Dick Merriwell’s Shooting;

OR,

THE GUN CLUB IN THE WOODS.

By BURT L. STANDISH.

CHAPTER I.

TWO RASCALS IN A CANOE.

Hugh Bramwell sat forward in the canoe and nursed his injured right hand, which was wrapped in a blood-stained handkerchief, while Dan Hyde wielded the paddle. They were returning from the Blue Mountain House to Catamount Camp. The golden sun was hanging low over the western hills and forests. A soft, purplish-blue haze hovered like a mist of enchantment over the distant waters of the lake, and the far-reaching stretches of the Adirondack timber-lands. The scene was most peaceful and soothing, yet the hearts of the occupants of that canoe were throbbing with a tumult of rage.

Bramwell ground his strong, square teeth together and swore, his face corrugated with passion and pain.

“What’s the use?” exclaimed the man with the paddle. “That doesn’t do any good. You can’t ease your feelings that way.”

“Well, I can’t keep bottled up, can I?” snarled the big, square-shouldered, coarse-faced youth with the bandaged hand. “I have a right to swear, haven’t I? You would if you were in my place.”

“In your place?” said Hyde bitterly. “Why, it was a white man, one of your former college-mates, who threw the rock that smashed your hand. I was struck by an Indian! I was knocked down, Bramwell, by a cur of a redskin. Who has the greatest grievance, you or I?”

“I told you that infernal copper-skinned sneak would make trouble for us!” rasped Bramwell. “He’s been watching us like a hawk ever since he arrived at Catamount Camp with Sparkfair and those other Harvard fellows. Didn’t I detect him this very morning examining my boots? I knew what he was up to.”

“In the first place, Bramwell,” said Hyde, pausing for a moment and leaning forward with his paddle resting across the canoe in front of him, “you did a fool trick when you fired at Merriwell from the shore of the lake the day the Harvard crowd arrived.”

The chap with the injured hand twisted his face into an ugly grin.
"Didn't fire at him," he said. "Fired at the swimming deer he was chasing."
"That won't go as an excuse, Hugh."
"Why not?"
"Why, you know it's close season for deer. You had no right to shoot at the buck. Better not attempt dodging by such an excuse. Stick to it that you didn't shoot. I'll stand by you."

"We've got to stand by each other. Didn't I stand by you just a little while ago? Didn't I pull a pistol on that infernal redskin after he had knocked you down in the presence of Rose Sharon? Say, Hyde, that was tough, I admit. Yes, you have a first-class reason for hating Joe Crowfoot. He played the stage-hero to perfection. He rescued the frightened girl from the villain who had placed violent hands upon her."

Hyde chewed at one corner of his short mustache, his eyes filled with an ugly light.

"I failed with the girl," he said, in a low tone of bitter disappointment. "They have poisoned her mind against me, that's plain. I fancied I could induce her to listen to me if I found the opportunity, and that's why I followed her along the path that led to the spot where she had beached her canoe under the cliff. I came up here to Blue Mountain Lake especially to get such an opportunity to talk to Rose Sharon. Last summer she was a fascinating creature despite her immaturity; this year she has developed amazingly, and she's a hundred times more fascinating. Last year she believed me a man of some importance and wealth, and, despite the prejudice of her brother, I was getting along swimmingly with the girl, even with her crabbed old father, until the unfortunate night when I sat into the poker-game with a party over at Loon Lodge. It was Jack Sharon who detected me putting up a hand on those easy marks who had a lot of loose money they didn't need. Then he queued me with his sister. Old Abe Sharon drove me away from Lakeview at the muzzle of a shotgun.

"But I could not forget Rose Sharon, and I continued to dream and plan of returning here for the purpose of seeing her again. The glimpse of her that I obtained in the club-house at the Saratoga race-track was enough to settle my mind, and I decided to lose no time in following her home. But you never can tell about a woman. By George! they are the queerest things in the world. Just when you think you have got one safe and solid she gives you the frosty mitt. I would have bet my life that, in spite of everything they could say to her, Rose Sharon continued to think of me with a great deal of sentiment. I would have wagered anything in the world that I could bring her round all right by talking with her not more than five or ten minutes. I dreamed pleasant dreams about meeting her clandestinely up here in some wild-wood glade. I dreamed about slipping away from Catsmount Camp for the purpose of keeping a tryst with my little Adirondack Rose.

"Imagine my disgust and anger while trying to talk with her under the cliff to-day to have her treat me with mingled contempt and scorn. I'm usually rather cool-headed and calculating, Bramwell; but I lost my head then. My blood was leaping in my body. I was desperate when I saw that the jig was up and I could do nothing with the girl. I was madly disappointed at the blighting of all my budded hopes. I saw my dreams fading into empty air, and then, like a fool, I seized her and tried to force her into listening, into believing, into trusting—tried to compel her by sheer superior brute strength.

"You can do that with a certain kind of woman. There are those of the sex who admire and love a man according to the amount of fear he inspires in them by his brutality. This is not true with the higher grade of women, and Rose Sharon is just about as high grade as they make 'em, regardless of her father. I understand that her mother was a school-teacher and a woman of education and refinement. Both Rose and her brother Jack owe a great deal to their mother. I suppose I've lost her, Bramwell. In these days, only a madman would think of capturing his lady-love and carrying her off by main force. But if I can't do that, at least I can even my score with that redskin who struck me."

"He has made all the trouble for us since he came," said Bramwell. "Why, I saw you talking with Goddard Cutts while the tennis-match was going on. I thought you had fixed everything up."

"And so I did to some extent," nodded Hyde. "Cutts was inclined to forget the past. He told me he was sorry there had been any trouble between himself and the Kimberlys. Why, we even made a bet on the tennis-match."

"A bet?"

"Yes, a small wager."

"Of course, you bet against Merriwell?"

"Of course I put my money on the side I fancied must win. Hotchkiss and Sparkfair should have won that match. It was disgraceful for them to let Merriwell and Claxton defeat them. Still, I don't care anything about that."
‘You will find out, if you see enough of the fellow, that this Merriwell has the greatest luck of anybody in the world. He almost always wins. I can’t explain it. I don’t understand it. Confound him, he was watching us! I saw you follow the girl down the path, and something led me to pike along. I caught a glimpse of the Indian. Then I came up just in time to pull my pistol on him after he had struck you. Didn’t seem to frighten him, though. He just folded his arms and looked straight at me. Oh, he made a great bluff before the girl. He certainly struck a pose. Of course, I didn’t mean to shoot him. I’m no fool. I never dreamed Merriwell had seen us and was looking down from the top of the cliff almost over my head. The first warning I had was the stone which struck my hand and sent the pistol flying. That’s another debt I owe that fellow. Oh, the score is a long one; but some day—some day I’ll settle it in full.’

‘Certainly, Merriwell seems to be your hoodoo, Bramwell.’

‘I didn’t want to come up here in the woods, anyhow,’ growled Hugh. ‘I have no particular love for the woods. I’d never come if it hadn’t been for you. I wish I’d stayed away. Say, Hyde, what are we going to do now?’

‘About what?’

‘You know. You heard Merriwell’s warning. He told us he would queer us at Catamount Camp if we went back there.’

‘Yes, I heard it all,’ nodded Hyde. ‘But we’re going back to Catamount Camp just the same.’

‘Oh, we’ve got to go back to get our dunnage; but I don’t believe we’ll be able to stop there.’

‘I do.’

‘Why, man alive, Crowfoot will be there. We can’t stop under the same roof with that Indian.’

‘I can. I can stop there and hide my time to get at him. The time may come soon.’

‘He will tell his story to Kimberly and the others. Merriwell will corroborate him.’

‘I’ll have a story to tell. Will Kimberly knows I was accepted as a respected guest at the Sharon home last summer. I’ll explain to him that I met Rose Sharon under the cliff near the Blue Mountain House by appointment. I shall declare that she agreed to meet me there. I shall say that she was frightened after she did meet me, for she feared her brother had seen and followed us. I was seeking to reassure her when Crowfoot interfered and struck me without warning. You happened to be on hand and saw it, so you pulled a pistol on Crowfoot. Merriwell was watching from the top of the cliff and threw the stone which smashed your hand and knocked the pistol to the ground. Leave it to me, Bramwell. I’ll fix it, and I’ll agree to make it seem as if the Indian was altogether too hasty in the matter.’

‘What if they question Rose Sharon and she tells the truth?’

‘I’ll simply say that she’s afraid to have her father and brother know that she agreed to meet me. You leave it to me, Bramwell. Let’s keep a stiff upper lip and see this thing through. I’ve played enough poker to know the value of bluffing at the right time.’

‘And I’ve played enough poker,’ muttered Bramwell, ‘to know that a fellow’s bluff may be called when he least expects it.’ All the same, I’m with you, Hyde. I can’t help you paddle because of this hand. It pains me. I’m afraid some of the bones are broken. Let’s get to the camp as soon as possible. The others will be coming along soon.’

Hyde took up the paddle and began wielding it once more. While they were talking the canoe had drifted close to one of the wooded islands of the lake. When they had moved out past that island Bramwell was able to look back toward the Blue Mountain House, and he perceived a number of canoes coming out from the landing and swinging around a point of land.

‘The boys are coming,’ he said.

CHAPTER II.

JOE PORTUGAS, THE GUIDE.

Joe Portugas, the Indian guide at Catamount Camp, was sitting in the shade of a tree near the float working down the handle of a maple paddle with a piece of glass and a square of sandpaper. He looked up and nodded with what was intended to be an agreeable grunt of welcome as Hyde and Bramwell came ashore.

“How you like my canoe?” he asked, for it was his own particular canoe that they had used on the trip over to the Blue Mountain House that day.

“First-rate, Joe,” answered Hyde, producing his cigar-case and offering the guide a weed; “but it’s too heavy and slow, don’t you think?”

“Good canoe,” answered Portugas, accepting a cigar and biting off the small end with his strong yellow teeth. “I use him for greenhorns. Regular canoe too cranky for greenhorns.”

Hyde laughed.
“So we’re greenhorns, are we? Have you forgotten that I was up here in the woods last season, Joe?”

“Oh, no; I not forget that,” was the answer. “I not forget that you try a little birch-bark canoe one day. You took him out yonder where everybody can see you do stunts. All of a sudden—whup!—over you go into the water quick as a wink, and there is canoe right side up thirty feet away.”

“Yes, that’s right,” grinned Hyde, as he struck a match and lighted his own cigar before handing the blaze over to the Indian guide. “But I wouldn’t do that trick again. That was because I wasn’t on my guard.”

“You good swimmer,” said Portugas, shaking his head, “but I have to go out mighty quick to save you that day. You get a cramp. You better stick to regular canoe, same as one I let you have to-day. It is good for heavy sea where small canoe mebbe it get swamped. You take my canoe any time you want him. You treat Joe Portugas white, and he will not forget.”

These words were spoken in a significant manner which indicated a hidden meaning. Hyde smiled and gave his head a jerk toward Bramwell, saying:

“My friend knows all about it, Joe. He can be trusted. That boy is all right.”

The Indian grinned hideously.

“Very good whisky you give me last time,” he said.

“All gone now. Mebbe bimeby you get some more for me?”

“You will have to wait a while, Joe. I’m going to have another lot come in from North Creek by stage in a day or two. Perhaps I’ll be able to spare a quart as long as you kept your promise to me and didn’t get drunk on the last I let you have.”

The Indian shrugged his shoulders.

“Young Will, he think I get drunk every time I get whisky,” he said. “That’s why he tell everybody not to give me whisky at all. You’re only man who dare give me any.”

“And Kimberly would be furious if he knew about it,” said Hyde. “If you’re looking for anything more from me you want to keep mum, Joe.”

“Oh, I keep mum, all right. Any time you want my canoe, you take him. Any time you want anything of me, you ask. You know I have good camp all my own over Raquette Lake way. Some time mebbe you want to come up with friends. You let me know, I give you good time at my camp.”

“Much obliged, Joe,” said Hyde. “Perhaps I’ll want the use of your camp some day.”

For the first time the Indian seemed to notice the bloody handkerchief wrapped around the right hand of Bramwell, who had waited impatiently near-by while Hyde was talking.

“What matter with your friend,” asked Portugas.

“He hurt hand?”

“Yes,” nodded Hyde. “He got his right hand smashed to-day. You’re pretty clever at doctoring a wound, they say. Perhaps you’ll dress it so that it will be all right until he can have a regular doctor look after it?”

“Why he not get regular doctor at Blue Mountain house? Always doctor there.”

“That’s right; but he didn’t feel just like calling on a doctor over there.”

Portugas slipped the piece of glass and the square of sandpaper into his pocket, leaned the paddle against the trunk of a tree near-by and followed Hyde and Bramwell toward the camp. As they were entering, Hyde looked back and saw the first of the canoes coming round a point of land and heading into the cove.

Hyde and Bramwell had a room on the second floor of the west wing of the camp. Their windows, always kept open, were securely screened to prevent the entrance of flies and mosquitoes. One window commanded a view of the cove, while the other looked out upon the rear of the camp where Pike, the cook, was now busy at work preparing supper, assisted by a boy “cookee.”

Portugas looked at Bramwell’s injured hand curiously when the bloody handkerchief had been removed.

“You got bad smash there,” he said. “You move fingers, eh? Yes? The first finger he smashed bad. Guess no bones busted. How you do it?”

Hyde turned from the front window where he had been standing watching the boys of the camp coming in to the float in their canoes.

“You know Joe Crowfoot, Portugas?” he said. Instantly a look of dislike swept over the unpleasant face of the Indian guide.

“Yes, I know him,” he said. “He no belong round here; but he come from way off somewhere and he think he know everything ’bout woods. I hear some fool people say Joe Crowfoot he just as good guide as Joe Portugas. How that can be I wish you tell me. Joe Portugas he live in Adirondacks all his life. He know every inch of Adirondacks, every river, every stream, every trail, every mountain, every lake from north to south, from east to west. How can some-
body who never been here before be just as good guide as Joe Portugas who been here all his life?"

Hyde saw that Portugas was jealous of Crowfoot, and he immediately took pains to fan the flame of jealousy.

“That’s right,” he said, “I’ve heard them say the same thing. That’s because Crowfoot’s friends want to favor him. They’re anxious to get him into your place here and throw you out of a job. You see, he’s a pretty swell Indian. He’s all ready to go to college, this fellow Crowfoot. He thinks he knows it all because he’s got a little education.”

“Don’t talk to me ‘bout him now,” growled Portugas, as he prepared to bathe Bramwell’s hand in a wash-bowl.

“Oh, I was just going to explain,” said Hyde, “that Crowfoot is partly responsible for Bramwell’s injured hand. I was talking to a young lady over at the hotel. We met at the landing under the cliff. Crowfoot jumped out of the bushes and struck me without warning. As I was unprepared, he knocked me down. Bramwell saw him and pulled a pistol on him. Then one of Crowfoot’s friends—a fellow who is stopping over at Loon Lodge—threw a rock from the top of the cliff and smashed Bramwell’s hand, knocking the pistol into the bushes. The fellow who threw the rock was Dick Merriwell.”

“Oh, yes, I’ve heard ’bout him, too,” nodded the guide. “Some fellows here they think Dick Merriwell pretty near the whole shooting-match. The one who talk so much, him they call Sparkfair, he make me sick when I hear him go on about Dick Merriwell.”

“Evidently you don’t fancy Sparkfair, either, Joe.”

“Too much chin. Talk, talk, talk all the time.”

“He’s one of the chaps who is trying to get Joe Crowfoot into your place here.”

“Oh, I could guess that. Well, let them do it. I could get ’m other job all right. Mebbe some time I catch Joe Crowfoot in woods all alone. If I do, he get what’s coming to him, you bet!”

While talking he had bathed Bramwell’s hand, and he now left the fellow to hold it in the bloody basin of water while he hurried down-stairs and away to his own room in one of the small lean-tos in the rear of the main camp.

“One thing, Hugh,” said Hyde, “we’ve got a strong ally in Portugas. He will stand by me, all right. The whole bunch is here. I’ve been half-expecting to see Kimberly sticking his nose into this room, but he seems to be keeping away.”

“Has the Indian come?” asked Bramwell.

“Crowfoot?”

“Yes.”

“He came along with Sparkfair. He’s here.”

“If Portugas catches Crowfoot alone in the woods, the chances are more than even that no one will ever hear of Crowfoot again. That man Portugas won’t hesitate at anything.”

Hyde nodded.

“That’s just about what I think of him,” he said. “Leave it to me. Didn’t you notice how I worked him up? Sh-sh! Here he comes.”

Portugas returned, his mocasined feet making scarcely a sound, bearing bandages, absorbent cotton, and a bottle of liniment.

“This make hand smart some,” he said. “You no mind that any. It fix him all right.”

With a towel he carefully dried Bramwell’s hand, after which he stopped the liniment onto a lot of absorbent cotton which he quickly placed upon the injured member.

Instantly Hugh danced a jig all over the room, although he held fast to his right wrist with his left hand, steadying it so that the absorbent cotton was not shaken off. Finally he calmed down somewhat and Portugas prepared to apply the bandage, which was quickly and deftly done.

“There,” said the Indian, as he split the bandage at one end, tore it down a short distance, then passed the two ends around Bramwell’s wrist and tied them securely. “That fix you all right if no bones is busted. You have sore hand just the same. No help for that. Now I go.”

“Wait just a minute,” said Hyde, opening a closet and bringing forth a bottle. “Don’t you think you’d better take a little drink before you go? I guess so.”

Portugas stopped with a grin of pleasure, which vanished, however, as Will Kimberly himself stepped into the room, saying:

“But I don’t think so.”

CHAPTER III.

HYDE’S RESENTMENT.

Both Portugas and Bramwell were startled by the sudden appearance of young Kimberly, but Hyde did not seem to be a whit disturbed. With a pleasant smile, he turned, bottle and glass in hand, and faced the son of the owner of Catamount Camp.
“Hello, Kim,” he purred softly. “Just in time to join us.”

There was a frown on the handsome face of Will Kimberly.

“You will excuse me, Hyde,” he said. “Under any circumstances, it is not my custom to drink with certain people.”

They knew what he meant. Hyde understood that this was a call-down for him because he had invited the guide to drink.

“Furthermore,” added Kimberly, “I took special pains to request you not to offer Portugal liquor. I know Joe’s weakness, and he knows it also. He cannot handle strong drink. It masters him. It’s rather remarkable, Hyde, that you should be found giving him booze after I took all that trouble to ask you not to do so.”

“Oh, well, you see it’s this way, Kim, old fellow; Joe has just been dressing Bramwell’s hand, and I knew he must feel a trifle nauseated. I reckoned that a small drink wouldn’t hurt him a bit—it would do him good.”

“A small drink might be just enough to start Portugal on a bender. Once he gets a taste of the stuff, he’s almost certain to fill up if he can find any more at any price. Now don’t scowl like that, Portugal; you know it’s the truth. You’re a valuable man. My father has employed you every year since he built this camp.”

“Now mebbe you tired of Portugal,” muttered the Indian. “Mebbe you get somebody else you like better. Oh, I hear about that. Mebbe you get Crowfoot for guide. He’d be a good one! He know lots ‘bout the country, don’t he?”

Portugal uttered these words with inexpressible sarcasm.

“What are you driving at, Portugal?” demanded Kimberly, in apparent surprise.

“Oh, I know how he try to get my job.”

“There’s nobody trying to get your job. Go on now, get that out of your head. I want to talk with Hyde and Bramwell. No, Hyde, you’ll not give him a drink; I object to it.”

Dan Hyde shrugged his shoulders and turned away, while Portugal left the room, wearing an air of disappointment and disgust.

“It’s rather unfortunate that I should find you doing anything like this, Hyde, especially after what I’ve heard happened over at the Blue Mountain house. You’re a friend of my father. We stood by you for all of that unpleasant occurrence last year. I was both surprised and pleased to-day when I saw you talking with Goddard Cutts, for I fancied it meant the burying of the hatchet and the end of a rather disagreeable feud. I didn’t think you would trouble the Sharon girl again. I fancied you would be too proud after what had happened.”

“Now wait a minute, Kim, old fellow,” interposed Hyde. “I know what you are coming at. Let me say something right now. You’ve heard one side of the story. Never forget that there are always two sides to any story. I had a date with Rose Sharon to-day. She met me at the landing under the cliff over by the Blue Mountain House. After meeting me she was frightened because she said she had seen some one watching us in the bushes. She thought it was her brother. I tried to calm her. I tried to reassure her. While I was doing so that young whelp of an Indian jumped out of the bushes and struck me without warning. I’m going to settle with him, Kimberly. He will pay dearly for that blow before I’m through with him. It seems that he has lost his head over the girl. He saw her the day he came here with the rest of the crowd. They camped on old man Sharon’s land and he warned them off at the muzzle of a shotgun. The girl interfered between her father and the young fellows, and Crowfoot, the Indian, saw her then. He’s gone smashed on her, and so to-day he attempted to play the hero by sneaking through the bushes in pursuit of her and jumping out at me while I was talking with her. Look here, Kimberly, old man, Sharon thinks his daughter too good to have anything to do with me. What will he think when he finds out that a full-blooded redskin is enamored with her? How will he like young Joe Crowfoot as a suitor for his daughter? How do you fancy he would like an Indian for a son-in-law?”

Kimberly’s face wore an ever increasing expression of surprise.

“You must be off your trolley, Hyde,” he said. “Why, Crowfoot wouldn’t dream that he could be accepted as a suitor for a girl like Rose Sharon. I’ve heard one side of the story about that affair over at the Blue Mountain House. I heard it from both Crowfoot and Dick Merrivell.”

Hyde laughed sneeringly.

“So I presumed,” he nodded. “My friend Bramwell saw the Indian jump out and hit me without warning. He was infuriated to think that a common copper-skinned fellow should dare do such a thing, and he pulled a pistol on Crowfoot. It seemed that Merrivell was sneaking along on the cliff over our
heads. He must have had a stone in his hand at the time. I don't know what he meant to do with it, but he threw it at Bramwell and struck Hugh's hand, knocking the pistol into the bushes. Joe Portugas just bandaged Bramwell's hand. I thought it was only fair to give Portugas a little drink after that."

The face of young Will Kimberly wore a perplexed and troubled expression.

"I'm very sorry this affair took place," he said. "It was most unfortunate. It's going to break up our party."

"What do you mean?" asked Hyde, who had been chewing nervously at one corner of his short, dark mustache. "How is it going to break up our party?"

"Both you and Bramwell have treated Crowfoot with a certain air of disdain ever since he came here with my Harvard friends. He's proud and he won't stand for that."

"Hold on, Mr. Kimberly," put in Bramwell, speaking now for the first time, "do you mean to say that we should accept this Indian as our equal? Do you mean that we should treat him like a companion and friend? Why, we aren't supposed to treat Portugas that way. We don't accept Pike as our equal."

Kimberly smiled the least bit.

"It's evident that you make a certain caste distinction, gentlemen," he said. "For reasons, it is necessary that Pike should keep his place. Pike's a good fellow. He hasn't any education, but he's all right. Joe Portugas can't be accepted here as an equal with everybody; it would ruin him. Drink is his bane. Some evenings as we are sitting around here in the twilight the boys open up a lot of beer, and sometimes they drink something stronger. What would that do for Portugas? He'd go on a howling old tear in short order, and he wouldn't be worth a cent to anybody until he sobered up. Perhaps he wouldn't sober up for two or three weeks. That's why I've asked the boys not to give him any strong drink on any account. That's why I was sorry when I found you disregarding my request, Hyde. I have heard your story about the affair over at the Blue Mountain House this afternoon. I have also heard Dick Merriwell's version of it, which was substantiated by Crowfoot. I am——"

"You're going to believe their story instead of mine. Here's Bramwell; he will back me up. I'm your father's friend. How will he take it when he finds that you went back on me because of an Indian and a friend of his at Loon Lodge who filled your ears with lies?"

Kimberly shook his head soberly.

"I'm not going back on you, Hyde," he said. "I told you I was very sorry this thing happened. It's going to break up our party. Sparkfair sticks by Crowfoot. Now Sparkfair is one of my college friends. I like him immensely. He's going to quit us. He's going to leave."

"Going to leave?"

"Yes."

"When?"

"To-night."

"Where is he going?"

"Over to Loon Lodge. We've talked it over calmly and dispassionately, Hyde. You're here—you and Bramwell. It would be decidedly unpleasant, even insufferably disagreeable, for Crowfoot to remain after this while you stay. So he and Sparkfair are going over to Loon Lodge. After you leave they will come back."

Dan Hyde bit the end of his mustache in silence for a few moments, his eyes flashing and his face wearing a resentful expression.

"Kimberly," he finally said, "I can see that you're sore on me. You've turned against me at last. Your father stood by me last year, and his son has turned against me this year. You have told these fellows that, having invited me here, you could not kick me out. You won't have to kick me out, Kimberly. I'll go!"

"That's right!" cried Bramwell hoarsely. "We'll go!"

"Now wait—please wait," requested young Kimberly. "Let's not have any scene over this. Sparkfair and Crowfoot both have friends and acquaintances over at Loon Lodge. They can go over there, and it will seem perfectly natural that they should do so. If you fellows quit it won't seem right. There will be more or less talk about it. There will be hard feelings."

"Don't talk, Kimberly!" flared Hyde. "You've made your choice, and we're willing to abide by it. You've gone back on me. You did it on account of that cheap redskin. I could not stay here now under any circumstances. I wouldn't think of it."

"Where will you go?"

"Never mind about that. I'm not going very far; rest assured. I'm not going to have my vacation spoiled like this. I'll be near enough so that some day I may run across Joe Crowfoot when everything will be favorable for a settlement between us." As sure
as I do, he will get his, and he will get it good and plenty, mark my word.”

CHAPTER IV.
'CROWFOOT’S FIST.'

Kimberly made no attempt to restrain Hyde or Bramwell. Although he regretted very much that the affair had occurred, in his heart he felt that it would be better if those two left Catamount Camp.

Therefore, Hyde and Bramwell proceeded to pack up their belongings without delay.

The sun had set and dusky shadows were gathering over the woods. Pike and his assistant, the cookoo, were hustling supper onto the long table in the dining-room. The smell of coffee was wafted upward to the nostrils of Bramwell, who stopped in his packing and sniffed the air, muttering:

“I’d like some of that. Where are we going to get supper, Dan? I’m hungry. Can’t we eat here before leaving?”

“No!” snarled Hyde. “I’m done with this place. I’m done with Will Kimberly. His old man will be fierce as a wolf when I tell him how we were kicked out.”

“But we weren’t really kicked out,” said Hugh. “We left. I mean we’re going to leave. We’ll have to borrow a canoe in order to get away, Dan. We haven’t one of our own, you know.”

“We can get that big canoe from Pike. He will let us have it. I reckon we can get supper over at the Blue Mountain House or the Osprey. We won’t starve; don’t worry about that.”

“I’m feeling deucedly mean,” confessed Bramwell. “My hand pains me all the time now. You will have to strap up this bundle for me, I can’t do it.”

Hyde complied, and finally they were ready to move out.

About this time the cook blew the big conch horn, which was the call to supper. They heard the fellows laughing and joking as they trooped into the dining-room and seated themselves at the table.

“Thunder! I’m sorry that we were so hasty, Dan,” muttered Bramwell. “It’s mighty comfortable here. I just hate to leave to-night. We might have stayed, too.”

Hyde was lighting a cigar. The glow of the match illumined his face in the semidarkness of the room. It was the face of a proud, impulsive, vain, brilliant yet vicious man. He snapped the burning end of the match out of the window and it fluttered downward from view.

“Careless,” said Bramwell. “It’s rather dry. Perhaps that match will start a fire.”

“Let it,” nodded the man as he rolled the glowing cigar into one corner of his mouth. “I don’t care if it smolders out there for a while and then turns into a blaze that wipes everything out hereabouts. They’re all at supper now. I’ll go find Portugas. You carry as much of the dunnyage as you can down to the float. We’ll get away before they finish eating.”

Joe Portugas seemed waiting out around a corner of the camp, for he whistled a soft signal the moment Hyde stepped outdoors.

It was a mild, delightful evening. The setting sun had left a faint golden glow in the sky which was dimly reflected on the placid waters of the lake and the cove in front of the camp. The wooded shores rimmed the unrippled lake with an icy border. A few stars were beginning to gleam dimly in the sky. The odor of the pines was mild and delightfully invigorating. A peaceful hush seemed to envelop the entire world.

“I watch for you,” said Portugas, as Hyde joined him. “I hear Will Kimberly tell Sparkfair and Crowfoot they no have to go, for you say you will go. Why you do that?”

“Say, Joe, I never hang around where I’m not wanted—at least, not as a guest. As long as I remain here as Will Kimberly’s guest I’m bound by certain rules which I must respect in spite of everything. The minute I leave nothing binds me but my own inclinations and judgment. I can do anything I please, and I’ll not have to answer to Kimberly.”

“Where you go?”

“Haven’t decided,” answered Hyde, shrugging his shoulders and puffing serenely at the cigar.

“Mebbe you go to Blue Mountain House?”

“Perhaps so. There are two other places where we can go, aren’t there? There’s the Lake House and the Osprey.”

“Look here, Mr. Hyde. You got in trouble ’cause you offered to give me a drink. Only for that you wouldn’t go. I know. That give Will Kimberly chance to say something to you he no would say otherwise. Let me tell you. Joe Portugas he tired of this job. He go too. He quit.”

“What’s that? You don’t mean——”

“Yes, I mean it. I got two canoes. One little one, one big one same you have to-day. I got all my duffle
ready packed. When I hear that you leave I go pack and wait to see you. You put stuff in big canoe. You say so, we go to my camp over toward Raquette Lake."

"How about provisions, Portugas?"

"Got lot canned stuff over there. Hide it in cache. Plenty fish in lake and streams, plenty deer in woods."

"But it's close time for deer."

Portugas grunted.

"Never you mind that," he said. "We have 'woods veal' on table. We no have deer-meat. You say tomorrow or next day you have rum come in by stage?"

"Oh, I see the method in your madness," laughed Hyde softly. "You're figuring on going on a hot old tear, Portugas. There goes Bramwell carrying a lot of truck down to the float. Are you going to leave without your pay?"

"Not much. I want to fix it all right with you, then I see Will Kimberly. I make him settle up square."

"All right, go ahead and do your business with Kimberly. We'll be ready to start when you are. It's getting dark."

"Don't mind dark. Portugas, he know every bit of lake and river all the way from here to his camp."

Hyde returned to the camp and mounted the stairs to the room he had occupied in company with Bramwell. There he lighted a lamp and made sure that they were not leaving any of their belongings behind. While he was looking around Bramwell returned.

"Did you get the canoe?" asked Hugh.

"Sure. We're going to have company, too."

"Company?"

"Yes."

"Who?"

"Portugas."

"The Indian?"

"Yes, he's going with us."

"What? To show us the way over to the hotel? Oh, we can paddle over there all right. That is, you can paddle it; my hand won't let me do any of that work."

"Portugas is going to throw up his job here—he's going to quit."

"Is that so?"

"Yes. We're going with him to his camp over toward Raquette Lake. We can stop somewhere for supper. By ten o'clock there will be a moon. We can make the trip to Portugas' camp by moonlight. Anything we've left here?"

"I think I've carried all the stuff down to the float except your bundle and your bag over by the door."

Hyde picked up the bundle and the bag, Bramwell blew out the lamp, and they descended the dark stairway. They could hear the rattle of dishes, the clicking of knives and forks, the hum of voices and occasional bursts of laughter coming from the dining-room.

"They don't seem to be much disturbed over our absence from the supper-table," growled Bramwell.

"Not a bit," said Hyde.

Two dark figures were standing on the float as they approached it. One was Portugas; the other Will Kimberly.

"Just a word with you, Hyde," said Kimberly, as they stepped onto the float.

The man with the cigar permitted young Kimberly to draw him aside.

"I'm not going to tell you how sorry I am on account of this unfortunate affair," said Kimberly.

"That's not at all necessary," said Hyde.

"But I do want to give you a friendly tip."

"A what?"

"A friendly tip. Portugas has quit me. He did so without notice, yet I have paid him in full up to date. It seems that some one has given him the idea I contemplated employing Joe Crowfoot in his place. I never had any such intention. Portugas has been with us a long time. We have had him three or four years in the summer season. My father has more confidence in him than in any other guide he knows. I've told Portugas to come back when he gets ready to take his job again. Now I'm coming to my friendly warning. You know I asked you not to give Portugas liquor. One drink is enough to arouse in him an intense craving for more. Two or three drinks makes him highly elated, but he doesn't stop there. He proceeds to get drunk—crazy drunk. When he fills up he has no more reason than a madman. He's dangerous then. No one can do anything with him. I've seen him twice when he was full. Once he was wild and hilarious, dancing, singing, and screaming like a lunatic; once he was sullen and ugly and vicious and ready to commit murder or any other crime on the slightest provocation. You have some liquor with you. Better be careful about giving Portugas too much. If you get more, guard it—keep it away from him. I say this in a friendly spirit, Hyde."

"I'm much obliged, Kimberly," said the man, with an intonation of mingled sarcasm and disdain. "I've traveled around the world a bit, and I've had dealings with all sorts and conditions of men. I've handled
men who were crazy, murderous drunk in my day. I think I can take care of Portugas.”

Kimberly shrugged his shoulders.

“Oh, all right,” he nodded. “I’ve relived my mind.”

At this moment a soft-stepping, quick-moving figure came down from the direction of the camp and sprang upon the float. In the darkness they recognized the tall, straight form of young Joe Crowfoot.

“Mr. Kimberly,” said Crowfoot, “I’ve just found out what is going on. I think it is far better that I should leave Catamount Camp instead of any one else doing so. I’m very sorry indeed that I came here at all. I don’t want to make trouble. I’ve been asked to come over to Loon Lodge. I’ve just talked with Spark, and he has agreed to stay here so the party will not be broken up. Let me go. Let the others stay.”

“Well, you’ve taken a devil of a long time getting round to this proposition, Injun,” said Hyde, with an insulting laugh. “It’s too late now. It’s all settled. We’re going.”

“That right,” growled Portugas, as he tossed a cylindrical duffle-bag into the largest canoe, in which Bramwell was already seated. “You stay. You show up Portugas. You show um what good guide you are.”

He passed a rifle to Bramwell, who received it and placed it in the bottom of the canoe. Then he straightened up, turned squarely, and faced Crowfoot.

“What you know to be guide, you young fool?” he scoffed. “Portugas lived all his life in Adirondack woods. You come here first time this summer. You show um how much you know in mighty short time. All your brain it could be put in hazel-nut shell. You like to make great show. You nothing but big bluff. You have no courage. You are a coward and a cur.”

Young Joe stood without the quiver of a muscle, his arms folded across his breast. He did not even deign to answer the insulting words of the Adirondack guide. This disdain increased the anger of Portugas, who began cursing Crowfoot in the bitterest language.

Will Kimberly ordered the enraged guide to stop; but ere he could interfere Portugas spat full and fair in Crowfoot’s face.

For a second time that same day, young Joe Crowfoot used his fist. It shot out like a flash of lightning, smashing Portugas fiercely between the eyes. The Indian was knocked backward from the float and struck in the water. Without a sound or a struggle, he sank from view.

CHAPTER V.

THE HEART OF AN INDIAN.

Precisely like a stone Joe Portugas sank. On the dark surface of the water a few bubbles rose.

Dan Hyde’s hand involuntarily went back to his hip pocket, but that pocket held no weapon. For a moment it seemed as if the man would leap at Crowfoot. But once that same day he had felt the Indian’s hard fist, and he had no relish for a second taste.

Kimberly bent over the edge of the float and looked downward at the spot where Portugas had sunk. The waves were spreading out wider and wider in a great circle of lessening ripples. A few more bubbles came up from the depths.

There was a shout of laughter from the lighted dining-room of the camp, followed a moment later by some one singing a snatch of a rollicking song.

Suddenly Joe Crowfoot plunged forward headlong, his hands outstretched and placed palm to palm. Like an arrow he clove the water, making scarcely a splash or a sound as he dived, disappearing into the depths.

A few moments of breathless suspense followed. Suddenly the water was broken with a cleaving, rushing, splashing sound, and Crowfoot’s head and shoulders shot up. The Indian was not more than ten feet from the float, and he bore a limp burden. With two strokes, he reached the float, where Kimberly and Hyde seized his burden and lifted it from the water.

It was Portugas, who had been knocked senseless by that sudden blow.

Fortunately, the guide had not taken a great deal of water into his lungs, and in a very few moments he was coughing and strangling and gasping for breath, at the same time protesting against their efforts to restore him.

As soon as Crowfoot was satisfied that Portugas would come around all right, he stepped back and again stood with folded arms, stonily looking down at the man.

Finally the guide stopped coughing, although he continued to gasp and gurgle as he sat up on the float.

“What—what happened?” he asked.

Will Kimberly actually bit his tongue at this point to keep from bursting into a sudden shout of laughter.
All the seriousness of the affair had turned to something extremely ludicrous from his point of view.

“You’d better be careful how you expectorate hereafter, Portugas,” he said. “Crowfoot seems to strike fully as quick as you can spit.”

Then the guide knew what had happened. In the midst of his strangling and gasping he swore viciously, being assisted to his feet by Hyde.

“So he hit me, eh?” Portugas finally snarled. “He struck me, did he? All right, some time I’ll strike back.”

“Better spare your threats,” said Kimberly, repressing his amusement. “You got off easy. I don’t suppose you realize what happened. You sank like a rock. It was Crowfoot who plunged in after you and pulled you out. Only for him you might be down there yet. You owe him—”

“Oh, yes, I owe him!” snarled Portugas. “I never forget a debt. I owe him, and some time I pay.”

Then he stepped into the big canoe, motioning for Hyde to take the smaller one.

“This young aborigine seems to be running up a big score,” observed Hyde sneeringly, as he entered the smaller canoe and took up the paddle. “Good night, Kimberly. I hope you enjoy yourself, you and your friends.”

They paddled away into the deep, soft darkness which lay heavy on the bosom of the lake.

Crowfoot stood like a statue until the canoes had been swallowed by the darkness, then he turned to the youthful host of Catamount Camp.

“Mr. Kimberly,” he said, “I cannot tell you how much I regret all this. I’m an Indian, and for that very reason it seems as if there must be a hoodoo about me. Wherever I go I make trouble.”

“My dear boy,” said Will Kimberly cordially, “you were not in the least to blame on account of this affair to-day.”

Joe shook his head.

“Perhaps that’s true,” he said, “and yet I know that some will blame me. They blame me because I, an Indian, have a desire to get an education like a white man. At Frank Merriwell’s school it was so. All the time I was there some boys hated me bitterly on account of my color. They seem to think that the only right an Indian has is to live on a government reservation as his forefathers have lived, in ignorance and sloth. They won’t give us the rights of manhood. They sneer at us when we seek to acquire knowledge that we may lift ourselves and our people from the pitiful degradation into which we have sunk before the power of the conquering Caucasians. I have never been abroad, but I have read a great deal about caste in other countries. It cannot be worse, no more distinct, no more pronounced than caste in this country. Here it is that money seems to make all the difference. I am the son of a son of a son of a chief. My grandfather, Shangowah, who still lives, was once like a king among his people. Yet among white men I am regarded as nothing but an Injun. If I was worth four or five million dollars they would bow down to me, lots of them. They would call me a prince. It’s money that does that. Money! Bah! I have nothing but contempt for it. I prize far more one true friend than all the money the white man has ever accumulated or heaped up in this great land that once belonged all to the red man.

“Stop! Why is it that I am talking like this? I beg your pardon, Mr. Kimberly. It is not polite for me to do so. It is not often that I say so much. Once I did not talk at all; but of late I sometimes forget myself. I have mingled so much with the white man that I get his ways and talk more than I should.”

But Will Kimberly had been given a sudden and surprising view of one side of Joe Crowfoot’s nature. He put out his hand and grasped that of the young Indian.

“My boy,” he said, “you’re right about money. No question at all—you’re right. Say, my old man has made a pile of it. If I were a poor dull scrubbing through Harvard I wouldn’t have very many friends among the so-called better class of fellows there. Why, they wouldn’t look at me. But they know my father has money, and so I get along swimmingly. The most of them don’t stop to inquire into my pedigree a great deal. The fact that I’ve got plenty of the long green and seem to be a pretty decent sort of a fellow is enough for them. In a way that is as it should be. The thing that’s wrong is the fact that I wouldn’t be accepted as a decent sort of a fellow if it wasn’t for that money behind me. If I was just plain Will Kimberly, the son of Hod Kimberly, the horseman and plunger, and Hod Kimberly, the horseman and plunger, had lost all of his dough and was living up some back alley, why, some of the fellows who chase around me now would give me the cold shoulder in a minute. I know this for a fact. I’ve thought of it before. Sometimes it makes me a bit pessimistical. But what’s the use? We’ve got to take things the way they are unless we want to waste our lives trying to be reformers. There never was a reformer yet that didn’t get more cuffs and kicks and
slurs and slights than a hundred ordinary men who were willing to let things slide along after their own fashion. What are you going to do after you get your education, Crowfoot?"

"I shall go back to my people, I suppose," answered Joe, as if there might be some doubt about it. "That was the original plan. That was why my grandfather brought me to Frank Merriwell and gave me into his hands, asking him that he should teach me the wisdom of the white man. It was that I might learn all the things I should know and go back to my people, who are now a remnant of an once great tribe, and try to save them from extinction by teaching them."

"Well, by Jove!" cried Kimberly, smashing his right fist into his left open palm. "Here I have been talking to you about reformers, and I'll be hanged if you are not being educated to become a reformer! Say, my boy, I'm sorry for you. You've got a hard row to hoe. I know just what you're going up against. You'll go back to your people with a lot of peculiar ideas, and they will receive you with contempt, disdain, even with absolute enmity. You'll spend your life, perhaps, trying to educate them, and you will get nothing out of it. Little by little you may see them coming around to accept the things you are teaching them; but it will be after you are dead and gone that they'll finally make a full acceptance and realize what a great man you were. Crowfoot, is the game worth the candle?"

The young Indian lifted his hand to his forehead and brushed back his heavy black hair. He took a long, deep breath, drawing himself to his full height.

"Yes, Mr. Kimberly," he said, "I believe the game is worth the candle. Even if you have spoken the truth and I may be treated with suspicion, scorn, and disdain by my own people, I will know in my heart that I am doing for them a work that must be done if they are to be saved from total extinction. That knowledge must be my reward in this life. Like the white man, the Indian believes that there is another life to come. While living with your people I have learned a little by little to become a Christian. There was once, long, long ago, a man who came to reform and redeem the whole world. Your Bible teaches it. I have read it in that book. I have heard your preachers tell of Him. He was the greatest of all reformers. What reward did He get in this world? He was scorned, scoffed at, and finally crucified. He died; but His great work lives and will live forever. Can there be a better example for any man?"

Will Kimberly was thrilled from his head to his feet. It seemed most marvelous to hear this young Indian speaking thus, and he felt that from this day on he must forever honor and respect young Joe Crowfoot.

"Perhaps you are right, Crowfoot," he confessed. "A man who simply lives his own life for himself, regardless of the good of others, is a wretched, selfish creature, who wastes a precious birthing. I never looked at it that way before. I've always thought it was every man's right and privilege to get the most fun he could out of life and be satisfied at that. Now I've a new idea in my noddle. By George, boy, it would be a queer thing if you should make a reformer of old Hod Kimberly's son. I wonder what my father would say to that? He would think I'd gone plumb daft. Let's go back to the camp. The boys will be wondering where we are."

They left the float and made slowly toward the camp, the windows of which were glowing with light.

Out on the lake Portugas had seized a paddle, having swung the big canoe around until he could look back toward the lights of Catamount Camp.

From the other canoe Dan Hyde asked:

"What's the matter, Joe? Have you forgotten anything?"

"Wait," said Portugas. "There is no hurry. Bimeby I show you what I have forgot."

Wonderingly they waited. Bramwell did not see Portugas bend forward and reach down into the bottom of the canoe. He was not aware that the guide grasped the stock of a rifle and lifted it to the gunwale of the frail craft.

After a time they could see two figures leaving the float and walking toward the camp. The lights from the windows and doors fell on those figures, and Portugas muttered:

"Crowfoot, he is the one to the left."

Then he lifted the rifle to his shoulder, took quick aim, and pressed the trigger.

Spang!

The clear, ringing report cut the air and was echoed back from the dark distant hills and woodlands.

Fortunately for Joe Crowfoot, Hugh Bramwell realized Portugas' purpose just in time, and thrust out a hand which pushed the muzzle of the rifle to one side.

"Do you want us all to go to Sing Sing for murder?" he exclaimed. "I pulled a pop-gun on that Injun to-day, but it was all a bluff. You've raised the devil now, Portugas!"
“That’s right!” cried Hyde. “You’re plumb daft, Portugas. Put down that rifle. Pick up your paddle. Let’s get out of this.”

“That saved his life then,” said the guide, as he dropped the rifle in the bottom of the boat. “Next time mebbe nobody be near to push rifle when I shoot.”

CHAPTER VI.

AT LOON LODGE.

Goddard Cutts’, original camp, Loon Lodge, was ideally located on a bold point of land which projected into Blue Mountain Lake and served as a partial shelter for a beautiful, sandy-shored cove. There on Balsam Point, as it was called, the sweet breezes were forever singing through the trees. Even on the hottest days a grateful breath of air seemed constantly passing over this point. For some reason, mosquitoes and flies were scarce in the vicinity of Loon Lodge, even when they were most plentiful at other points around or near the lake. The nights were always cool, sometimes almost cold. They were great nights for sound and refreshing slumber.

Water from a cold living spring located on higher land some distance back from the lake had been piped into the Lodge. Cutts had even had one fine bathroom fitted up; but when he built his handsome summer home, a mile and a half distant on a slope that commanded a splendid view of the island-dotted lake, that bathroom practically fell into disuse. The placid cove was too inviting for bathing purposes, and Roger Cutts and his friends preferred it at almost all seasons save when the weather was too severe for outdoor bathing.

Roger had caused a long float to be built, with a fine spring-board at the end. Only a short distance beyond the spring-board the waters of the cove grew deep after a most amazing fashion, and out near the middle of the cove it was said no soundings had ever been taken.

Here at Loon Lodge young Cutts had gathered a congenial party of friends who were keenly enjoying the pleasures of camp life under most favorable circumstances. They seldom followed the road which wound away into the woods and up toward the heights of Plumadore. Up there Goddard Cutts might entertain his friends who desired all the comforts of home while seeking an outing in the Adirondacks. At Loon Lodge the only complaint seemed to be that there were altogether too many comforts.

Happy is the fellow who can content himself in the woods without being disturbed by a feverish desire to kill something for the mere pleasure of killing. Some never seek a vacation in the wilderness save in that season when they may carry a gun and use it for the purpose of slaughter. Some cannot even restrain their inclinations to destroy while fishing, and when they have made a fine catch and secured even more fish than they can use or distribute for use, they continue angling as long as conditions permit and there seems a prospect of another bite. “Fish hogs” and “game hogs” are to be met almost everywhere in the woods. The true sportsman invariably regards them with silent, pitying contempt or open disapprobation.

Among the lads at Loon Lodge there was but one who had displayed hoggishness of this sort. This one was Gus Comstock, a Harvard man who was not a little given to vainness and boasting. Comstock was no great fisherman, yet he often told of his angling skill and successes. One morning he paddled away by himself for the purpose of fishing; and did not return until long after midday. When he came back his shouts brought some of the lads down to the float, and he proudly displayed a tremendous catch of trout which almost filled the entire bottom of the canoe.

Roger Cutts took one look and turned away without speaking.

Not so Dick Merriwell.

“What are you going to do with them, Comstock?” asked Merriwell. “We can’t eat them all.”

“Oh, of course not,” was the answer. “What we don’t want to eat we can throw away, can’t we?”

“That would be too bad. It would be wasteful. It’s a shame to make such a catch of beautiful fish and then throw them away.”

“Oh, you’re jealous, that’s what ails you!” cried the Harvard man. “You came in the other day with sixteen trout and thought you had some.”

“I had enough for one mess for our whole party,” said Dick, “and therefore I stopped fishing.”

“Oh, tell that to some one who will believe it. You stopped fishing because you couldn’t catch any more.”

“No, indeed, Comstock; you are wrong. They were biting better when I stopped than when I began. I’d just located them. Don’t you think we’d better dress those fish and distribute what we don’t need over at the hotels?”

“Bah! You can do that if you’re so anxious to
work. I’ve had my fun, and I won’t bother with them any more.”

And so it happened that Merriwell, assisted by Bob Files, the guide who seemed to have taken a pronounced liking to the Yale lad, dressed the fish to the last one, after which they paddled over to the hotels and distributed them gratis, only reserving enough at the Lodge for the needs of the party there.

Comstock did not like this. He pretended to laugh over it, but there was a sneer in his laughter.

“That fellow Merriwell always has to be doing something of that sort to show off,” he said. “He tries to give the impression that he’s a superior sort of a person. As far as I’m concerned, he might stay up at Plumadore the most of the time chasing that girl from Virginia without being missed by me.”

“Better not let Rob Claxton hear you talking like that,” advised Phil Preston, another Harvard man of the party. “I don’t see anything the matter with Merriwell. He’s taught me how to dive and swim under water in the last two days, and heretofore I’ve never been able to put my head beneath the surface.”

“Oh, I could have taught you myself a great deal better than Merriwell,” declared Comstock. “He’s not such a great swimmer. I believe he’s afraid. You never see him taking any chances.”

“Don’t you believe he’s afraid,” said Preston. “It’s my impression that he isn’t afraid of anything. He’s simply cautious, that’s all.”

One evening, a day or two later, as the fire was dying on the hearth of the great stone fireplace in the broad living-room of Loon Lodge and the boys were thinking of going to bed, Comstock suddenly said:

“I’ll be the first one in swimming in the morning. Who accepts the challenge? Come now, old Jonesy, what do you say? You were the last one out this morning.”

“You should not forget, my friend,” said Blessed Jones solemnly, “that the last shall be first and the first shall be last.”

One by one they wandered off to bed, and the silence of the cool, sweet midsummer night in the Adirondacks enveloped Loon Lodge. At times from afar on the bosom of the lake came the weird, laughing cry of a loon, and sometimes an owl hooted dismally in the dark recesses of the woods. Occasionally some prowling wild beast gave tongue in the far depths of the forest. When the moon had risen a mother doe, followed by one timid fawn, came down to the edge of the cove and drank from the waters of the lake. The night slipped on, the stars of heaven swinging in their courses with the flight of the hours, until at last there was a streak of gray between two distant eastern hills.

Gus Comstock awoke and looked at the illumined face of the clock in his room. In another moment he crept out of bed. He could hear some one snoring regularly and heartily in the next room. His own bedmate, Preston, was slumbering soundly with his arms under his head.

Comstock slipped out of his pajamas and pulled on his bathing trunks. Thrusting his feet into a pair of canvas shoes, he stole softly down-stairs and opened the front door of the camp.

The moon was paling in the sky and the stars seemed feeble and dim. Dawn was at hand, and on the bosom of the lake lay a soft, mystic mist. In the woods thrushes were awakening and sending forth their bell-like music.

“Come on, lazy-bones!” shouted Comstock. “Turn out, you sleepy-heads! I told you I’d be in swimming first! Ha! ha! ha!”

He heard some of the fellows stirring in their beds and muttering, and then he descended the steps and trotted down the path to the float. Having kicked off his canvas shoes, he was on the point of plunging in when a familiar voice called:

“You’re distressingly late, old fellow. I’ve just about finished my swim. I told you the first should be last.”

And Blessed Jones came swimming out from behind a jagged bit of ledge which projected into the lake near the extremity of Balsam Point.

CHAPTER VII.

THE DIVERS AND THE BOTTOMLESS HOLE.

“Well, where the dickens did you come from?” demanded Comstock in disgust. “I thought I was the first one here.”

“Lo and behold,” said Blessed, “the vain and boastful man shall be exceedingly humbled in his heart.”

And now the others appeared one by one upon the broad veranda of the camp, each and all wearing bathing trunks. With shouts and laughter, they raced down to the float, ran out to the spring-board, and went plunging and splashing into the cool, placid water until it fairly frothed and boiled.

Bouncer Bigelow had not been able to get used to that spring-board. He tried it persistently, and this morning, as usual, it gave him an unexpected flip and
he came down flat upon his back with a tremendous splash.

Comstock, swimming near the float, laughed at Bigelow’s performance.

“Great cow!” he said. “He never will learn to dive.”

For once Dick Merriwell was almost the last to appear. He used the spring-board, but made a simple headlong dive without any fancy flourishes.

“And that’s the fellow they all think such a wonder at everything!” muttered Comstock. “I’ll show him up if he’s got nerve enough to accept the challenge.”

And so, as soon as Dick approached, the Harvard man shouted at him from the float:

“You’re a pretty good swimmer, Merriwell. I’ll show you a stunt to do if you dare try it.”

Running the length of the float, Comstock struck the spring-board, bounded into the air, turned over handsomely, making a complete somersault and disappearing into the water, feet foremost.

“Go ahead, Dick,” urged Tommy Tucker, climbing out onto the float. “That’s a challenge. You’ve got to take him up.”

“Not necessarily.”

“If you don’t he’ll make us all sick with his swaggering and bragging.”

So Dick followed Comstock’s example, leaping from the spring-board and turning a handsome somersault ere he disappeared into the water.

“Well, that was pretty fair,” said Comstock, when Dick had risen to the surface. “I’ll just have to make it a little harder next time.”

And so, instead of simply turning completely over once and striking the water feet first, Comstock next turned a full somersault and a half and plunged into the lake headlong, going down cleanly and handsomely.

“Nothing but circus stunts,” gurgled Bouncer Bigelow, sitting on the edge of the float. “What do they amount to?”

The boys watched Dick as he prepared to make his next dive from the spring-board. He ran forward easily, struck the board fairly, turned like a flash after shooting upward to the highest point, revolved in the air and straightened out in time to cleave the water headlong with scarcely a splash.

“Rather better than Comstock did, I should say,” drawled Blessed Jones, who was scrubbing himself with a towel on the shore end of the float.

Gus Comstock was surprised and a trifle irritated.

“I’ll give you a good stunt next time, Merriwell,” he cried. “I’m going to turn a double somersault.”

He did it—did it beautifully and gracefully, striking the water feet foremost and going down with his arms locked tight to his sides so that he made not the slightest sort of a splash.

Dick waited until Comstock had swum to the float.

“That was clever enough,” he admitted, and seemed rather reluctant about attempting to duplicate the feat.

“I thought that would cook you,” laughed the Harvard man.

“Did you? It hasn’t cooked me yet. I was taking time to rest, that’s all.”

“Oh, then you are going to try it?”

“Yes, I think I’ll try it.”

Tucker’s teeth were chattering as he sat on the edge of the float with his feet dangling in the water; but he was too interested in the performance to spend time to rub down with a towel.

Merriwell took a slightly longer run than previously. He rose handsomely from the spring-board, shooting upward with a gentle curve and then turning twice over with a swift revolving movement. Even then he did not stop, but made another half-turn, so that when he struck the water he was in diving form and vanished head foremost.

A shout went up from the watching lads.

“There’s something for you to try, Mr. Comstock,” chattered Tucker delightedly.

Comstock knew he was up against a hard proposition, for this was something more difficult than he had ever attempted. Nevertheless he managed to hide any feeling of anxiety or dismay that may have possessed him. With an air of confidence, he took his place at the shore end of the float and prepared for business. Along the float he sped, striking the spring-board in perfect form. Twice he turned, but the final half-turn was too much for him, and he struck the water upon his stomach with a splash that made the watching boys utter exclamations of dismay. The breath was knocked out of the fellow for the time being, although he managed to swim to the float without assistance. Sitting on the edge of the float, he gently rubbed his breast, which was burning red as a result of the manner in which he had struck the water.

“I slipped,” he declared. “I didn’t get a proper shoot from the spring-board.”

In his heart he was ablaze with wrathful resentment toward Merriwell.

Dick expressed his regret over Comstock’s misfortune, saying he hoped the fellow had not been hurt.

“Oh, of course I wasn’t hurt,” was the sharp re-
tort. "It was like a slap on the stomach, that’s all. I don’t mind it. You’re pretty clever, aren’t you, Merriwell? I didn’t know you could do so many stunts. Perhaps you’re a good deep swimmer? See this white stone?"

He had picked up a white rock the size of a man’s fist from the float. With a sudden movement, he tossed it into the deep water out toward the middle of the cove.

"Oh, what made you do that, Comstock?" cried Roger Cutts. "Nobody can ever get that stone now. We have had it to dive after, and now it’s gone. The water must be thirty-five or forty feet deep out there."

"Mr. Merriwell will recover the stone for us," said Comstock, with an unpleasant laugh.

"I don’t know that I can," said Dick; "but I’ll try to get it."

Pushing off from the float, he swam out slowly and gently toward the spot in the midst of a circle of ripples which indicated where the stone had disappeared. Having reached the proper place, he turned in the water and they saw the flash of his heels as he went down.

"I didn’t think he was fool enough to try it," said Comstock. "I say, Cutts, I threw that rock farther than I intended. He will never get it out there."

Breathlessly and anxiously the boys waited. The seconds passed and each moment seemed amazingly long. The anxiety grew upon them all.

"He’s been down an awful long time," whispered Tommy Tucker.

"Awful," gurgled Bouncer Bigelow. "I wonder if anything has happened to him."

The same thought was troubling many of the others. Comstock alone seemed fully at his ease.

"Oh, such a great performer as Mr. Merriwell will take care of himself," he said. "Don’t you worry about him. He’ll look out for number one, but he won’t get that stone. I think I’ll have to try for it myself."

Cutts, wearing a bath-robe which he had flung over his shoulders, came out upon the float and stood there frowning at the placid waters of the cove which had closed over Dick Merriwell.

"Boys," he finally said, "I’m disturbed. By Jove, he’s been down too long! No man can stay under water as long as that."

"Verily, I believe that is right," droned Blessed Jones, who had followed Cutts.

Rob Claxton, the Virginian, was very pale, although calm.

"I’m going to see if I can find anything of him," he said. "I’m not a first-class diver, but I’ll go down as far as I can."

Claxton was on the point of plunging in when Cutts restrained him, speaking to Comstock.

"You’re the man to dive for him, Gus," he cried. "Let the others swim out there and wait for you to come up. If you can find him bring him up. The boys will be ready to help you. I’m coming in myself. I’ll be there."

Comstock was looking serious at last.

"I haven’t seen any bubbles come up," he said. "If he were drowning down there under the surface there would surely be bubbles. All right, Cutts, I’ll dive and see if I can see anything of him."

He swam off swiftly from the float, followed by the others. Reaching the point where Merriwell had vanished, Comstock turned in the water and went down.

With a growing feeling of horror in their hearts, the young campers paddled about in that vicinity, waiting for the reappearance of the Harvard man. Some of them feared that he would bring up an unconscious youth with him, while others feared still more that he would bring no one. The dread of a great tragedy was upon them all.

Finally the water broke in their midst and Comstock’s head appeared. He gave a snort and a gasp, shaking the moisture from his eyes.

"No use, fellows—no use!" he gasped. "I went down as far as I could, and I couldn’t find bottom."

"And you saw nothing of Merriwell?" cried Cutts. "Nothing."

Rob Claxton turned and dove, but he did not remain under anywhere near as long as Comstock had.

Still, he was so exhausted when he reached the surface that it was necessary for two of them to assist him to the float.

Back to the float they all went, the horror of this mysterious and terrible thing having taken possession of every one.

"Comstock, can’t you—can’t you dive again?" asked Cutts. "You must! Merriwell is down there somewhere in that bottomless hole! You are responsible for it! If you hadn’t challenged him to go after that white stone——"

Then, to the unspeakable astonishment and terror of them all, a voice which seemed to come from the water beneath them was heard distinctly saying:

"The bottomless hole is very deep, and I could not return without the white stone."
“Heavens above!” chattered Tommy Tucker, almost fainting from fright. “That’s Dick’s voice!”

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CHAPTER VIII.

A CHALLENGE FROM CATAMOUNT CAMP.

It is impossible for words to describe the emotions of the boys who heard that voice and those words, seeming to rise from the silent depths of the water beneath them. Although the voice was somewhat smothered, Merriwell’s comrades recognized it instantly as his.

“Horn of Joshua!” faltered Blessed Jones. “Is it the voice of the dead?”

“It must be!” gurgled Bouncer Bigelow faintly.

There was something so amazingly mysterious about it that not one of them escaped the awesome effect.

Suddenly Tommy Tucker shouted;

“Dick! Dick! where are you?”

“Down here in the water, Tommy,” came the answer.

“Are you dead? Are you drowned?”

“How long do you suppose I can remain under water without drowning, Tommy? It has been nearly ten minutes since I dived after that white stone.”

“He’s dead!” exclaimed Tucker. “It’s his ghost that we hear! You’ve killed him, Comstock! You’ve murdered him!”

Perhaps no one of them all was more frightened and overcome than Gus Comstock. Indeed, his horror was so intense that he could not command his voice. Three times he tried to speak without success.


And now from the water rose a sudden burst of laughter which seemed most hideous and mocking. It was the laughter of Merriwell, and yet, smothered and muffled, it seemed to have a taunting, jeering, contemptuous ring.

A moment later Blessed Jones jumped back and nearly fell from the float, for at one side a dripping head had suddenly risen from the water. They all saw it, and, staring with unspeakable amazement, they recognized Dick Merriwell, who grasped the edge of the float with one hand, holding himself with his head and shoulders out of water.

“Well, you fellows are easy!” cried Dick, as soon as he could seem to catch his breath. “I suppose that was a rather mean joke, but really I couldn’t help it. I just had to do it.”

“Wh-where have you been?” asked Tucker.

“Under the float, boys,” was the answer. “There was just room enough for me to cling there with my mouth and nose out of water beneath the planking.”

Gus Comstock suddenly flared with anger.

“Well, that was a cheap sort of a trick!” he cried.

“I went out there and dived for you as deep as I could, and I thought my head would split open before I could get back to the surface. All the while you were chuckling here under the float!”

“That’s right,” acknowledged Dick. “I certainly had a good laugh. Perhaps I carried it a bit too far, fellows. If so, I beg your pardon. But the temptation was more than I could resist.”

“And we thought you down there after that white stone!” rasped Comstock. “I suppose you swam for the float just as soon as you got under the surface. You didn’t even try to get the stone!”

“Didn’t I?” chuckled Dick, as he held up his left hand. “What does this look like?”

He had the white stone!

“I swear it’s a marvel!” cried Roger Cutts. “I fancied it so deep out there that you couldn’t possibly reach bottom. Just a little beyond it’s so deep we have never been able to make a sounding. Merriwell, you’re the greatest water duck I ever saw. Your success in getting that stone is enough to lead me to forgive you for your practical joke.”

He extended a hand to Dick, who came out upon the float, his clean, handsome body shining with moisture.

Comstock hung back as the rest of the party followed Dick to the shore and up toward Loon Lodge.

“He did it just to show me up!” muttered the Harvard man resentfully. “They’ll all laugh at me. They’ll all try to josh me. Well, they’d better be careful, for I won’t stand too much of it.”

As soon as he reached the Lodge Comstock hastened to his room and rubbed down. He was partly dressed when Preston appeared and seized a towel.

“By Jove, Gus!” said Preston, “that fellow Merriwell really is a duck in the water. He’s got anybody I ever saw beaten at it.”

“Don’t talk to me about him!” snarled Comstock, in a low tone. “He’s a great fellow to show off. I suppose the whole crowd is putting him on the back and telling him how good he is.”

“Now don’t get that way,” implored Preston. “Don’t get raw and show it. You mustn’t forget that
you challenged Merriwell. You were trying to show
him up."

Comstock pulled the woolen shirt on over his head
and turned to glare at his companion.

"I'll be blamed if you aren't turning into a Merri-
well worshiper, just like the rest of the bunch!" he
snickered. "He can't be a top-notcher at everything.
I'll find something at which I can trim him before long,
mark my word."

Preston simply laughed.

"You will have to go some, Gus," he said.

The smell of frying bacon and the delicious odor
of coffee crept to their nostrils as they were dressing.
It took them only a few moments to make their un-
conventional toilets, but when they descended to the
dining-room they found a number of the boys ahead
of them. Within thirty seconds, however, the entire
party had assembled around the breakfast-table, ready
to do justice to the bacon and eggs, corn rolls, fried
potatoes, and coffee prepared for them by Jim, the
Scandinavian cook. Jim himself, in remarkably clean
white duck trousers and white shirt, the sleeves of the
latter rolled above his elbows and exposing his hairy
forearms, came in from the cook-room bringing a
huge coffee-pot and grinning broadly.

"Hey, Yim!" "Hi, Yim!" "Morning, Yim!" cried
the boys.

Every one calling him "Yim" with the exception of
Tommy Tucker, who rose in his place, bowed pro-
fondly and soberly, and seriously said:

"Good morning, James. I hope I see you this morn-
ing."

"Ay tank you do ave your eyes bane ol rait," an-
swered the cook.

"Thank you," said Tommy, with the most humble
politeness. "How do you feel this morning, James?"

"Ay haid no tone to fale off maeself," said the cook.
"Ay bane pretty busy dese morning."

Then he began pouring the coffee, ignoring the fact
that Tucker had lifted his own cup and saucer and
was holding it out invitingly to get an early supply.
Commencing next to Tommy, Yim circled the entire
table before serving Tucker, who was the last man to
be waited on, much to the amusement of his com-
panions.

"That's the usual reward of politeness," growled
Tommy disgustedly. "It shows that some people ap-
preciate incivility and rudeness far more than cour-
tesy and good manners."

At this the cook paused a moment with the huge
coffee-pot upheld and grinned more broadly than ever,
winking one eye with deep significance.

"Ay bane onto you, Meestar Tugah," he said. "Ay
har you tol Bob Files how you gae me plante of soft
soap and Ay bae easy mark so you get serve first ol
time. Ay bane onto you, Meestar Tugah. Yim, he ain't such big fool as you tank, mebbe."

This brought a perfect roar of laughter from the
boys about the table, while Tucker collapsed llimply
in his chair, murmuring:

"This is a case where another would-be diplomat
gets it in the neck because he talked too much."

Among them all, Gus Comstock was the only one
whose laughter was in the least restrained. Comstock
was still thinking sourly over the events of the morn-
ing.

What ravenous appetites those lads had! How deli-
cious every morsel of food tasted! They ate with the
keenest relish and without a single thought of fu-
ture discomfort or indignation. When they had fin-
ished the table was swept clean, to the satisfaction of
Yim, who regarded it as a distinct compliment to him.

"What's doing to-day, Roger?" inquired Tommy
Tucker, as they left the table and made their way
out upon the veranda. "Anything special on the pro-
gram?"

"Nothing this forenoon," answered Cutts. "We
have a challenge for this afternoon if we wish to ac-
cept it."

"A challenge?" gurgled Bigelow. "That sounds
ominous. I don't like these challenges. I came up
here to take comfort, not to live the strenuous life.
What sort of a challenge is it, Roger?"

"A challenge to do some shooting."

"Oh," said Merriwell, "then you have heard from
Kimberly, have you?"

"Yes. He has challenged us to meet the crack shots
of Catamount Camp over at the gun club. I'm to let
him know by ten o'clock if we'll shoot against them."

Gus Comstock jumped up from the comfortable
chair he had captured.

"What sort of shooting is it to be, clay pigeons?" he
asked.

"Yes, regular trap-shooting."

"Of course we'll accept," decided Comstock instan-
tly. "I'm right at home at that sort of sport. I know
you can shoot too, Cutts. We ought to be able to
hold our own with those chaps."

"Perhaps we're not the only ones," smiled Roger.
"You shoot, don't you, Merriwell?"

Comstock sat down, with a sudden frown.
“A little,” answered Dick; “but a man has to keep in practise in order to do his best.”

“Will Kimberly is clever at trap-shooting,” said Cutts. “He beat me at the clays last year. Out of a hundred, he defeated me by seven birds.”

“I’ll take care of Kimberly,” promised Comstock. “Don’t you worry about him. All I ask is a good gun.”

“My father has at least a dozen guns at the club-house. I think you’ll be able to find what you want among them, Gus.”

“Count me out of this shooting business,” said Jones. “I’ll go over and watch the fun, but I’m not going to take any part in it. I’m a rotten shot. If they should put wings on a house and send it flying across the cove out there I don’t believe I could hit it with the best gun ever built.”

“I must acknowledge,” put in Tucker, “that I’m a trifle too nervous myself. Better not depend on me.”

“And you can’t count on me,” confessed Preston.

“Shooting is anything but my long suit.”

“How about you, Claxton?” asked Cutts.

“Like Merriwell, I fear I am rather out of practise, Cutts,” said the Virginian. “Of course I would enjoy taking part in the match, but I don’t want to go into it and be the cause of our defeat.”

“Oh, we’ll chance that, old fellow,” smiled Roger.

“That makes four of us to defend the honors of Loon Lodge. We’ll send word over to Catamount Camp that we are ready to meet four of their picked men, excluding, of course, their guide.”

“Your guide?” cried Tucker. “Have you forgotten that they have lost their regular guide, Portugas, the Indian? He quit Catamount Camp the same time Bramwell and his sporting friend, Hyde, left there.”

“That’s right,” nodded Cutts. “We won’t have to take Portugas into consideration. That Indian is one of the finest shots I ever saw. I wonder what’s become of those three fellows? Nobody seems to have heard anything of them since they left Catamount Camp.”

“I don’t think there’s any one worrying for that reason,” chuckled Tucker. “The less we hear about them the better satisfied we should be.”

CHAPTER IX.

SHOOTING.

The Blue Mountain Gun Club was ideally located in a secluded opening amid the wooded hills about half a mile from the lake. The grounds were accessible by a very good and very picturesque road which had been built by the wealthy members of the club. They could likewise be reached by paddling up a broad stream which emptied into the lake, although very few persons came that way.

A Plumodore buckboard with four horses attached carried the boys of Loon Lodge over to the gun club grounds that afternoon.

When they arrived they found the party from Catamount Camp already there. Sparkfair, Kimberly, and the others greeted the boys from Loon Lodge with a cordiality that was little short of effusion.

“We understand it’s to be four of your men against four of ours, Cutts,” said Kimberly. “That’s agreeable to us. I’m going to shoot, and I have picked Perkins, Sparkfair, and Starkell to support me.”

“And I shall have Comstock, Claxton, and Merriwell,” said Roger.

“Who’s your star performer?” smilingly inquired Kimberly.

“Tell you the truth, I don’t know; but I have an idea that it will prove to be Comstock.”

“Not Merriwell?”

Kimberly seemed somewhat surprised and disappointed.

“Merriwell says he’s out of practise.”

“Now we fancied it would be Merriwell, so we’ve arranged to put Starkell, our best man, against him. We’ll put Brill Perkins against Comstock. Perkins is fairly good. Of course I reckoned that you and I would shoot against each other. That will leave Claxton and Sparkfair matched. How does that suit you?”

“It is agreeable to me,” nodded Cutts. “The total score of each side is what will count, anyhow.”

As Roger was entering the club-house, Comstock pulled at his sleeve and whispered:

“Who am I to shoot against? I presume you were talking it over. Put me up against their best man, won’t you?”

“Why, Kimberly sort of settled that point,” said Roger. “You’re to shoot against Perkins.”

“Ho! Perkins?” laughed Gus. “Why, I’ve seen him shoot, and he’s really too easy for me.”

Roger shrugged his shoulders, beginning to feel weary of the man’s constant boastfulness.

“Beat him as hard as you can, Gus,” he said. “It’s likely we’ll need every score we can make in order to come out ahead on the total count.”

He had the keys to open his father’s gun-racks, and
soon the four representatives of Loon Lodge were looking over the handsome guns, each seeking to select one that suited his taste and seemed fitted to him. Every weapon was in perfect condition, needing only a little wiping off and swabbing out before use.

Comstock made haste to get at the guns before any one else, catching up several of them and weighing them in his hands before he seemed to find one that came anywhere near suiting him. Even then, after looking the splendid gun over and peering through the gleaming polished barrels, Gus found fault with it, although he stood it aside while he pawed the others over, declining to let any one else have it unless he could find one that suited him still better.

This specimen of bad manners added to Roger Cutts' growing feeling of dislike for Comstock. Roger was tempted to give the fellow a call-down, but managed to hold himself in check, refraining from doing so. Rob Claxton said nothing, but there was a look of disdain, almost of contempt, in his eyes as he watched Comstock.

Finally Gus turned back to the gun he had first chosen.

"This isn't just what I want," he said; "but it seems to be the best piece in the lot, and so I'll use it."

"Very well," nodded Cutts. "Now that Comstock has made his selection you will have a chance, boys."

"Oh," said Dick quickly, "you must have a pet gun of your own here. I'm sure neither Claxton nor myself would think of taking it."

"But I haven't a particular pet," said Roger. "I'll find one that suits me after you're satisfied."

With the utmost courtesy and consideration for each other, Dick and Rob looked the guns over and chose from among them. When they had done this, Cutts selected one, and the others were returned to the racks.

Comstock hurried out in advance. As they were leaving the club-house Cutts laughingly said, speaking in a low tone for the ears of Claxton and Merrwell:

"I hope Gus finds that gun all right. He has the one I generally use."

"Why didn't you say so?" asked Dick quickly.

"You should have your own gun. I'm sure there were plenty of others for Comstock to choose from."

"Oh, never mind," said Roger. "We may have to depend on him to save us from defeat to-day."

The Catamount Camp lads were ready for business. The traps had been set at a distance from the long board platform on which the boys were to stand while firing. The spectators gathered in the shade where they could watch the sport without any chance of interfering or bothering.

It was decided that the men pair off and shoot in couples. Each man was to have fifty "birds" to be sent up for him, but was to shoot only ten times in succession before giving place to the next man on the list. The trap-tenders were ready for business and everything had been arranged and understood when Cutts and Kimberly took their positions upon the long platform.

Both traps were sprung at precisely the same instant, and up shot the "birds."

Bang! Bang!

Kimberly smashed his clay to a white powder with the first shot, but Cutts missed and was forced to use his second barrel.

Bang!

This time Roger got the "bird" all right, but at the very outset Catamount Camp had taken a lead in the scoring.

And now there was a somewhat regular and intermittent cracking of guns, awaking the echoes of the woods and hills, as the youthful sportsmen rattled away at the clay pigeons.

After that first miss Cutts seemed to steady down, for he smashed the remaining nine birds without any trouble whatever, which gave him a score of ten for eleven shots.

Up to the final bird it seemed that Kimberly would have a clean score. He broke nine clays without a miss. Then he was a bit exasperated by missing the tenth. His gun followed the course of the soaring white "pigeon" and he let fly the second barrel.

He missed again.

This put Loon Lodge in the lead, for Kimberly had made only nine "breaks" with his eleven shots, while Cutts had made ten with the same number of cartridges.

"Well done, thou good and faithful servant," laughed Comstock, as Roger handed his gun over to the attendant to be swabbed and wiped off, retiring to the shade while the next couple showed what they could do.

Comstock seemed to strut the least bit as he walked forward to take his position on the platform.

On the contrary, there was a quiet, businesslike air about Brill Perkins, the jovial, good-natured Harvard man. Nevertheless, Perkins duplicated Cutts' feat at the outset, missing with his first shot, which compelled him to use his second barrel to smash the clay.

At the same time Comstock broke his bird into a
puff of white powder, shooting in perfect form and
doing so with deliberate, calculating ease and grace.

“That gun must suit Gus all right,” murmured
Roger Cutts. “He handles it handsomely.”

“Almost too handsomely,” observed Dick, in a low
tone. “A man can’t be self-conscious; he can’t pose
for the eyes of others, and do his best at anything.
Perhaps Comstock will forget himself presently. I
hope he does.”

Dick was sincere in this, for, having entered into
the contest, he was anxious to win. In everything he
undertook it was natural for him to strive hard for
complete success and unqualified victory.

Perkins seemed a trifle rattled by his bad start, for
he missed the third bird with both barrels. The same
thing happened with the seventh, and his score for his
first turn showed that he had broken eight pigeons
with thirteen shots.

On the other hand, Comstock did not make a miss.
His ten shots smashed ten birds. He handed his gun
over to the attendant with an air of smiling satisfaction
and walked back into the shade swaggeringly.

“Really, Kimberly, old fel,” he said, “I’m sorry for
you, don’t you know. We’re going to trim you beau-
tifully to-day.”

“That’s all right, Comstock,” said Will Kimberly.
“We’ve scarcely begun. There’s a lot of shooting to
be done before we get through.”

Claxton and Sparkfair both showed lack of prac-
tise in their first attempts. The Virginian fired four-
teen times to get seven birds, while Sparkfair used
fifteen shots for eight birds.

“If we keep this up, Claxton,” said Dale as they
retired, “there won’t be ammunition enough to last us
through the afternoon.”

It was now time for Starkell and Merriwell to
shoot. The Harvard man, wiry, sinewy, yet cool as
ice, duplicated Comstock’s performance, getting a
clean score with his ten shots.

Dick, however, was forced, like Cutts, to use both
barrels on one bird. But he scored, which gave him
a count of ten for eleven shots.

“You did first rate,” said Comstock patronizingly,
as Dick rejoined the crowd in the shade. “It’s too
bad, however, they didn’t put me against Starkell.
I’m afraid I’ll have to do my prettiest to trim Perkins
good and hard in order to make our total all right.
Starkell managed to even things up pretty well.”

Cutts and Kimberly stepped out once more. This
time they evened up their score, for Cutts missed one
clay entirely, getting nine with ten shots, while Kim-
berly fired eleven shots to get ten.

“By Jove!” muttered Comstock. “They’re crowd-
ing us. It begins to look like a hot old match.”

Perkins soon showed that he had steadied down
marvelously, for he smashed eight birds before miss-
ing one, and he made ten breaks with eleven shots.

This seemed to surprise and annoy Comstock, who
had not looked for such work by his red-headed col-
lege acquaintance. Instead of paying attention to his
own work, Gus was keeping track of his opponent at
the same time.

“You’re getting too good for anything,” he ob-
erved, with a laugh that was meant to be annoying.

“Why, you’ll make a record as a wing-shot if you
keep on.”

Then he was caught off guard with the last pigeon
sent up from his trap, and missed with both barrels.

“Confound it!” he exclaimed, glaring at the weapon
in his hands. “I wish I could find a gun that suited
me.”

He was still growling as he retired with the spec-
tators in the shade.

“Oh, cut it out, Comstock,” laughed Sparkfair.

“You’ve got to miss sometimes like anybody else.”

Dale and Rob now stepped forth and did somewhat
better than before, although both were far from bril-
liant in their performance.

Starkell and Merriwell wound up the second round
domsomely, both getting clean scores.

Comstock’s annoyance seemed intensified over this,
for he realized that his one double miss had put him
behind Merriwell, the fellow he had most desired to
excel and whom he had confidently believed he could
outshoot.

In the second round Comstock betrayed some anxi-
ety, and possibly it was this which caused him to open
badly with a rank double miss. When he had finished
he found himself behind Perkins, for he had used
fourteen cartridges in order to get eight birds, while
Perkins had again secured a tally of ten with eleven
shots.

“Look out, you wizard,” called Sparkfair, as Com-
stock, his face flushed, came sauntering back toward
the spectators. “One more fiasco like that and your
record will be below mine. I understood you were
to be the star performer for your bunch.”

“Give me the right kind of a gun and I’ll show you
some shooting!” rasped Comstock.

Claxton and Sparkfair were tied at the finish of the
third round.
That round also saw Merriwell even up with Starkell, who was compelled to spend two shots on one bird, while Dick got a clean slate.

Some one prophesied that Merriwell was going to press Starkell for honors. Another fellow expressed an opinion that Merriwell would carry off the honors of the day. Comstock heard this and ground his teeth in grim silence.

In the fourth round Comstock used twelve cartridges to make a score of nine. Perkins fired thirteen times to get his ten birds. This left them nearly tied, although the red-headed chap had a slight lead.

Interest seemed to center now upon the performance of Merriwell and Starkell. The Harvard man felt this and did his level best to keep a steady nerve and a cool head. He knew that he was up against a fellow who had the reputation of fighting to the very finish at anything he undertook. He had likewise heard enough of Merriwell to bear the impression that the fellow had a marvelous way of winning out, sometimes against odds. In this case there were no odds, for the score was tied.

Eight times those two fellows fired, and sixteen clay pigeons were handsomely smashed. And then, just as the traps sent up the next bird, Starkell was smitten with the conviction that he could not defeat Dick Merriwell; he missed with one barrel, but caught himself, followed the flight of the clay bird, and smashed it into a puff of powder with the other barrel. Again his score was ten birds for eleven shots.

But Merriwell made ten straight.

Gus Comstock was obliged to bite his tongue to keep from swearing aloud. He had hoped to be the star performer of the day. He had confidently expected to make a better performance than Merriwell, under any circumstances. But now he saw that once more Dick Merriwell seemed likely not only to defeat his particular antagonist, but to be the champion of the day.

This was precisely what happened. In the last round Starkell shot brilliantly, but his two misses in the third and fourth rounds were sufficient to defeat him, even though he wound up with ten straight.

Merriwell likewise made ten straight, and won the championship of the day by securing fifty birds with fifty-one shots.

Loon Lodge led Catamount Camp in the totals by a small margin. Had not Perkins gone to pieces badly in the final round Catamount Camp would have won the match, for Comstock’s record was anything save brilliant.

CHAPTER X.

A DESPERATE INDIAN.

The wooded hills and valleys were echoing and re-echoing with the shooting at the Blue Mountain Gun Club as Rose Sharon, dressed in khaki, paddled her canoe up the winding stream toward the club grounds and made a landing where the path came down to the water.

The girl’s usually pronounced color seemed somewhat heightened and there was a light of excitement and anxiety in her eyes.

“I’m sure Portugas came over here,” she murmured. “He must be prowling around the gun club, waiting for his opportunity. In his present condition he would do anything. He might shoot from the cover of the woods.”

The firing at the club had ceased as she hurriedly followed the path which brought her finally within view of the assembled lads from Catamount Camp and Loon Lodge. She halted in the edge of the timber, protected by some low bushes over which she peered, and saw several of the youths shaking hands with Dick Merriwell in a way that seemed to indicate that they were congratulating him. Instinctively she knew Merriwell must be the winner of the shooting-match.

But it was not Dick for whom her eyes sought. After a moment or two she discovered the one for whose safety she was intensely anxious.

Stretched gracefully upon a bed of pine-needles beneath the shading limbs of a group of trees was young Joe Crowfoot. There was little in his appearance to make him noticeable among the others save that his hair was very black and his skin had a coppery hue. Had she not known he was an Indian she could not have divined it at that distance, even though she possessed remarkably keen eyes.

“There he is,” she murmured. “How can I tell him? I can’t tell him what Portugas said to my father. If I did, I’d die of shame. Oh, isn’t it too bad Joe Crowfoot is an Indian! If he were only white!”

Three or four of the young fellows moved toward the club-house. Dick Merriwell was one of the party. There seemed to be some talk about rifle-shooting.

The watching girl was not acquainted with Gus Comstock, but it was Comstock who was asserting that he could do far better with the rifle than with the shotgun.

One of the boys ran into the club-house and reappeared with a handsome target rifle, which he...
handed over to Comstock. Gus examined the weapon superficially, shook his head with disdain, and passed it to Dick. Dick looked the weapon over more closely, finally putting it down in a leaning position against the wall of the club-house.

Comstock and one or two others entered the club-house, leaving Dick talking with Dale Sparkfair. After a bit Sparkfair also entered the club-house, and Merriwell turned to retrace his steps toward the group beneath the trees.

Rose Sharon called to him guardedly. He seemed to hear her, for he looked around as if searching for the person who had called. She fluttered her handkerchief above the bushes and motioned for him to approach. Then she drew back and waited, but through the shrubbery she could see that he was coming.

Dick had been greatly surprised for his clear eyes had recognized Rose Sharon, even though he obtained barely a glimpse of her face.

"Miss Sharon," he said, as he appeared before her, "I thought it must be you, and yet—"

"I had to speak with some one," she hastily explained, "and I disliked to appear before the entire party. I do not wish to be seen by any one else. Let's step back a bit farther into the cover of the woods."

He followed her, restraining his curiosity and wonderment.

"Mr. Merriwell," she said, when she believed they were secure from observation, "I am over here to give you warning."

"To give me warning?"

"Yes, you or some other loyal friend of Joe Crowfoot. He is in the greatest danger to-day."

"Indeed! Will you explain?"

"This forenoon Joe Portugas came to Lakeview Farm. He had been drinking. He was drunk at the time and he had a bottle of liquor with him. He tried to talk to me about Mr. Hyde, but I was afraid and refused to listen. My brother was not at home. Portugas knows my father. You know my father was once a guide himself. He found my father and talked to him. I listened to what he said, although he did not know I heard him. At first he made my father angry by trying to tell what a fine man Mr. Hyde is. When my father stopped him, he said—Oh, I can't tell you just what he said!"

She faltered and gasped, her color intensified and her sudden confusion being most pronounced.

"You might give me an idea what it was he said, Miss Sharon," suggested Dick.

"It was—so—so foolish," she stammered, her face burning like fire. "That's why I decided that I could not tell Crowfoot. That's why I wished to speak with some friend of his. Why, Portugas insinuated that—that I was interested in—in Crowfoot. He asked my father which he preferred as a—as a son-in-law, Dan Hyde or Joe Crowfoot. I really thought they would come to blows. Father used dreadful language. He ordered Portugas off. Portugas went after a time, but he did not go until he had said a great deal more. He—he said he would save my father the disgrace of having an Indian for a son-in-law by shooting Crowfoot. He said he was after Crowfoot to-day and would get him before sunset. I watched him go away into the woods. This very afternoon, since you began shooting here, with a set of field-glasses I saw Portugas leave the big island on the lake and paddle over this way. He's here somewhere. Perhaps he's skulking in the woods now, ready to shoot Joe Crowfoot. I had to come. I had to let you know so that Crowfoot can look out. I'm going back now. Please—please don't tell any one you've seen me, but for goodness' sake warn Crowfoot—do make him be careful! When he is drunk Portugas would do anything."

Her very confusion, her reluctance to repeat the sneering words which Portugas had spoken to her, her father, the heightened color in her cheeks and the drooping of her eyelids—these things revealed to Dick Merriwell the surprising fact that Rose Sharon was deeply interested in young Joe Crowfoot.

"Miss Sharon," said Dick, "I'll warn Joe at once. You may trust me, I assure you."

"Thank you, Mr. Merriwell. I'm going back now. Good day."

He removed his hat, offering to accompany her along the path; but this she declined, urging him to seek Crowfoot without delay. In another moment the forest enfolded her.

On arriving at the landing, she was startled to find that her canoe had been moved. She had drawn it up part way on the shore. It was now pushed off and seemed to be partly submerged in the water.

After one hesitating glance around, she ran to the canoe.

There was water in it, and in the bottom of the frail craft was a jagged hole which seemed to indicate that a heavy stone had been cast through it.

Her face paled and she stood there, one hand up-
lifted to her cheek, gazing at the hole in the bottom of the canoe.

“Who could do it?” she whispered. And then, guardedly, she exclaimed: “Portugas!”

With a feeling of terror thrilling through her, she turned—turned to find herself face to face with the Indian guide of the Adirondacks, who was less than a yard away.

“You speak my name,” he said huskily, his black eyes gleaming with an evil light. “You want to see me, eh? I am here.”

And then, as he saw her open her lips to utter a cry, he leaped upon her like a panther. Her scream of fear was cut short and she was hurled to the ground, one of his dirty brown hands covering her mouth.

CHAPTER XI.

THE RESCUE OF ROSE.

In spite of the girl’s words urging him to hastily notify Crowfoot of his danger, Dick Merriwell stood for some moments with his eyes fastened on the spot where she had melted into the shadows of the woods.

“Too bad,” he finally said. “I know Sharon and I reckon him as a friend. His sister mustn’t become too interested in Crowfoot. It would be a fatal blunder. I must tell Joe about this murderous guide and put him on his guard.”

He had reached the corner of the club-house when Rose Sharon’s muffled, half-uttered scream reached his ears. A quivering thrill shot through him, and he turned like a flash in his tracks. Instinctively his left hand went out and seized the rifle that still remained leaning against the building. In another moment he was making for the path that led down to the landing, running with the speed of a deer.

Quick as he was, Dick reached the landing too late to find either Portugas or the girl. He found her ruined canoe lying there on the edge of the water, but on every hand the thick underbrush which crowded close to the banks of the stream seemed still and undisturbed by any moving creature.

“That is her canoe,” decided Dick. “Where is she? What’s happened to her?”

Then, as he bent over the ground, seeking amid the many old tracks and the few fresh ones to find some token that would give him a hint of the truth, young Joe Crowfoot came leaping forth from the woods and joined him.

“What is it, Dick?” asked the Indian youth. “I heard a cry and I saw you grab the little rifle and run. I followed you. What has happened?”

“Rose Sharon was here. She came to warn you that Portugas, crazy with drink, is skulking in these woods watching for a chance to shoot you.”

“Where is she now, Dick?”

“I wish you could tell me. She left me and followed the path back here to this landing. Here’s her canoe with a hole in the bottom of it. It was her voice that uttered that cry.”

“Dick, you stand still! Don’t you move! You let me read the ground!”

And so Merriwell stood in his tracks while young Joe, stooping somewhat, slowly and cautiously moved, running his eyes over the ground. Amid all those old tracks and new footprints he seemed to find something which told him a story. It is doubtful if any save the most expert in the art of tracking and trailing, could have learned anything at all from that trodden bit of ground. In a moment or two Crowfoot called to Dick:

“This way! He has gone into the woods here. He is a man of unusual weight, or else he carries a burden. He isn’t one who comes from cities or towns. He wears moccasins and he toes in. Follow me, Dick.”

The trail did not lead them far. It brought them to where the stream came curving round a wooded point, and there it ended at the water’s edge.

Even as they reached that spot Crowfoot uttered a cry and flung out one hand, pointing down the stream. A canoe, apparently containing a single person, was just disappearing from view. The person who sat in the stern of the craft and skillfully wielded the paddle was Joe Portugas.

“He’s alone, Crowfoot!” said Dick. “Where is the girl? Where is Rose Sharon?”

“She is in that canoe,” said the young Indian. “She is lying in the bottom of the canoe. I could tell it from the way the canoe was balanced upon the water. Here is where he had his canoe hidden behind these bushes. We must follow him.”

“Follow him? How can we, Crowfoot?”

“I came here to-day in my own canoe, Dick. I have it hidden also. Come.”

Once more the Indian youth led the way with great speed, causing Merriwell to strain every nerve to keep close at his heels. They reached the spot where Crowfoot’s canoe was concealed, and in a twinkling they had launched it.
“But we have only one paddle!” cried Dick in dismay.

“One is enough,” declared the Indian youth. “You keep down low in the prow so that even the breeze that may strike you will not hold us back.”

Dick obeyed, crouching there with the target rifle in his hands. He opened the weapon and took notice that it was loaded with a single cartridge.

Young Joe made the canoe fairly skim the surface of the water. Around the curves they went, following the stream until it brought them at last out upon Blue Mountain Lake.

To Dick’s dismay, nowhere before them could they see the canoe of Portugas.

“He’s fooled us!” cried Merriwell. “He has landed somewhere.”

“Wait,” said Crowfoot—“wait until we get out a little farther where we can see all the shore each way.”

When they had proceeded farther into the lake, both suddenly discovered the canoe of Portugas hugging the northern shore and making toward the west.

“There he is!” exulted Merriwell as young Joe swiftly swung the frail canoe around and headed it in pursuit.

“There he is!” breathed the Indian youth; “and now he can never get away from us on this lake.”

Portugas saw them coming. He was marvelously skilful with the paddle, and he laughed his disdain. Nevertheless, it was not long before his judgment told him that the pursuers were gaining. Immediately he increased his efforts, and for a time it seemed a race in which neither gained the slightest advantage.

But Joe Portugas was to learn that the Indian youth wielding the paddle in the pursuing canoe had muscles of steel and the heart of a lion. The steady strain began to tell, and finally Portugas was compelled to relax somewhat.

Once more he decided that they were gaining on him, and he cursed savagely.

Never in his life had young Joe Crowfoot weakened or unnerved himself by indulgence in drink or by any other excess. This could not be said of Portugas, and therefore the Indian pursuer gained upon the Indian fugitive.

The sun was slipping down toward the wooded western peaks. The afternoon was waning. Still Portugas realized that he could not hold out in this manner until darkness came on.

Finally he turned his canoe abruptly and shot it into a small cove, disappearing from view.

Crowfoot and Merriwell followed. When they entered that cove they discovered the canoe of the fugitive guide lying with the prow resting upon a bit of shore just where it had been driven by the last stroke of Portugas’ paddle.

Merriwell feared that the Indian might be hidden in the woods ready to open fire on them. Crowfoot had the same thought, yet neither of them hesitated.

Landing, they leaped out. Dick waited for his companion to take the trail.

Young Joe was off like a bloodhound on the scent. Into the woods they sped, soon striking the foot of a sharp declivity that led them upward and onward.

There was no hesitation on the part of Crowfoot. The time he had spent at Frank Merriwell’s school in Bloomfield and at the prep. school where he sought to finish his mental equipment to enter college had not robbed him in the least of his craft of the woods.

On they went, over ridges, dipping into hollows, climbing rough slopes, and ever straining their eyes for a glimpse of Portugas. It seemed amazing and marvelous that the man could cover such a distance, burdened as he was with the girl, and do it with speed enough to prevent them from overtaking him long ere this.

The country grew wilder, and, of a sudden, they came over a ridge and in sight of a deep, rocky gorge, at the bottom of which leaped and splashed a swift mountain stream.

Again rose the exultant cry:

“There he is!”

Through the thick timber which lay between them and the brink of the gorge they could see Portugas. He was on the far side of the gorge. At that very moment he was stooping and tugging at the trunk of a fallen tree upon which he had crossed from bank to bank.

“Shoot, Dick—shoot quick!” cried Crowfoot. “If he pushes it off——”

The tree-trunk went spinning and crashing down into the chasm. Immediately, with a yell of defiance, Portugas leaped back behind some rocks, where he crouched, fully protected from view.

“I have only one cartridge in this rifle, Crowfoot,” said Dick. “When I use it I must hit.”

Recklessly they rushed forward, exposing themselves to view. There was a puff of smoke from behind the rocks, and a charge of shot rattled amid the shrubbery close beside Crowfoot.

“Cover, Joe—get to cover!” shouted Dick, as he flung himself down behind an old log.
Young Joe seemed to vanish most mysteriously amid the timber.

From the far side of the gorge came a harsh burst of mocking laughter.

"You blamed lucky, you fellers!" shouted Portugas. "I meant to get you both. Mebbe I will yet. When I shoot next time I hit."

Peering past one end of the log, Dick surveyed the length of the ravine as far as he could see it. His heart sank, for he perceived that it was far too wide for a human being to cross by leaping.

Apparently, Joe Portugas had brought them to a stand.

Looking around Dick eventually saw Crowfoot flit from one tree to another like a shadow. The Indian youth was shifting his position and moving toward the brink of the gorge some distance farther up the stream.

In time Crowfoot reached the point he sought. Ere he did this, Merriwell divined young Joe's purpose. Up there at the very edge of the gorge was a stout and massive tree with strong, wide-reaching branches, one of which hung far out across the breadth of the chasm.

Crowfoot reached that tree in safety and climbed into the lower branches. He found the strong limb he sought and swung out upon it hand over hand, moving toward the far side of the chasm.

And now he was in plain view of Portugas should the Indian chance to look in that direction.

Dick lifted his head sufficiently to peer over the old log. His heart leaped into his mouth, for he saw Portugas rising cautiously and bringing his gun to his shoulder with the weapon leveled and steadied over a bit of rock, the muzzle pointed straight at the Indian youth who was swinging along the limb of that tree above the chasm.

"Now," cried Portugas fiercely—"now I fix you, Crowfoot! Now I shoot you!"

Two reports woke the echoes of the woods. One was the report of the rifle in Dick Merriwell's hands. He had fired at the head of Joe Portugas. The guide's shotgun spoke an instant later, but not a pellet of lead touched young Joe Crowfoot. Portugas tumbled over, disappearing from view behind the rocks.

Crowfoot reached a point far out on the bending, cracking limb of the tree from which he could give his body a swing and drop to the far bank of the ravine.

Unhesitatingly and fearlessly he ran down toward the point where Portugas had last been seen. He found the guide lying still upon the ground, and a little farther on he saw Rose Sharon, her arms bound at her sides and her feet securely tied.

"She's dead, she's dead!" breathed Crowfoot in the greatest anguish as he knelt beside her and hastily cut the rawhide thongs that bound her.

He caught her up in his arms. He looked into her face, and, holding her close, felt her heart beating faintly against his bosom.

"Great Spirit, I thank thee!" he said solemnly, with his eyes upturned to heaven. "She still lives!

Then she opened her eyes, saw him; and smiled.

Rose was fully conscious and was answering Crowfoot, who had spoken soft, tender words of reassurance, when Dick Merriwell, having imitated Joe's example in crossing the chasm by means of the tree limb, appeared beside them. Dick had taken care to make a thorough examination of Joe Portugas.

"Crowfoot," he said, "I think I'll use those rawhide thongs with which Miss Sharon was bound by that brute. I thought it possible I had killed Portugas; but, having made an examination, I'm inclined to believe I have simply 'creased' him. My bullet cut his scalp, and grazed his skull, stunning him for the time being. We'll take him back to Loon Lodge with us, and I fancy that next we'll turn him over to the sheriff of Hamilton County, that he may be properly punished by law."

THE END.

The Next Number (646) Will Contain

DICK MERRIWELL IN THE WILDS;

OR,

THE CALL OF THE WOODS.

The Captive at Loon Lodge—What Drink Will Do—The Man in the Woods—The Empty Chair—The Real Hero—In the Wilds—A Grave Question—Beside the Camp-fire—'Twixt Love and Duty—The Red Trail—Retribution
THE TWINS' COON-HUNT.

By A.D. H. GIBSON.

The burning logs in the old fireplace crackled and sent out a pleasant glow, illuminating the dimly interior of a weather-worn old cabin that stood, like a disconsolate donkey, in a reclining attitude, on the bank of Big Toe Bayou, in the State of Arkansas.

Old Tige slumbered before the hearth, dreaming of rabbit-hunts, or treeing some big, fat coon. He would move his fore legs, the muscles would twitch, and he would give several short, quick, smothered barks in rapid succession.

It was great fun for Moses and Aaron Pikey to watch the old dog dream, and not a few were the remarks made at his expense. The Pikey boys were twins, and as much alike in personal appearance as two young negroes of fourteen, with round black faces, eyes to correspond, and the usual cranial wealth of dusky wool, can be.

Mr. and Mrs. Pikey, with the girls, had gone to attend a meeting at a little log schoolhouse some five miles distant, but the two twins complaining of being sleepy, had been allowed to stay at home.

But no sooner had the sound of the retracting ox-cart died away than both boys began to manifest symptoms of perfect wakefulness and directed their attention to Tige.

"Tige, yo's wants go coon-huntin', I specs,' said Moses.

"Ob co'se he do," replied Aaron. "See how he dreamin' now ob catchin' some varmint?

'He's a er plump shame not to humor er dunb crittah like Tige.'"

"Dat's so. Tige ought to be tooken out inter de woods to hab some fun, 'cos he had'"

The dog, bearing his name uttered so often, woke up, opened his eyes intelligently, and began thumping the elaborately carved floor board with his tail, as if to say:

"I am in favor of that, but I'll just keep my place here till I see some move on your part to leave the cabin."

"Dis am a fine eben' fo' huntin' varments. De moon's comin' up, Tige, an' as bright as er new dollic. Git up, Tige, an' come hyer,' commanded Moses.

Tige quickly obeyed, shaking himself, and rubbing his nose affectionately against the young fellow's jeans-clad knee.

"Come to me, sah!" called Aaron; but Tige would not desert the hand which fondled him most. "Well, den, stay, fo' yo's fin' mo' ob Bullrussles dan ob me anyway!" he added, in a half-exasperated tone.

Moreover Aaron was displeased, or jealous because of the dog's greater love for Moses than for himself; he never failed to vent his feelings by nicknaming his brother Bullrusses, knowing that the term was very ominous to him.

He had overheard preacher tell the story of Moses' childhood—the Moses in the Bible—and first applied the nickname in boyish mischief.

"Well, Tige, yo's an' Bullrusses come on, an' le's be cavorin' bout de bayou an' see if we-us kaint scalp up some varmint.

So saying, Aaron snatched up an old fur cap and started for the door.

Tige could not contain himself any longer, but began capering about the cabin with demonstrations of great pleasure in anticipation.

Moses did not relish his nickname, and he was inclined to refuse to accompany his brother into the woods; but Tige looked so coaxingly up into his face that his half-formed resolve to be stubborn melted away, and, putting on his hat, he followed Aaron out of the cabin.

Far off on the Ozarks it might have been snowing, but down on Big Toe Bayou the weather was very mild for the lateness of the winter. The air was touched with just enough of Jack Frost's breath to make the young hunters feel gay, and to send their breath off along the bayou like a pair of frisking deer.

Tige whisked about among the trees, the most active member of the party. They had not gone far when his barking showed that he had discovered something worth the attention of the twins.

They hurried forward and found that the dog had treeed a large coon. The moon rendered it light enough for them to see very clearly, and they could make out a fine, fat fellow sitting on a limb, far up a large tree. Their fun began at once, and everything was for the time being banished from mind; nor kept the pleasure of securing the coon.

Aaron climbed nimbly up the tree, while Moses, equipped with a stout club, and Tige, with low, anxious whines, waited at the foot.

The twin up the tree made a grab for the coon, which tried to elude him by taking to a large hole in the trunk. Aaron succeeded in getting hold of the bushy tail, however, before the animal could effect a complete escape. So intent on winning the prize was he that he quite forgot where he was until Tige gave a yelp directly beneath him.

He grasped the appendage with both hands, crying out to his brother,

"He got him, Moses! Now you's look out down dar, for some-fin's shush gwine to drain, an' dat mighty sudden."

He pulled vigorously, but the tail slipped from his hands; the coon disappeared down the hollow, and before Aaron could recover his balance on the limb, he came tumbling downward through the leafless branches.

However, he was not fated to descend at once to terra firma, for a dead prong on the lowest projecting limb caught the basement of his trousers and held him suspended about ten feet in the air.

"Golly!" exclaimed Moses, "I fink somefin' done drap, shush!" and he could not refrain from laughing at the ludicrous position of the luckless twin.

"Oh! holp me quick, Moses!" he cried; "I'll fall shush an' breek my neck square off. Honey bruddhel," he pleaded, seeing that Moses made no effort to release him, "won't yo's please to holp me down?"

"Yo's nebeh call me dat name, Bullrusses,' no mo' ef I holps yo's?" asked the triumphant daredevil, showing the whites of his eyes in the moonlight.

"No, nebeh!"—promised the repentant Aaron.

"Cross yo's heart?"

"Cross my heart!"

"Den I holp you's down, buddy," and Moses, with many a grin, placed two short poles against the limb where Aaron was held a prisoner and climbed to the rescue.

"Dat am er coon, Tige, dat we-us cotch," Moses called to the barking dog. "One ob de bigges' kin' ob varments!"

After considerable tugging Aaron was freed from his uncomfortable position, and descended safely to the ground by means of the poles.

Whether it was the noise made by effecting the rescue, or Tige's barking, or some previous talk in the hollow that frightened the coon, is not known. At least it darted out of the hole, but ran off up the tree where it appeared as if in security from its hunters.

But, with a stout club, Moses climbed after his coonship, and, with a well-directed blow, knocked him to the ground, where Tige soon finished him.

When the folks returned from church and beheld the fruits of the hunt, old Pikey was inclined to reprimand the twins sharply, for deceiving him. But Aaron soon made it all right by saying:

"Dad, dat dog jes' cavor and cavor roun' de house so we-us couldn't sleep. He gib we-us no res' till we's took him coon-huntin'. Feel em! See how fat dat coon am, dad!"

READY FOR BALLOON TEST.

From a New York daily of recent date we clip the following, which is of considerable interest to our young readers, since the famous aeronaut mentioned recently figured in a series of stories connected with Frank Merriwell's School of Athletic Development.

Captain Thomas F. Baldwin, who has built the three big dirigible balloons for the United States Government to be used the last week in July in the tests at Fort Meyer, was entertained at dinner last night by the Aero Club, in the Hotel Astor. Captain Baldwin arrived yesterday from Tuckahoe, where he has been putting the finishing touches to the balloons. The balloonbuilder said last night that he is sure his dirigibles will come up to the requirements set by the government.

"At present Germany is ahead in the international race to be first on the field. We succeeded in building the balloons," said Captain Baldwin, "but America is catching up, and when we get well started Yankee ingenuity and desperate daring will beat out the German deliberation."
NEW YORK, August 22, 1908.

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TIP TOP ROLL OF HONOR.

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

E. E. Warley, Texas.  
Clarence Sawyer, W. Va.  
Benjamin Leventhal, Mo.  
David B. Elliot, Texas.  
Carleton M. Allen, Boston.  
Ed. Conden, New Jersey.  
Chas. L. Beck, Nebraska.  
Alfred M. LeMoyne, Brooklyn, N. Y.

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

APPLAUSE.

Owing to the large 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.

FREE POST CARDS—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 on his part to increase its circulation, will, upon request, receive a set of six free post cards of the principal characters in Tip Top free by mail. Be very sure and address your letters "Editor Tip Top Weekly Post Card Offer."

(A letter from California.)

I have read the Tip Top Weekly for more than two years, and I expect to read it a good many years longer. My favorites are Frank, Dick, Brad, Bart, and Chester for the boys. As for the girls, Inza, June, and Elsie are my favorites.

When I first started to read the Tip Top my father did not like it; but I managed to read a few of them. The boy that lived across the street from me would loan me all I wanted. One day my father picked up one of those that I had been reading, and began to look it over. When he had finished he said that they would not hurt me, and ever since that day I have read them openly.

I wish that Frank and Tom Baldwin would come out here for a while, because Baldwin and the California Arrow stayed here for a few months.

I have got several boys to read Tip Top in this way: I read them one of them and they borrow a couple and are soon back for more. Please send me a catalogue.

Hoping to see this in print, I remain a loyal Tip Topper.

Neil Lake.

We are sending you the latest catalogue, and you will find it filled with good titles. Your father evidently was himself once a boy with a love for outdoor sports, and he could not fail to realize how much good such reading as Tip Top supplies would do the average lad.

I have never written to express my opinion of "The Ideal Publication, But have read it ever since I was old enough to read, and that was when the famous weekly started. I feel somewhat ashamed to write now, having enjoyed the pleasure of reading a supply of Tip Top as long as I have, yet neglect to tell what it has done for me. But hoping that I’ll be pardoned for the delay, I can only repeat what has been told thousands of times by other readers.

While I first started reading Tip Top stories I used to read all kind of sensational matter, but my mother and relatives objected, so I had to "cut it out." But I finally convinced them that Tip Top was different, and so was allowed to read them.

Some of my boy friends were reading the same kind of literature, and I have tried to show them how much better Tip Top was, and I think I have partially succeeded.

You have noticed many of the writers to the "Applause" try to tell Mr. Standish how he should write his story. Why don’t they write a magazine of their own. I am satisfied to let the author run it himself. Certain it is that I couldn’t better it. I think there is no one so well fitted as B. L. Standish.

The characters are all fitted for their places, so as to make the stories most interesting. I would not be satisfied to lose any of them. There is no use of my telling which ones I like best, for any one could guess. I don’t think anything ever pleased me so much as to see Arlington become Dick’s friend. It was the crowning of his Fardale career.

But what has become of that charming, blue-eyed girl of Dick’s, Doris? We lost one of our most pleasing characters when she went out of our stories. Doris pleased me better than June, but of course Dick will suit himself.

Wishing Burt L. and Street & Smith every success and hoping to hear more of Doris, I remain a constant reader,

Corming, N. Y.

“A SENIOR.”

When Mr. Standish’s plans mature perhaps we may see Doris again. Thousands would be especially well pleased to have it so. Our valued correspondent is evidently a staunch friend of the Merriwells and all that they stand for.

(A letter from Kansas.)

I received your catalogue of "Tip Top" and Medal Library but as I have been a reader for about two years, I have read all after No. 445, and the catalogues just gave back to 483. Would like to have a list of the back numbers in stock of the "Tip Top." I have read quite a number of the Medals and they are just simply fine. I can express my opinion of "Tip Top" in three words. They are, grand, great and wonderful. Do you have the addresses of any of the readers who have back numbers for sale? If so, please send them, as I would like to get those back of what I have. Yours truly,

Van C. Smith.

You will find full information about the early issues of "Tip Top" in this and each succeeding number. We have back to 372 with a few missing, and there are contained in the Medal books (3 or 4 in each issue) the numbers from 1 to 528, so you see nearly all can be obtained direct from this office. We have no addresses of those who wish to sell back numbers.
I have been a reader of your magazine for a good many months, and think (as others say) it is a good, clean, moral magazine. I am not ashamed to admit that when I first started to read your "Tip Top" I was walking on the wrong path, and walking mighty fast. I would like to tell "Tip Top" readers a case of what cigarettes will do. A boy friend of mine, who is two years older than I, one whom I have known since I was able to talk, started to smoke cigarettes at the age of eight years. At that age he was two grades ahead of me in school. Well, to make a long story short, I am now out of school two years and he is still going to school.

Now, some of the readers no doubt will say, How does he know that his dumbness was caused by smoking cigarettes? This I can say, I was in the best of health till my friend Evolyang, and when a boy uses a pack of tobacco in one day, every day, and even goes to the extreme limit of picking up stumps out of the streets, well, every "Tip Top" reader should get Frank Merritwell'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.

(A letter from Pennsylvania.)

PROF. FOURMEN: I am a reader of the "Tip Top," and I take the liberty of asking you how my measurements are, what kind of training I need, and how can I get heavier? I am 20 years old, weight, 136 pounds; height, 5 feet 10½ inches; chest, normal, 33 inches; expanded, 34½ inches; contracted, 26 inches; waist, 28 inches; wrist, 6½ inches; forehead, 9½ inches; biceps, 11 inches; expanded; thigh, 18½ inches; calf, 12 inches; neck, 14 inches; ankle, 10 inches. I don't use tobacco nor drink. Some people call me slim, and I don't like that; I would like to gain. Yours truly,

PHIL MARKHAM.

You should weigh about 158 pounds, and have a chest measurement of 39 inches. You can only increase your weight by eating such food as will do you the most good, and dropping pastry. Perhaps you would be glad to take up a course of training as given in our manuals. It would take too much valuable space to try and tell you here what you might do to gain flesh and add to your lung capacity.

(A letter from Illinois.)

PROF. FOURMEN: Being a regular and interested reader of your splendid weekly, "Tip Top," I take the liberty to ask your opinion of my measurements. These measurements are correct.

1. I am 15 years 6 days old; weight, 100 pounds; height, 5 feet 4 inches; chest, normal, 30½ inches; expanded, 33½ inches; waist, 28½ inches; neck, 13½ inches; right biceps, 10½ inches; flexed, 11 inches; left, 10 inches; flexed, 11 inches; right forearm, 10½ inches; left, 10½ inches; wrist, 8 inches; thighs, 11½ inches; calves, 12½ inches. I remain a true Tip Topper, Yours truly.

ELOF MUREN.

10 pounds underweight, 2 inches lacking in chest circumference, ¼ inches too much about the waist. You need to buckle down to business and correct all these things if you aspire to be an athlete.

PROF. FOURMEN: I have read dear old "Tip Top" for four years without writing to the physical culture department. I am 15 years old; 5 feet 5 inches tall; weight, 115 pounds. Am I up to the standard? What is good for pimplies? What is a good exercise for the muscles of the back? Thanking you in advance, and hoping to see this in print, I remain, Worcester, Mass.

A TRUE TIP TOPPER.

Your weight is exactly right. Let the pimples alone. They will in time disappear. Any exercise that brings the muscles of the trunk into play will strengthen the back. Lifting, wrestling, boxing, or the use of an exerzier will help.

(A letter from Ohio.)

PROF. FOURMEN: I have read "Tip Top" for about three years. My measurements are: Height, 5 feet 6½ inches; chest, normal, 31 inches; expanded, 32½ inches; weight, 116 pounds; waist, 26 inches; thighs, 18 inches; calf, 12 inches; forearm, 12 inches; neck, 13 inches; wrist, 7 inches; biceps, 8 inches; normal; arms, chest, 16½ inches. How is my weight? How is my chest? How are my other measurements? I play football, baseball. I run, jump, I can stand and jump about 8 feet. How is that?
TIP TOP WEEKLY

I run high jump about 4 feet 4 inches. How is that? What is the average record made for my size for 100 yards? Hoping to see in full print soon, yours truly,

GWLNY REES.

Your weight is about correct, but chest should measure almost 35 inches, normal. Your jumping does you credit. There is no record kept according to the height of contestants.

PROF. FOURMEN: Having been a reader of "Tip Top Weekly" for the past two years, I take the liberty of asking your advice on a matter that has bothered me considerably of late. I have a fine large chest, "knock-knees," as they are usually called. Could you advise any form of exercise which would tend to straighten my knees or reduce the size of same through your column in "Tip Top Weekly"? I am looking forward to the coming season, but am afraid I am a little too heavy for my height and thighs. I have a little layer of hard fat all over me. Is that bad? What can I do to get a good wind? It would be fine if I was a good pitcher. What can I do to get a lot of speed? I hope to see this in print soon. With my kindest regards to the "king of weeklies," Bert L., and yourself, I remain, "MIGNON." Philadelphia, Pa.

You are about 38 pounds overweight and need an inch more about the chest. You should go in for heavy athletics, selecting those movements best calculated to cut this avoidable down. Your wind will improve as you get rid of the fat. This course would likely fit you for almost any position in the ball-field. You can only be a good pitcher if you have the arm that can deliver the goods.

PROF. FOURMEN: As I am a reader of "Tip Top," I will be very much obliged if you will give me your valued opinion upon the following measurements: My age, 14 years 9 months; height, 5 feet, 10 1/2 inches; weight, 160 pounds; neck, 14 inches; chest, normal, 36 inches; expanded, 42 inches; circumference of shoulders, 46 1/2 inches; reach, 72 1/2 inches; forearm, 11 1/2 inches; biceps, 12 inches; waist, 30 inches; wrist, 7 3/4 inches; hips, 36 1/4 inches; thigh, 21 1/2 inches; calf, 14 1/2 inches; ankle, 9 3/4 inches. I am 16 years old. I do not drink or use tobacco. Please state my defects and how to make them as nearly perfect as I can. What branch or branches of athletic work do you think I am physically best adapted to?

R. S. BROOKING, N. Y.

You would be good in football especially, and apparently in hammer-throwing or wrestling. Your weight is far above the average, which for your height would be 143 pounds, and you have a fine chest, also above the average. Possibly you would feel more "fit" if you could reduce your weight some ten pounds.

PROF. FOURMEN: As I have been a reader of the "Tip Top" for some time, I will take the liberty of asking a few questions. I expect to get in the Boston Marathon run and would like to know if I am qualified for it. Age, 17 years 2 months; height, 5 feet 6 inches; weight, 130 pounds. Are you interested? What distance should I run? Have pains in abdomen. What weight should I take off? Thanking you in advance, I remain sincerely yours,

BARTON LANDIN, Vt.

You should not weigh a pound over 107 pounds, considering your height. I cannot believe, in spite of your good wind, that you will be able to make good—your height is all against you now.

PROF. FOURMEN: I enclose my measurements. Please tell me my weak points, and what exercises I should take to rectify them? Do you think I will grow any taller, and is there anything I could do to increase my height? I have read "Tip Top" for six years, and have started about seven friends reading it. It's great. Height, 5 feet 3 inches; weight, 138 pounds; age, 18 years 2 months; neck, 14 inches; biceps, normal, 11 inches; expanded, 10 1/2 inches; left, 12 inches; forearm, right, 10 1/2 inches; left, 10 1/2 inches; width shoulders, 19 inches; chest, normal, 34 inches; expanded, 35 inches; hips, 36 inches; waist, 30 inches; calves, right, 14 1/2 inches; left, 13 1/2 inches; thighs, 22 inches. I am afraid I am a little too heavy for my height and thighs. I have a little layer of fat all over me. Is that bad? What can I do to get a good wind? It would be fine if I was a good pitcher. What can I do to get a lot of speed? I hope to see this in print soon. With my kindest regards to the "king of weeklies," Bert L., and yourself, I remain, "MIGNON." Philadelphia, Pa.

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Very little under the standard, son. You can reach perfection by training a bit harder, and it is worth your while to aim for such a high mark.

(Letter from Indiana.)

PROF. FOURMEN: As I have been a reader and admirer of the "Tip Top Weekly" for some time, I take the liberty of asking you how I am proportioned. I am 13 years 4 months old; height, 5 feet 2 inches; weight, 95 pounds; chest, normal, 30 inches; expanded, 32 inches; waist, 27 inches; wrist, 6 inches; neck, 13 inches; calf, 12 inches; ankle, 9 inches; shoulders, circumference, 28 inches; biceps, 9 inches; thigh, 18 inches. Are my measurements normal? Hoping to see this in print soon, I remain yours,


You have no particularly weak points, Henry, and with daily exercise you should be able to make a pretty good athlete out of yourself.

(Letter from New York.)

PROF. FOURMEN: Being a constant reader of the "Tip Top," I would like to ask you a few questions. Age, 17 years; height, 5 feet 6 inches; weight, 120 pounds; chest, normal, 35 inches; expanded, 37 inches; waist, 30 inches; thighs, 10 1/2 inches; calves, 14 inches; ankle, 10 inches; wrist, 6 1/2 inches; forearm,
10 inches; biceps, normal, 10 inches; flexed, 11½ inches; neck, 14 inches; across the back from shoulder to shoulder is 18 inches; all around my shoulders is 45 inches. Are my measurements all right? Do you think my shoulders are broad enough? Do you think I can become an athlete? I do not use tobacco in any form nor do I drink liquor. I can throw a 16-pound ball 43 feet; put the 16-pound shot 24 feet. My standing jump is 8 feet 8 inches; high jump is 4 feet. I can wrestle fine. For I wrestle with another boy who is 5 feet 7 inches high and weighs 138 pounds. I remain forever a "Tip Top" friend.

BERNARD J. DURPHY.

All very good except your waist, which is 3 inches too large for the proper form of such a clever athlete. Remedy this and you will be able to do even more difficult stunts than now.

PROF. FOURMEN: As I am a constant reader of the "Tip Top," I wish to ask you a few questions about my measurements. I am 16 years of age; weight, stripped, 116½ pounds; height, 5 feet 4½ inches; waist, 25 inches; chest, normal, 32½ inches; expanded, 34 inches; biceps, normal, 9 inches; expanded, 10 inches; thighs, 105½ inches; calves, 12½ inches; ankles, 9 inches; neck, 13½ inches.

Questions: 1. How are my measurements? 2. Can I make a good one-hundred-yard runner and a standing-broad jumper? My record for a standing broad jump is 7 feet 4 inches. I remain, yours respectfully,

B. ABBIN.
New York City.

1. Measurements good, save that you lack a couple of inches about the chest.
2. I should imagine you would, providing you have good wind. You will do even better if you gain the additional lung capacity.

PROF. FOURMEN: As I have read "Tip Top" for four years, I take the liberty of asking you a few questions. My measurements are: Age, 16 years 3 months; height, 5 feet 4 inches; weight, 115 pounds; neck, 13½ inches; width of shoulders, 18 inches; biceps, normal, 9¼ inches; flexed, 11 inches; forearm, normal, 96 inches; flexed, 11 inches; wrist, 5½ inches; chest, normal, 34 inches; small, 30 inches; expanded, 38 inches; waist, 27 inches; hips, 33½ inches; thigh, 19 inches; calf, 13½ inches; knee, 13¼ inches; ankle, 9¼ inches. How do my measurements compare with other boys of my age? I take a half-hour's exercise every morning, followed by a cold bath. Does Street & Smith publish a book on "wrestling"? If so, would you please let me know how much it would cost by mail. Thanking you in advance, I remain,

A LOYAL TIP TOPPER.
Washington, D. C.

Your measurements are gilt-edged; and it is a great pleasure to have such a fine specimen of physical perfection among my correspondents. The only books in this line published by our house are enumerated at the head of this department.

PROF. FOURMEN: I have been reading "Tip Top" for about three years, and would like for you to answer a few questions for me. Have you copies of "Tip Tops" where Frank is playing baseball in the Mad River League? If not, what Medal contain those stories? How are these measurements? I am 16 years old; 5 feet 13½ inches high; 168 pounds in weight; chest normal, 34 inches; expanded, 37½ inches; waist, 31 inches; reach of arm, 31 inches; neck, 14 inches; biceps, 11 inches; flexed, 13 inches; thigh, 21 inches; calf, 14½ inches. Texas Plume.

Blano, Tex.

The stories of the Mad River League, 12 in number, are contained in Nos. 472, 473, and 476 of the Medal, issued June 30, July 21, and August 11.

Weight is all right, chest several inches below standard, and waist too large. You should correct these discrepancies, friend.

1908—TIP TOP BASEBALL TOURNAMENT IS NOW OPEN.

The two teams which, at the end of the season, have the highest average—the members of which play the greatest number of games, score the most runs and have lost the least number of games, will be declared the winners. Of the two winning teams, the one having the higher average will be declared the TIP TOP CHAMPIONSHIP TEAM OF THE ALL-AMERICAN BASEBALL TOURNAMENT FOR 1908, and will receive a beautiful silk pennant bearing a suitable device. Each winning team will receive a full equipment, consisting of trousers, shirt, stockings, shoes and cap for nine members. Is this not worth working for, boys?

DON'T FAIL TO SEND IN YOUR COUPON AT ONCE.

No notice taken of any score not entered on this coupon. Coupons must be properly made out, one for each game.

1908—TIP TOP BASEBALL TOURNAMENT COUPON.

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WINNER | FINAL SCORE | MANAGER |
THE TIP TOP WEEKLY
ISSUED EVERY FRIDAY
HANDSOME COLORED COVERS

For the benefit of the boys who want to read back numbers of the TIP TOP WEEKLY, we give herewith a list of all titles now in print. Do not miss this opportunity to get your back numbers, boys, at five cents per copy. We invite particular attention to the later numbers, for Burt L. Standish has never written in better form at any time in his-entire career. TIP TOP stories are big value at five cents, so do not fail to recommend them to your friends.

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STREET & SMITH, Publishers, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York City.
# Numbers 1 to 328

## Tip Top Weekly

Are contained in the Medal Library

We know that there are thousands of boys who are very much interested in the early adventures of Frank Merriwell and who want to read everything that was written about him. We desire to inform these boys that numbers 1 to 328 are entirely out of print in the Tip Top Weekly, but they can be secured in the numbers of the Medal Library given below.

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