by redskins ten or twelve miles out of Deadwood, and had only escaped by hard riding. Feeling sure.
there had been a serious Indian outbreak, he made no attempt to reach the town, but came back to their ranch as fast as he could ride. Both felt themselves fortunate to see each other's faces again. They set off that night and drove the remainder of their herd out toward Fort Yates and the Missouri River, along their old trail. Curtis told them they would find from what they heard, of Sitting Bull and the state of the country at the fort, where they arrived five days later, they concluded that they had been fortunate to get away as they did.

Our two young friends felt rather "blue." Thus far the tide of fortune had been against them. In three years they had made nothing, but rather lost money. Judging that, in the present condition of the "Indian Question," stock-raising west of the Missouri was risky business, they sold out what cattle they had left to a Dakota stockman east of the river, and then began to cast about for some new enterprise to redeem their steadily waning fortunes. For after three years of toil, and often peril, they found themselves in possession of less than three hundred dollars. They were none the less determined not to go home with that ugly word failure written across their faces.

It was then that the item of information about old dry bones, picked up in Kansas City almost two years before, rose to the surface of their thoughts. The question was: "Is there anything we could do with these bones"? But "Is there any money for us to be got out of it?" In their movements about the country to the west of the Missouri, they had seen and traversed many old buffalo ranges, and they felt fairly sure and paved the way. It was fairly sure and paved the way. In fact, the entire country was once one great buffalo range, as their old "paths" and "wallows," seen everywhere on the Dakota prairies testify.

The price at Kansas City for these old bones was then, and is now, fifty cents per hundredweight, or ten dollars per ton delivered. Thence they are shipped via St. Louis to Baltimore, Philadelphia, and New York, and can be manufactured into superphosphate of lime, which is extensively sold as a fertilizer for impoverished soils.

During the months of June that season, our two friends "prospected" for bones at various points up and down the river. They even went as far north as the Knife River. To test the quantity on the ground, they set to work and collected piled of bones in many places, to see how many they could get on a piece of ground—an acre, for example—and also how long it would take a man to pick up a ton. The result of the month's explorations convinced them that there was very good pay in the business—if they were willing to work hard.

How to transport the bones to market at least cost was the next question; and during July, Curtis made a trip to St. Louis, where he made inquiries, and at length concluded an arrangement by which, at the point on the bank of the river to be shipped down the river, either on steamboats or in barges or flatboats, they could be shipped at a given price of ground—an acre, for example—and also how long it would take a man to pick up a ton. The result of the month's explorations convinced them that there were very good pay in the business—if they were willing to work hard.

The next year they invested the money they had saved, plus the profits from the first year. They loaded the bones in a "bone" and began the business of getting bones to the river bank from the back country to the eastward, first from a tract to the south of the Morran, or Owl River, and afterward at many other points. During this first season they prosecuted the business wholly by their own hands, having but one team, consisting of a large wagon and four mules. When I remember about, they said that they drew in and loaded for shipping one hundred and forty—odd—tons that year. It is easy to see that they must have labored patiently and well. Many a New England farmer's crop of corn was the heavier for their hard work on the banks of the upper Missouri that season.

The following year they enlarged their business, buying four new teams and hiring five men as drivers. They had five teams now, and were able to collect with their own hands; for they collected and piled the bones in rocks, out in the back country, to keep these five teams steadily employed pulling loads to every mile of distance, and inform us how much they cleared for the second year; but I judged that they made a good thing of it, for they had eleven teams employed the next year, at various points, both above and below the Grand River Agency.

Not to dwell on this bone business—which, if not the pleasantest occupation in the world, is at least an honest and a useful one—it may be stated that our two young friends combined in it quite extensively till the spring of 1881. By that time they had, as Curtis expressed it, "got the old ranges along the river pretty well cleaned of bones."

This was, as the reader will recall, the year of the "great flood" on the Missouri. Our friends had two large loads of bones frozen in, up the river, the fall before. The flood washed them both away along with a vast floe of ice in which they lay embedded. One capsized, or was crushed, and sank. The other one they heard of, in May, at a distance of over a hundred miles below. Afterward they found that it had "not down on" a settler's log house upon the bottoms. Apparently it had stranded, at high water, on the top of the house; and as the flood abated, it settled upon the cabin, crushing it to pieces.

Curtis and Hazland were both very active in saving property, cattle, and even human lives, during those weeks of the uncivilized Missouri's furious ravages. An account of their adventures at that time would fill an entire chapter, had I the space for it. One had not to look far for a hero on the upper Missouri that spring. It was a time of common danger and of many wonderfully brave and unselfish deeds, which ought not to be lost unrecording in the history of Dakota and Nebraska.

As to their profits during the four years our young friends were in the bone business, the writer is not exactly informed. When men make a good thing they are often modest, or at least not anxious to herald it to everybody. But some idea of it will be gathered from the fact that early in the season of 1881 they bought outright five hundred head of young cattle to reconnoiter the business of stock-raising. For during all this time they had never lost sight of this first object which had led them West; they still saw money in it, and they were now able to buy on a larger scale. Later that same year they bought three hundred head more.

Some ten years back, when the writer made their acquaintance, they were pasturing their cattle down to the southwest of Sentinel Butte, near the boundary of Montana, and employed ten "cowboys"; their herds at present number about two thousand head, which are probably worth over forty thousand dollars. This estimate does not include pens and much other property. It must certainly be conceded that for young men, twenty-six and twenty-seven years old, they did fairly well. The hardships they endured seemed not to have told severely on them physically; they looked hale and hearty.

From this plain narrative the reader will not, I think, find it difficult to draw his own conclusions and frame his own moral. For it is easily framed, and, if I mistake not, will run as follows: West is a good place for young men of courage and perseverance. Shirkings and weaknesses had better stay at home.

THE END.

HARD ON THE LOBSTER.

The lobster is greatly in dread of thunder, and, when the peals are very loud, they bury themselves three hundred feet down and swim away for deeper water. Any great fright may also induce them to drop their claws. But new claws begin at once to grow, and in a short time are as large as the old ones and covered with hard shells. The lobster often drops its shell, when it hides until the new shell is hard enough to protect it.

WITH MANY USES.

The various kinds of palm-trees that grow in Ceylon are in themselves of great interest, and when their different uses are explained a person can well appreciate how essential they are to the natives in the Cingalese districts. From the sap of the coconut palm the spirit the native drinks is distilled; the kernel of the nut is a necessary element in his daily curry; the "milk" is the beverage offered to every visitor to his domain; his only lamp is fed from the oil; his nets for fishing are manufactured from its fiber, as is also the rope which keeps his goat or cow from going astray; while the rafters of his house, the thatch of the roof, and the window-blind are made from its leaf and wood. But the palm is, perhaps, no so well known in the world that is put to so many and such profitable uses as the coconut palm, for even its leaf ribs are tied together to make brooms for sweeping and cages for birds.
TIP TOP ROLL OF HONOR.

Following the suggestion of Mr. Burt L. Standish, that appeared in his letter to Tip Top readers in No. 46, the following loyal Tip Top readers 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 grils and strive to get your name at the head of the list.

Oakes Worl, New York City.
Sidney B. Pope, Arizona.
Thos. P. Conboy, Conn.
Ernest Rowland, Conn.
John Rowe, Conn.
John Kelly, Conn.
David Parkhurst, Conn.
Dick Stanley, Penn.
Eddle M. Drummond, Virginia.
Francis, H. Sayles, Actor, "On the Road."
Richard Umbelhaun, Conn.

The names of other enthusiastic Tip Top readers 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."

I have been reading your great weekly for over five years, and have also read the "Merriwells" in the Medal Library, and I think "Frank Merriwell's Brother" was grand. I want to tell you how I first started to read Tip Top. My father keeps a book-store and sells all the five and ten—also fifteen—cent publications. So one day, about five years ago, as I came in the store, I saw my brother reading a "Tip Top." I said to him, "I don't see what good you get out of those things." He got angry at this and said if I would read one I wouldn't talk so much. So when I went home I took one and read it, and have been reading ever since. I have been telling our regular customers about it, and they have started buying regular. So my father has increased his sales from thirty copies a week to fifty-five copies a week, all on account of my recommending them. Of the characters I like Frank best, than comes Dick, Brad, Bart, Spark, Young and Old Joe Crowfoot, and last but not least Frank, Jr. Well, I will close column wishing long life to Burt L. and Street & Smith, I remain a true "Tip Top," A TEXAS BOY.

Houston, Tex.

We would have liked placing your name on our Roll of Honor, as well as sending you the catalogues asked for in your postscript, but how could either be done when you signed no name?

I have been reading "Tip Top" for the past year and a half, and think it one of the best papers published. I am a subscriber to a number of boys' papers, but do not find such interesting stories as I find in "Tip Top." I have induced a number of my friends to read "Tip Top," and we all have the same opinion.

I like even character from Frank down to Dunc Ditson, although there are a few I would like to lay my hands on and leave a beauty mark; still, I do not want to see them cut out of the stories of my "favorite," for it would destroy the beauty of "Tip Top," and I, for one, do not care to witness the destruction, after so long a success.

In order to keep all "Tip Toppers" together, I would like to see a correspondence club. I am willing to publish a paper—at my own expense—which will contain interesting letters from loyal "Tip Toppers."

For further information "Tip Topper" should write to me in care of "Tip Top Weekly."

Hoping this will not reach the waste-basket, as I am positive that this correspondence club will be a great aid to the publishers of "Tip Top," in assisting them to obtain many new readers, and with three rousing cheers for the publishers, editor, and author—including his characters—I remain, a loyal "Tip Topper."

New York City.

If our readers are in favor of such a club we will promise to see that their letters reach the writer of this.

(A letter from Canada.)

I have been reading "Tip Top" for two years and think it is the "whole cheese." I have read a lot about Frank Merriwell in the Medal Library, and liked them very much. I have read many letters in the Applause column in Canadian readers of "Tip Top," and would like to see more. I have persuaded several boys to read this very interesting weekly and I hope to get more in the near future.

I like all the characters, and think Burt L. Standish is a great author. I remain, yours very truly, HERBERT FARR.

Catalogue was mailed as per your request. We receive hosts of letters from Canada, though not always able to find room for every one; still, they come laden with good cheer, and we welcome them as from those of the same family, since "blood is thicker than water."

(A letter from Ohio.)

I have read your king of weeklies for two years, and have got about fifteen boys in three different cities to read it. Would you please send me catalogues of "Tip Top," also Medal and New Medal Library? I like Dick and Brad best. I am glad Chester A. turned to the good at last. I remain, a "Tip Topper."

MANUEL MURPHY.

You have done well, and we take great pleasure in sending you the catalogue you ask for.

It is a long while since I have written you, so I think I will try it again. One day, about four years ago, I saw in a waste-basket an old, shabby-looking pamphlet without any cover; in later I picked it up to see the name, and it was "Frank Merriwell's Courage." No. 225, Medal Library. So, not having
TIP TOP WEEKLY.

heard about the Merriwells before, I started in, and now I have every Medal book on the two brothers that has been printed, also about two hundred and fifty "Tip Tops." About the character I will say that Dick's trip to New England on his vacation this year was about the best ever, as Blackpool turned out to be a nice fellow after all. I was very sorry to hear about Captain Wiley's death, and I think that Burt L. Standish would please a lot of readers if he denied it as a false rumor.

I am writing around a club of boys and girls who are nearly all readers from my example; there are seventeen altogether.

"Tip Top" seems to make me feel like a brother to Frank and Dick, because when I started to read I had both parents but now have none, and am supporting my sister, who also reads "Tip Top.

I forgot to mention the girls, of whom my favorite is Doris Templeton, though I like Inza, Elsie, and June all close up. Hoping to meet the place where I first found Frank Merriwell— in the waste-basket—I am, a true helper of "Tip Top."

New York City.

OAKES WORL.

You certainly are, and "Tip Top" is proud to acknowledge such a firm friend. We think your name should honor our list at the head of this department.

Being a constant reader of the "Tip Top," I take the liberty to tell you how I like it. My opinion of the "Tip Top Weekly" is that it is the king of all weeklies. My favorites are Frank, Bart, Dick, Buckhart, Sparkfarm, Young Joe Crowfoot, and Obad. Enclose stamp, please send me your "Tip Top" and Medal Library catalogues, and oblige. I remain, yours truly,

Fred Borman.
New York City.

Short and sweet, a sample of many letters that usually we have to pass by. We like our boys to tell us: First, what "Tip Top" has done for them and for their friends, and, Second, what they are doing to help the good work along.

(A letter from Maine.)

I have been a reader of the "Tip Top Weekly," and I like it very much. I have read the New Medal Library for three years. I like Dick the best, and I think Mr. Standish has an excellent idea of the American boy. Will you please send me Prof. Fourmen's address? Yours respectfully, G. S. DuBois.

The professor can be reached by sending letter in care of this office. Glad to hear from you, and that you are fond of "Tip Top."

(A letter from Georgia.)

Seeing many letters from loyal "Tip Toppers" in praise of the reading weekly of its kind in this country has made me feel like expressing my opinion also.

I have read "Tip Top" from No. 100 to date, and many happy hours I spent over them. They make as fine a collection of athletic stories any boy could wish for. I think Frank's Athletic School is bound to be a success, as I also hope Dale Sparkfarm will, and his Indian chum, Crowfoot. My favorites are Frank, Dick, Bart, Brad, Battleton, Diamond, Joe Camp, and Captain Wiley. As this is longer than I intended to write, I will close, with best wishes. I am, yours truly,

W. M. Thornton.

A file of old "Tip Tops" is as you say, William, a splendid thing for a boy to own, and now that all the earlier stories, up to the arrival of Dick on the scene, can be had in the Medal Library bound books, there is a magnificent chance for every lover of the Merriwells to have a complete library, filled with such delightful treasures in the way of attractive and uplifting juvenile literature, as never offered to the older generation who were forced to be content with Optic, Alger, and Castleman.

(A letter from Arizona.)

Will you let a loyal "Tip Topper" from the Wild West express his sentiments with regard to the great king of weeklies? I have been a reader for the past six or seven years, and I find it far ahead of any other weekly printed. When only a small boy I got hold of a "Tip Top" one day. No. 597, and I have been a reader ever since. I have been in Arizona some time, and I learn that "Tip Top" finds its way everywhere.

I go. My native home is in Texas, and, of course, I admire Brad Buckhart to the limit. I was once a cigarette fiend, and I am proud to say that reading after the Merriwells has entirely changed the habit of the thing. In fact, I persuaded dozens of boys to read "Tip Top." When I first began reading my father scolded me for it, but I was surprised to hear him say, "Enter his room one day and find him reading one of my old ones, and he said he liked it fine. Well, I hope this does not reach the waste-basket. I wish a long life to author and publishers. I remain, a loyal "Tip Topper,"

Sidney B. Pope.

All of which is very pleasant reading for editor and publishers, and we feel that our good friend Sidney certainly deserves a place among the "Immortals" whose names grace our Honor Roll.

I see we have another Chester Arlington; he is Duncan Dixon, but hope Frank or Dick will tame him down like they have done a lot of others like him. I am glad Chester has turned over a new leaf for the sake of his sweet sister. June, June is the one for Dick, and Dick knows it, and a lot of readers of "Tip Top" know it, too. First comes Frank, Dick, Bart, Brad, and then our great Southerner, Robert Claxton. Then the very little chap, Thomas Tucker, Bouncer Bigelow, and Jack Spratt. Let's hear a little more of Dick's old friends, the Fardale crowd. If there is anybody who is good for anything, who, Frank's show, if I will be Frank Merriwell, Jr., as Dick Merriwell. Hope this misses the waste-basket like everybody that writes to "Tip Top" Applause column says; but I think they are wrong, because every letter that Street & Smith receive from the "Tip Top" Applause column goes in it; but that is our great password, "hope this misses the waste-basket." I hope Rob Claxton will become Dick's warmest and best friend. Three million cheers for our great author and publishers, Burt L. Standish and Street & Smith, and every reader of the king of weeklies, "Tip Top." I remain,

Samuel Barbra.
New Orleans, La.

Nevertheless, much as we regret it, friend Samuel, there are many letters that lack of space prevents our publishing. We try to select those that are of the most general interest, and that tell the story of "Tip Top"'s great work.

Having been a reader of "Tip Top" for the last eight years and not having seen anybody writing to you from my section, I thought I would let you know that you are not unknown here. Frankly, I think that you are the best published. I like best Frank and Bart of the old, and Dick and Brad of the new bunch. I would like to hear some more of Dave Flint. I have just gotten through with No. 604, "Dick Merriwell's Drop Kick," and felt sorry for Carl Hogan when he was hurt, and I hope he gets well and becomes a friend of Dick's. Well, I think I am taking up too much space, so I had better stop, wishing success to Street & Smith and Burt L. I remain, yours respectfully,

Hermit, Texas.

Harry, the "Tip Top" Reader.

We have a multitude of earnest friends in Texas, and they are always for Brad. They understand his frank and breezy character better in the country where they grow real men.

(A letter from the Pacific Coast.)

I have been a reader of your famous weekly for about six years, and I wish to state that I think Mr. Standish is one of the best writers of boy's stories in the country at the present day. If all the youths of our Nation would take Frank and Dick as models in the lives they lead, there would be no use for jails and prisons. I notice that in all his travels, Dick has never been to our city. If I am not presuming, I would suggest to Mr. Standish to have him appear in our part of the country on his next summer vacation trip. There are thousands of "Tip Top" readers in this State of Washington, and it would be a new scene in the stories. With best regards, I am, yours very truly,

E. V. Grisvard.

Dick or Frank may come some time later. Meanwhile, you good people in the West coast must get along next spring with the grand naval review. The sixteen battleships we are sending out to tour the western coast of our Republic are old friends along the Atlantic seaboard.
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 BOOK OF PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT.
THE ART OF BOXING AND SELF-DEFENSE, by Prof. Donavan.
U. S. ARMY PHYSICAL EXERCISES, revised by Prof. Donavan.
PHYSICAL HEALTH CULTURE, by Prof. Fourmen.

PROF. FOURMEN: As a true Canadian and a constant reader of the “Tip Top Weekly” and Medall Library, I take the liberty of asking you a few questions. Age, 14 years 8 months; height, 5 feet 2 inches; weight, nearly 107 pounds; from shoulder to shoulder, 16 inches; right bicep, 9½ inches; left bicep, 9¼ inches; forearms, 10 inches; wrist, right, 6¼ inches; left, 6¼ inches; chest, normal, 39½ inches; expanded, 32 inches; waist, normal, 27½ inches; expanded, 26½ inches; calf, right, 12½ inches; left, 12½ inches; neck, 13 inches; ankle, left, 9½ inches; right, 9½ inches. How are my measurements? Tell me my weak points and how to strengthen them. I play football, rugby, baseball; can row, paddle, swim, or shoot. In running would you recommend me to put underwear on under my gym suit, or not? I attend the Y. M. C. A. of this city, and have got gym suit, sleeveless jersey, white pants, and running shoes. Hoping to see this in print, I remain, a true “Tip Topper.”

C. B.
Toronto, Canada.

Weight all right; chest might measure a little more in order to reach the average for your height, 31 inches. You can suit yourself about an undershirt, but certainly you do not need it when running, only be careful about taking cold when over-heated.

PROF. FOURMEN: As I have been a reader of the “Tip Top” for quite a while, I take the liberty to ask you a few questions. What do you think of my measurements? Age, 16 years; height, 5 feet 2 inches; chest, 29 inches; expanded 31½ inches; waist, 26 inches; thighs, 18 inches; calves, 12 inches; biceps, 8 inches; expanded, 9 inches; wrist, 6 inches; weight, 91 pounds. Do I weigh enough? I play ball very much, and I am a pitcher and pinch with my left hand, but my wrist is weak. How can I remedy this? I am very short-winded. I have started now getting up early and taking a run and then practising jumping. Is this good or not? Hoping to hear from you, and with three cheers for Burt L. and Street & Smith, I remain,

Santa Rosa, Cal.
A LOYAL “Tip Topper.”

Too little chest, too much waist. Weight about right. Reverse the first and second by a course of gymnastics, and such well-known deep-breathing exercises as will develop the lungs. Yes, the early morning work is good.

PROF. FOURMEN: As I’ve been a reader of your excellent weekly, “Tip Top,” for several years, I now take liberty of asking you several questions: Age, 15 years 7 months; height, 5 feet 1½ inches; weight, 113 pounds; chest, normal, 33½ inches; expanded, 35 inches; shoulders, 36 inches; neck, 12½ inches; wrist, 6½ inches; forearm, 9 inches; biceps, 10 inches; calves, 12½ inches; ankles, 9 inches. Do you think I will grow more, and what kind of exercise would you recommend? What are my weak points? Hoping to see this letter in print soon, I remain,

Brooklyn, N. Y.
A LOYAL “Tip Topper.”

You have the torso of a boy of 5 feet 4 inches and measurements are fine. Of course, you will grow during the next five years; but you will never be a large man so far as height goes. Possibly you may reach 5 feet 6 inches. But you are to be congratulated on possessing such a splendid pair of lungs. Keep them healthy, son, and take pride in being athletic and healthy, even though Nature denies you the commanding presence you crave.

PROF. FOURMEN: Will you kindly give me the information asked for below. Is it best to take a cold bath in the morning with soap, or just a sponge-bath? I have been in the habit of taking a row every morning for the last 8 months, of about 3 miles, do you think it would be better to increase it to 5 miles? Also which is the best way to row to be benefited most? I generally row facing the stern going and on returning face the bow, is that all right, or should I row facing the stern both ways? For how long should I row in the evening? Trusting to receive the information by return mail, and wishing you continued success, I am, yours very truly,

Jacksonville, Fla.

You have a lovely stream for rowing, and I have enjoyed it many times myself. Rowing is splendid exercise, and you can hardly get too much of it if careful about your manner of doing it. Never row backward if you want the full benefit. Rightly done, it exercises all the muscles of the body. As to the bath, either way is good.

PROF. FOURMEN: As I have been reading “Tip Top” for about six years, I thought I would take the liberty to ask your opinion upon my measurements. They are: Age, 16 years 10 months; height, 5 feet 7½ inches; weight, 125 pounds; shoulders, 39 inches; neck, normal, 14 inches; expanded, 15 inches; chest, normal, 35 inches; expanded 37½ inches; waist, 28 inches; biceps, normal, 10 inches; expanded, 11 inches; forearm, 10½ inches; thighs, 19½ inches; calves, 13 inches; ankle, 9½ inches.

1. What are my weak points and how can I develop them? My biceps are small compared to other boys of my age, but I seem to be just as strong as the average boy. I have never trained and have never attended a gymnasia. Thanking you in advance, I remain,

HARRY V. WYLD.

1. Fair.
2. Weight 15 pounds short, and chest deficient. Buy a manual and start systematic exercising with the idea of enlarging your lung capacity.
The Story
The Street-Car Tells—
The Trained and the Untrained Man

Side by side they sit,—one filling an important position in the world—the other poorly paid and discontented. The difference between them is due to the fact that one man is trained—an expert in his line of work, while the other is not.

If you’re the untrained man and want to advance, write to-day to the International Correspondence Schools and learn how you can better your position—how you can have your salary raised.

You’ll be surprised when you learn how easy it all is. Do it now, while it’s fresh in your mind. Tear out the coupon, mark it opposite the occupation you like best and mail it to-day. There’s no string to this—no obligation on your part—no charge for the information and advice that the coupon will bring. Isn’t your whole future worth the finding out? Then, do it now.

Doesn’t matter how old you are, where you live or what you do—so long as you can read and write the I. C. S. can help you without your having to lose a day’s work or leave home. Mark the coupon.

Doesn’t the fact that during November 265 students voluntarily reported better positions and higher salaries obtained as a direct result of I. C. S. training prove the willingness and ability of the I. C. S. to raise your salary? This is the average number of similar successes reported every month. Mark the coupon NOW.

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| Textile Mill Supt.                                                                                       |
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| Civil Engineer Contractor                                                                                |
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| Architect                                                                                               |
| Structural Engineer                                                                                     |
| Banking                                                                                                 |
| Mining Engineer                                                                                         |

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| City, State                                                                                              |
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 School-days." 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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