WHOOPING AND YELLING LIKE INDIANS, THE BUNCH CAME THUNDERING UP TO THE MESS WAGON.
Dick Merriwell in the Saddle

OR,

THE BUNCH FROM THE BAR Z.

By BURT L. STANDISH.

CHAPTER I.

THE COWPUNCHERS’ CAMP.

The day had been beastly hot, even for Southwestern Texas. It was but one, however, of a long succession of such days, treading on each other’s heels and baking the face of the great barren, gray, untimbered plains, sucking dry the streams, shriveling the springs, and causing even the rivers to dwindle to mere threads.

In such weather as this the herds of cattle feeding upon the tufted grama grass of these ranges suffered intensely from lack of water, and hundreds were certain to perish miserably of thirst. Around the infrequent water holes the range had been grazed bare for vast distances, which made it necessary for the cattle to travel far to feed. At night they might be seen in small bunches coming at a run to drink, and when they had quenched their thirst they set forth, again at a run, to return to the feeding grounds.

Many of these shrunk water holes became traps of death, for into their miry depths the thirsty cattle would plunge and wade, often becoming mired. Weakened as they were by thirst, it was no easy task for them to extricate themselves from the sucking mud, which seemed to have no solid bottom whatever. Now and then an unfortunate creature became stuck and was held fast in spite of its most desperate efforts. Its companions, who had also come to drink, would depart with usual haste and leave the lone beast to its fate. Lower and lower the creature must sink. In time only its head would remain above the surface, and eventually the smothering, choking mixture of earth and water, as thick as molasses, would close over the doomed animal.

To an Easterner or a person unaccustomed to the methods of life upon Texas ranges this loss of life and property always seems unnecessary and cruel; but the native Texan, the Southwestern rancher, will tell you that it is absolutely unavoidable. Nevertheless, it is the duty of the punchers and range riders to prevent as far as possible such catastrophes, and a great deal of time is spent in looking for mired cattle and rescuing them.

The sun, a ball of blazing fire, had sunk in the west when Jim, the cook with the Bar ‘Z’ mess wagon, saw the first three men of the outfit riding in his direction from the west at the head of a little trail of dust.
He knew the others would follow before long, and therefore, without looking for them further, he went on with preparations for supper.

They came in at intervals, nine of them in all, grim, dusty, silent men, each of whom possibly had covered some scores of miles since setting forth ere sunrise in the morning. They unsaddled their horses and watered the animals at the hole some distance from the wagon, afterward hobbling them and turning them loose to find such scant food as they could.

Cyclone Smith, foreman of the Bar Z, a small, insignificant-looking man with a faded, straw-colored mustache, had an eye for everything that transpired, although he wasted little breath in words. He listened quietly to the reports of those men, whom he had not seen since morning, nodding and frowning as he was pleased or otherwise by the statements they made.

Of all the number only one man seemed inclined to be voluble. He was a long, lanky, thin person, with the saddest and most dejected face imaginable. Upon his slightly rounded shoulders one might fancy there rested the woes of a nation, and his faded blue eyes forever seemed on the verge of yielding tears. This man was known upon the Bar Z by the nickname of Circus. It is true he had another name which he had given on making application for a job, but no one seemed to remember what it was. That he was not a cowpuncher he had sorrowfully confessed, but had added the information that he could ride anything having four legs, as he had spent some years of his life as an equestrian with circuses. Hence the nickname given him.

"Well, Circus?" said the foreman, as the woeful-appearing cowboy approached with a queer, limer-kneed, bobbing gait.

"Very well, indeed, thank ye kindly," said Circus.

"I don't think I ever before was enjoying such a salubrious and contagious superabundance of extravagant good health. The only thing that worries me is the emaciated state of my appetite."

Circus was a tremendous eater, always hungry and never able to get enough. As Bill Horn had expressed it, it was marvelous where Circus could stow all the grub he swallowed, "unless his legs were holler clean down to his feet."

"Report," ordered Smith curtly.

"Pulled three cows out of the mire, shot a wolf, rode my horse into a gopher hole, broke my swanlike neck in four distinct places, and—that's all."

"You saw no signs of rustlers?"

"Nary sign. It would give me an abnormal amount of satisfaction to report that I had collided with a bunch of eighteen or twenty rustling persons and scattered them around careless on the arid desert as provender for buzzards, but, being an excruciatingly truthful person, I can't say so."

With his other failings, Circus was known as one of the biggest liars on the range; but, having had one experience in falsifying to Cyclone Smith, he forever afterward clung fast to veracity when making his reports.

Smith grunted.

"This expedition doesn't seem to be doing much to earn its salt," he grumbled. "The old man knows we're losing cows regular, and it's pretty certain that that greaser Castro is depleting the Bar Z herds, though we can't seem to catch the critter at work. The only thing we've made right sure of is that less than half the cows we're losing are mired, or killed by wild animals. Every time we set out and look for Castro he seems to slip off the face of the earth, but he's back again at his blamed work the minute we settle down and go about our regular peaceful duties."

"Just give me blamonge to go forth on the trail of Castro all by my vivacious lonesome," said Circus, "and I'll agree to bring you his scalp for a door mat inside of two weeks. I'll be pragmatically swizzled if I won't get him if I have to run him a sprint all the way down to Chihuahua. Ever hear the hair-marcelling tale about how I roped and landed the chief mourner of that bunch of train robbers who held up the Northern Pacific Express at Cross Bar in ninety-seven?"

"Forget it, Circus," said Smith curtly. "If you've got to keep your vivid imagination in running order, practice on some one else.

"Excuse me," murmured Circus mournfully. "For a man who loves the naked, unadulterated truth more than life itself, I've certainly acquired a most obnoxious reputation. It has caused me unmitigated misery and woe, although you'd never suspect it to gaze on my beaming countenance."

"Grub pile, grub pile," sounded the voice of the cook.

In short order those nine men gathered in a circle to eat beans, bacon, and corn bread and drink black, unskimmed coffee. Circus was on hand with his usual promptness, and ere any of the others had obtained a mouthful he was shoveling the food away at a rate which would have awed a stranger.

"Your appetite," observed Bill Horn, with an intonation of sympathy, "seems to be some delicate, as usual, Circus. It's always been a problem to me to un-
derstand how you manage to exist on such humming-
bird morsels of meals."

"I think I'm doing slightly better than I was," mumbled the thin man between mouthfuls. "Still, at the first opportunity I propose to consult some prominent physician in view of obtaining a tonic that may enable me to eat a rational amount of grub. Once on a time I did have a fairly satisfactory appetite. I remember one occasion when on a wager I cleaned out a bakeshop, eating fifty-three loaves of bread, forty-nine loaves of cake, one hundred and eleven assorted pies, and some three or four bushels of crullers, not to mention the various little knickknacks which I absorbed on the side — the inside, I mean, of course. That was when I was traveling with Balem & Barney's Circus, and I carelessly missed a couple of previous meals."

"Keep him talking, Horn," grunted a cowboy named Turner, "and maybe the rest of us will be able to get half enough to eat."

"Ah, ha!" breathed Circus. "I diagnose your per-idious design. You shall be diabolically foiled. Jim, fill her up again."

He passed his emptied tin plate to the weary-looking cook, who simply shook his head and groaned as he loaded the dish with another supply of beans and bacon.

"Tell us, Circus," invited Turner sweetly, "about that time you traveled with Kerman, the magician, and put him to shame one night by pulling a zebra, a giraffe, and a cinnamon bear out of the small talk silk hat from which he had lately been producing rabbits for the mystification of the audience."

"Not at present, Turner—not if I have fathomed my own sagacity. Just now I'm too busy trying to get enough of this grub to fill the hollers in my back teeth. By and by, if you still yearn with an unquenchable yearning for that voracious little reminiscence, I'll take pleasure in reeling it off for you with all the side dishes and decorations and fancy flourishes that properly should be appended to it."

"If you tell that romance again," snapped Squinty, a little red-headed chap with puckered eyes and a fiery temper, "I sure am going to forget myself and shoot you up some. I've heard the story twenty-three times already, and I judge that's the limit. You've never yet succeeded in telling it twice alike, but even the variations have become a plenty monotonous to me."

"Alas and alack!" sighed Circus. "Some persons are propitiated into this world with a most unfortunate distaste for a real good story. Squinty, I wouldn't have your temperament dispositions for all the wealth of my old-time bosom friend, John D."

"You don't have to have it," snapped Squinty. "I was some afraid when we started out that we was going to be burdened with the old man's son and that tenderfoot chum of his, which would have made it too much for human endurance, taking you into consideration likewise."

"And I," said Bill Horn, "was some disappointed that the youngsters didn't come along with us. Brad sure is no tenderfoot, and it might have been right good sport initiating his school pards into real life on the range. I 'low, however, that he'd get some tired and quit before this."

"Perhaps not, Bill," said the foreman. "You know I met up with that boy Merriwell the time I traveled East with Brad when he went to college. The boy is a good fighter with plenty of sand in his craw, and I've a notion he could stand up and take his medicine with the rest of this bunch."

Horn shook his head.

"He's a heap too tender and fresh, though he lands at the ranch minus a b'iled shirt and wearing plain puncher clothes. I 'low it was Brad who put him wise to that."

"I haven't any use for kids on the range," declared Squinty, as he finished eating and produced his pipe. "They're always underfoot and bothering, and you have to look out for them like they was babies. Of course the old man's son brought that chap on to show him a good time, and——"

"We'd showed him if he'd come along with us," grunted Horn. "Greenhorns from the East always 'low we don't have anything but a good time punching cows. The stories them fellers write for magazines is mainly responsible for such an erroneous opinion."

"Still," said Squinty, "I notice you always grab for the magazines what print such stories. They seem to interest you a heap."

"I 'low I read 'em just to see what sort of blunders the blame fool writers can make," nodded Horn. "They're some interesting in that respect."

"Hark!" said the foreman. "If I'm not mistaken, somebody is coming."

Through the twilight came the faint, far-away sound of horses' hoofs. This sound gradually grew more distinct.

Without a word those men rose, stepped back from the fire, and sought their weapons.

Suddenly a hail came floating to their ears. In the gathering darkness they saw two horsemen approaching. The manner in which the riders came on seemed
to betokened that they were not enemies, and Cyclone Smith answered that hale at once.

A few moments later two dusty youths drew rein in the circle of firelight and promptly dismounted.

"So help me," chuckled Bill Horn, "it's them same boys! Squinty, we've got 'em on our hands, after all."

CHAPTER II.

UNWELCOME RECRUITS.

Riding up, Brad Buckhart and Dick Merriwell dismounted, watched with a strange variety of emotions by the seemingly indifferent cowboys. Cyclone Smith advanced to meet them, observing that they had sprung something of a surprise on the outfit.

"Well, Cyclone," said Brad, "we got a-plenty tired of hanging around the ranch with nothing doing in particular, and so we decided to join this bunch, hoping there might be some amusement with the rustlers."

"Listen to that, Squinty," muttered Bill Horn. "They're thirsting for amusement, and they reckon mebbe they'll git some if we run up against the rustlers. I 'low perhaps the old man's son knows what he's talking about, but his tenderfoot chum doesn't understand what it means to get mixed up with a bunch of cow-stealing greasers."

"Oh, they make me sick!" growled Squinty. "Cyclone he 'lows the boss' son is all right, but I never did have any use for kids. They're always making no end of trouble and perplexity."

"You see," Brad was continuing, "my pard Merriwell wants a taste of real cowboy life, which I've long promised him he should have here on the Bar Z."

"He'd git all that was coming if I had my way," muttered Squinty.

"We've had a right long ride of it," said the Texan, "and we're a-plenty hungry. I see you've finished supper. That's too bad, for I reckoned on getting here in time to eat with you, and we're certainly near famished."

"That's most unfortunate," said Squinty, "for we've just up all the pie and cake and plum pudding and ice cream there was. You'll sure starve to death on what's left."

Brad gave the sour cowboy a look.

"Oh, I reckon not," he drawled. "If you've got any prairie-dog stew or fried jack rabbits just bring it out and watch us get busy."

"Prairie dogs are out of season," said Squinty, "and jack rabbits has been so shy we ain't adding any to our menu. Howsoever, mebbe Jim has got some o' that roast skunk left, though I presume it might not agree with the delicate stomach and pampered appetite of your friend."

"Oh, I don't know," smiled the rancher's son, un-ruffled. "I allow my partner will eat without complaint whatever the rest of the outfit eats."

"Sure," said Dick cheerfully, a slight twinkle in his dark eyes. "I'm not very fussy about my food. For breakfast I'm satisfied with oatmeal and cream, soft boiled eggs and percolated coffee. I seldom eat a great deal in the middle of the day. Give me a nice sirloin steak with brown gravy, Delmonicoed potatoes, asparagus tips on toast and a Tontonie salad of vegetables with French dressing and I can manage to get along. For supper I prefer almost anything in the cold-meat line, with a side dish of potato salad and a small triangle of custard pie."

"Whoop!" laughed Bill Horn, striding forward and giving the cook a slap on the shoulder. "There's your chance to show your culinary skill, Jim. This here," he explained, "is our chef, late of the Waldorf-Cas-toria, and what he can't provide in the way of delicacies it will bother you some to mention. Oatmeal and cream. Ha! ha! Fresh boiled eggs. Ho! ho! A nice thick steak with Delmonicoed potatoes, asparagus tips on toast and similar trimmings. He! he! That Tontonie salad sounds some good likewise. All you has to do, Jim, is step out here 'most anywhere and cull the vegetables. We keeps the larder stocked constant with an unnamable variety of cold meats, and the pies Jim can slap together will make your mouth water like a weeping spring."

"Let up, Horn," said the foreman. "Unfortunately, boys, we're down to bacon, canned beans, coffee, and hard-tack just now."

"Well, I allow that sort of fare will have to do for us," smiled Buckhart. "Perhaps Merriwell can manage to subsist on it."

"He'll have to," muttered Squinty.

And so, with the moon just beginning to peep in the east, the cook opened another can of beans, sliced more bacon and prepared to satisfy the appetite of the new arrivals.

There was a sudden commotion among the horses, kicking, squealing, and signs of general disturbance.

"Thar goes that devilish cayuse of yours again,
Squinty," said Turner. "If I was in your place, I'd get some hobbles that would hold him a while."

"Didn't hobble the critter to-night," said Squinty; "picketed him. I 'low he's managed to pull the picket pin loose somehow. Now that'll be blazes to catch him. Lemme take your pony, Turner."

"I suppose I'll have to, though my horse has been rid hard enough for one day."

"Pard," said Brad, "Squinty's horse has got loose. The critter has a pernicious habit of raising hob with the other ponies of the outfit whenever he gets a chance. I allow the boys are all a-plenty tired after a hard day. Why don't you go catch and picket that horse?"

"All right," said Dick promptly, "I'll do it."

"Hold on," objected Squinty. "You couldn't capture Beelzebub in a year of trying. Thar ain't a man in the bunch, 'cept me, that can do it, and I'm the only person what's ever straddled him successfully. He killed Larry Dikes, the broncho buster, when Larry attempted to break him."

"He must be a very vicious animal," said Dick. "Still, if you're willing, I'll let you rest while I go out and get Beelzebub."

"Go ahead, pard," urged Brad, "and hurry some, for things will be piping hot and ready to eat by the time you finish the job."

"I judge they will," sneered Squinty; "but if Jim continues that fire to keep 'em hot until he ropes Beelzebub, he'll run it constant for the next few months."

"We'll see," said Dick, as he mounted his horse and rode off, removing the coiled rope from the saddle horn.

"I washes my hands of all responsibility," said Squinty. "I reckon, however, he won't get within rods of Beelzebub. Should he do so, nevertheless, I want it distinctly understood that I raised objections, for I don't want to be considered the cause of his demise. Permit me to inquire, Brad, how it comes that you're so mighty anxious to attend the funeral of your friend?"

Buckhart laughed.

"As long as he had such an overweening desire to have a taste of real cowpuncher life," he said, "I thought he might as well begin without delay. I'm not much worried over any serious harm coming to him."

"Well, mebbe there ain't no particular reason to worry," admitted Squinty, "for I opine he will chase the cauryse all over El Paso County without getting within comfortable roping distance, unless Beelzebub becomes wearied and starts in to kick the packing out o' him and his pony."

CHAPTER III.

A SURPRISE FOR SQUINTY.

"Tell you what," said Brad, "I'm willing to bet something that my pard ropes Beelzebub. Furthermore, I'll take a chance on it that he can ride the cayuse, too."

At this Squinty laughed derisively.

"Though you was raised in Texas," he said, "your recent experience in the East has certain plumb spoiled your judgment. If that's a man living 'cept myself what can ride Beelzebub, I'll make him a present o' the critter. Not being the foreman of this bunch, I feel that I'm absolved, no matter what happens; but I didn't judge Cyclone would allow the greeny to take such chances."

"You needn't disturb yourself on my account, Squinty," said Smith. "If Brad saw fit to let the boy try it, I fail to understand why I should interfere."

They watched Dick ride away toward the horses, where the commotion still continued. The moon had lifted clear of the horizon and was flooding the plain with white light, which was sufficient to enable them to take note of the course of events for the present.

Squinty's horse continued its pestering manœuvres among the others until Dick Merriwell was close at hand. Then, of a sudden, the animal wheeled out from the rest, cut a half circle in front of the approaching youth, flung its heels in the air with a shrill squeal of defiance, and made off.

Merriwell set out in pursuit at a sharp canter.

"Good-by," said Squinty, striking a match and relighting his pipe. "You'll have a nice little ride of it, and mebbe we'll next hear of you down in Mexico somewhere."

With which remark he seated himself indifferently upon the ground, although the others continued to watch until the figures of the fleeting horse and mounted pursuer became dim and hazy and melted into the dull gray distance.

"It certain was foolish," agreed Turner. "Why, the boy's liable to get lost, in which case he'll be pretty sure to croak for want of water, which is a heap scarce about now."

The cowboys continued to wonder that their foreman had permitted such a foolish piece of business, but Cyclone Smith showed his unconcern by talking quietly with Brad concerning other matters.

Perhaps half an hour had passed, during which time Jim had once or twice observed that the rancher's son would take supper alone that night, when some one of
the party declared he could hear the sound of hoofs. This caused them all to look around in search of the cause, and after a time they discovered, far off in the moonlight, just pitching over a slight swell, what seemed to be two moving figures.

"I opine," said Bill Horn, "that Beelzebub has doubled on the youngster and is coming back this way."
"Which, I presume," said Squinty, "is what Cyclone counted on and therefore is none disturbed."

It was not long before those moving figures again rose into view in the moonlight, and then, as the men watched, they perceived that the leader was a mounted man, coming at a furious pace, with an unmounted pony following him.

"Well, now," drawled Horn, with an intonation of surprise, as he slowly scratched his head, "it begins to look like Beelzebub was a-driving the youngster back this yere way some lively."

"Either that," observed Smith gently, "or the youngster is hicking this way with Beelzebub in tow."
"Not any," cried Squinty. "Don’t you believe it for a second. I judge Bill has got it correct. My pony he become some tired of being chased, and so he turns round and plays chaser."

This idea filled the little cowboy with untold delight, causing him to chuckle and slap his thigh repeatedly.

The clatter of hoofs grew more and more distinct. On and on came the horseman, followed by the unridden pony. Through the night floated a shrill, sharp yell, which seemed vibrant with an intonation of satisfaction and triumph.

"He’s certain coming hillwhooping," observed Turner.
"And I’m still ready to wager something on his performance," said Brad. "I’ll bet he’s caught Beelzebub and is bringing the critter in."

"It would be like taking candy from the baby to bet with you," declared Squinty.
"Look out!" roared Horn. "Unless he sheers some, he’s coming straight through here like a norther. Look out for your coffeepot, Jim."

The cook caught up the coffeepot from the coals and sprang back behind the mess wagon. Right and left scattered the cowboys as the wild rider headed straight for the camp fire.

Then some one yelled:
"By the everlasting, he’s riding Beelzebub!"
Squinty seemed paralyzed with amazement and incredulity. He stood like one benumbed, seeing the boy clinging fast to the unsaddled back of Beelzebub and hearing his triumphant yells. The other pony, with saddle empty and bridle rein swinging loose, slackened and turned aside ere the camp was reached, joining the hobbled horses and falling to grazing.

Straight through the camp tore Beelzebub, leaping the smouldering camp fire and continuing onward to the north with a long trailing end of rope whipping the air behind him.

"Well, what do you think of that?" bellowed Bill Horn, cracking Squinty a slap on the back. "I thought you stated that nobody could ride that caustic except yourself?"

"Yah!" rasped the astonished little cowboy. "I don’t know how he ever straddled the critter, but I’ll wager he gits off with a broken neck."

"Look! look!" urged Turner. "The boy is sure handling that horse."

Although the moonlight was not sufficiently clear for them to perceive just what the daring rider was doing, one and all they were aware that something further of a most unexpected nature was taking place. They saw Beelzebub swerve and turn to the left, and perceived that the Centaur-like rider was busy with his hands.

Three times Dick Merriwell circled the camp on the back of that horse. Then he headed the animal toward the mess wagon and came cantering up, leaping to the ground with one hand fastened upon Beelzebub’s nostrils in such a manner that the creature’s wind was practically shut off.

"Here," he cried, with a snapping flint of his hand—"here’s your horse."

That snapping movement sent the end of the rope flying in Squinty’s direction. The cowboy caught it, whistling shrilly through his teeth, a signal which the captured broncho seemed to understand.

"Gents," said Circus, "this yere performance reminds me of the time I was a-doing horseback riding with Skinner & Fakemore. Many’s the time I’ve circumnavigated the sawdust ring standing proudly erect upon the backs of eight fiery, untamed Arabian steeds. I’ll tell you how it happened I got into that business, for it’s a fascinating, interesting, and tumultuously thrilling tale."

"Shut up!" commanded Turner. "This yere beats any circus performance on record. Squinty, I opine you’ve been bluffing us all about the dangerous character of that thar caustic of yourn. It pears to me the critter is as tame as a Maltese kitten."

"Pard," smiled Buckhart, "I’ve been waiting for you some to partake of this sumptuous repast. You were
longer about bringing in that pony than I 'lowed
you'd be."

"The animal was rather shy and obstinate," said
Dick; "but I found him extremely gentle and tractable
after he felt my rope."

Bill Horn burst into a roar of laughter.

"Gents," he cried, "it's my judgment that this yere
tenderfoot ain't nigh as tender as we took him to be."

---

CHAPTER IV.

THE OLD CIRCUS MAN.

"What are you going to do now with your horse,
Squinty?" drawled Bill Horn, as the little cowboy sulk-
ily returned after caring for his captured pony. "You
know you said you'd give the critter to anybody what
could ride him."

"That's right," said Buckhart, looking up from his
plate of beans and bacon, "According to your own pro-
posal, the horse belongs to my partner now."

"In that case," said Dick, who was not displaying
any daintiness over his plate of food, "I'll have to de-
cline to accept, for the pony isn't spirited enough to
suit me."

And Squinty was the only one on whose ears these
words fell who did not chuckle or laugh outright.

"It's my judgment," muttered Turner in the ear of
Jim, the cook, "that the tenderfoot will do."

"It's mine," returned Jim under his breath, "that he
ain't no tenderfoot whatsoever."

It was plain that both the boys relished the plain
food and thick coffee. True, Merrivell seldom drank
coffee, but on this occasion he disposed of a brimming
dipperful. Despite his recent performance, there was
nothing of swagger and braggadocio in Dick's manner.
Indeed, he was quiet and reserved, and Bill Horn ad-
mitted that the youngster's style was "a-plenty satis-
factory."

With their appetites satisfied, the two lads sat listen-
ing to the desultory conversation of the cowboys.
Later on they were given blankets and told to pick their
beds anywhere they pleased in the whole of outdoors.

Circus, longing for some one to whom he could talk,
diplomatically joined the boys.

"It has been many a long and weary season since I've
last seen anything in the way of a surprise party like
this," he observed. "It reminds me of old days. It
reminds me of the time when I towered the country
with Skinner & Fakemore's mammoth circus and colos-
sal aggregation of wild beasts of the jungle. It makes
me recall with fluttering convolutions of the chest those
days when I used to ride the circus trick mule. You
know the game. The ringmaster cracks his whip and
the little mule prances around the ring and kicks up his
heels. Then the ringmaster announces that the mule is
a most vicious and dangerous beast and offers a re-
ward to any one who will ride him. One of the bare-
back performers tries it and is bucked off. The clown
prances out, and the mule chases him from the ring.

"At that stage of the game I always made my ap-
pearance. I was inevitably seated among the spec-
tators, dressed as a Reuben from the back pastures of
Joshua County. I had on overalls, long-legged boots,
an old cotton shirt, and a straw hat with a hole in it.
I was always chewing a straw. I used to rise up and
announce that I was a candidate for that reward
money, by gum! Then I'd climb down over the heads
and shoulders of the spectators, fall sprawling, and get
up and stagger into the ring as if carrying a cargo suf-
ficient to swamp the Lucania. Of course, the ring-
master objected. Of course, he warned me, and de-
clined to take any responsibility.

"Meanwhile the mule, with a vicious look in his left
optic, waited patiently for me to get near enough to
have my brains kicked out. When I reeled gracefully
onto the sawdust, that little beast promptly proceeded
to come after me. Then I'd squeal with terror and
take flight round the ring, with the mule reaching for
me with his well-manicured front teeth. The audience
always howled with delight over the spectacle. The
ringmaster always cracked his whip at the mule and
shouted in a pretense of driving the creature away and
saving my life. Eventually I would gracefully catch
the toe of my right foot behind my left ankle, and do
a parabola stunt on my ear. The mule used to reach
down and get me by the seat of my trousers, which
were reinforced by a leather patch, and shake me like
a bartender shaking up a cracked-ice cooler for a thirsty
patron. When he dropped me, I would scramble out
of the ring on all fours, and the crowd never failed
to howl itself into bronchitis.

"But that wasn't the end of it, you know. I was
mad—oh, yes, I was so blazing mad that I was vio-
antly vexed. I used to shake my fist at the mule and
vow vengeance, while the ringmaster excitedly urged
me to hasten my escape. Three or four times I'd at-
tempt to get back into the ring, with the mule always
waiting for me, and then I'd fall and roll down al-
most under the animal's feet. While the mule, trained
for the purpose, seemed to be trying to walk all over me, I'd crawl to my pins, project myself suddenly upon its back, with my head toward its tail, lock my feet around its neck, grab my arms around its body, and away we'd go once more. This time, of course, I rode the mule with supercilious success, or words to that effect.

"Oh, those were salubrious days! Alas! they have gone to return no more. Pardon me while I brush a pearly teardrop from my eye with this ten-dollar silk handkerchief—ten dollars a gross."

By this time Dick had discovered that Circus was an interesting character, and straightway he went about drawing the man out. There was no need of this, however, for, given a single attentive lister, the lanky, sad-faced puncher would talk until his vocal cords were paralyzed.

"How did you happen to get into the cowpunching business?"

"Ah, it is only one of the numerous and unnamable vocations into which I have ventured since the good old palm-y days of the road circus. I've tried my 'prentice hand at almost everything, and made a noble failure of everything I've tried."

"What's your name, if you have no objections to giving it? I trust you will understand that I don't mean to be offensively inquisitive."

"Fear not that I should misunderstand you, my boy. These men call me Circus, but that is only one of the many cognomens I've borne in my adventurous career. On the record books of Dusenberry, my natal village, I am recorded as Ebenezer Q. Duck. What the Q stands for I never learned even from my thoughtless parents. There was a time, however, that I was known as Signor Dorando, the great bareback rider."

"Then you've really done bareback riding with a circus?"

"Ay, ay, even so. I have astonished and appalled gaping multitudes by gracefully posing on one toe, planted near the roots of a madly galloping horse's tail. I have ridden eight horses abreast, proudly decorated in pink tights and glittering golden spangles—that is, myself, not the horses. I've heard the delicious plaudits of innumerable throngs, yet I must confess that of my own natural skill I never could ride a circus horse ten feet, and stand upon its back without constant danger of arising directly with a broken vertebrae, from the ground. It is perchance an interesting tale of how I came to do this stunt. Wouldst hear it? Then listen while I navigate—I mean narrate."

CHAPTER V.

THE EQUILIBRUM BELT.

"I joined my first circus as a canvas man. That is, it was my duty, along with other poor devils, to pitch the tents, take them down, pack them, and care for them in transportation. It was beyond question a life suitable for a yaller dog, but not for a human being. Still, the fascination of the circus had always thrilled me and lured me, and, once it got its grasp upon me, I never was able wholly to shake it.

"From the first it was my fixed, set, undying design to become a pyrotechnic performer upon an ebullient equine in the sawdust ring. I remember myself, even as a tender, innocent kid, with a handkerchief-neglected nose, standing awe-struck before a gaudy-colored billboard circus poster, representing a daring gent poised upon the pet corn of his big toe, which barely touched the back of a wildly galloping, coal-black horse, and vowing unto myself that some day I would do that same stunt. The pictures of supple gentlemen and ladies projecting themselves through burning hoops always thrilled me to the marrow of my being. I even admired with unfathomable enthusiasm those careless persons who were pictured clinging by their eyebrows to swinging trapezes hundreds of feet in the air. To me such a career had far more allurements than that of the greatest statesman who ever rose from rail-splitting obscurity and was swept upon the tidal wave of popular political approbation through the welcome, yawning doors of the White House. It may have been a defect in my mental mechanism which made me have such queer thunks; but, alas! had I been given my choice, I would have selected the life of a circus star in preference to warming my lateral regions upon a Presidential chair or the throne of a king.

"Hence, having spilled myself fast to a real circus, I began to look forward to the time when I could acquire the necessary skill to become a performer in the ring, and on every occasion when opportunity offered I sought to practice bareback riding. Boys, I tell you with the utmost concern that it is one of the marvels of modern times that, considering the feats I valiantly attempted, I was not soon tucked gently away beneath the blooming daisies. It is unspeakably wonderful that I did not issue from some of those attempts with a compound fracture of my spinal column, somewhere between the roots of my hair and the level of my shoulder blades. A hundred times, at least, I was dropped to meet the cold, firm, unresponsive earth, which seemed to rise with shocking violence and smite me
hip and thigh. At one time I had so many bruises scattered over my exterior anatomy, that, happening to see me stripped to the waist, the side-show manager offered to put me on exhibition as the tattooed man.

"Alas! for my imperishable ambition, I never could seem to get the knack of riding upon a circus horse, either standing on my feet or my head. Of all insecure, slippery, treacherous things, the back of a galloping circus horse is certainly the most treacherous.

"My bump of obstinacy, developed by several concussions in that locality acquired by falling from these insecure equines, kept me at it with pertinacious persistence until I became the standing joke and jest of the entire circus, from the pink-lemonade man up to Signor Dorando, the most marvelous of bareback riders. They joshed me on every and all occasions. Dozens of times each per annum day they would inquire if the manager had not engaged me as one of the starring performers. They applied to me the obnoxious nickname of Signor Tumbleheels. They pierced me to my quivering heart with the derisive finger of scorn. But the more they rubbed it in, the deeper became my determination to conquer.

"Now, although I may not betray it by my outward seeming, I am naturally of a scientific and inventive turn of mind. Doubtless, had I given my attention to matters of science and invention, I would to-day be famous all over the terrestrial globe as a man of mighty intellect and acumen. I presume beyond question that my ambition to become a circus performer robbed the world of one who would have readily put Tom Edison to shame.

"In those days electricity was a force far more unfathomed than at present. Magnetic attraction was a deep and yawning problem. Nevertheless, I had learned a few things concerning it, and one day, while meditating upon some method of acquiring the skill I so ardently desired, I was smitten, smitten, or smitten by a hilarious, happy thought. It dawned upon me like a flash of calcium light that electricity might be employed to preserve the equilibrium of one who found himself unstable upon insecure or swiftly moving bodies. Straightway I set at work manufacturing a magnetized belt of steel links. At this task I worked whenever I could find a spare moment, and eventually the feat was accomplished.

"In spite of my marvelous genius in electrical matters, I will confess that I have a most obscure knowledge of technical terms, yet this matter may become somewhat plainer to you when I explain that the opposing links of that belt were polarized and depolarized. That is to say, those links were alternately electro positive and electro negative. In this manner I obtained the most perfect conservation of force known. The buckle of the belt was carefully constructed, like a miniature combination lock, to which there was no key, but which could not be opened unless the manipulator knew the combination. I was working upon the diametrical convulsant theory that such a belt would produce and maintain perfect equilibrium in whatever upright body it horizontally encircled.

"One night I found an opportunity to test my theory upon the centre pole of the tent. The performance being over, I, with others, set to work to pull down the tent, preparatory to moving on to the next town. The pole near its foot was about the size of my own waist. At this point a fold of canvas was wrapped about it for some purpose of which I do not now remember the nature. Getting a good chance and making sure that I was not observed, I buckled my equilibrium belt around the pole and pulled the canvas down over it so it could not be perceived. Then I awaited developments.

"Gents, what followed astounded every beholder, with the possible exception of myself, whom it filled with unspeakable triumph and magnanimous elation. When the canvas had been stripped down and the pole was left standing, with only the long guy ropes to hold it in place, we canvas men got into position to lower it after the usual custom. The ropes on one side were loosened in order that it might lean in that direction, while a dozen brawny fellows held fast to the ropes upon the opposite side; but, as I am naturally a truthful man, that pole declined to lean. She wouldn't even quiver.

"After a time the foreman gave orders that some of us should pull her over and get her started, while the others held fast at the opposite extreme and lowered her. We pulled according to instructions, and it took considerable strength to drag her out of a perpendicular, upright position. Even then she refused to fall, and we had to keep on pulling. But what was the most astounding was the fact that the nearer we drew her tosmost end down to earth the harder we had to pull. Before long the entire crew was over on one side pulling and straining with every ounce of strength to lay that pole prostrate, while the foreman was dancing and cursing a blue streak, with his eyes bulging out like glass doorknobs. It must have appeared to everybody that the centre pole was everlastingly bewitched.

"But wait—wait and you shall hear the most marvelous and astounding marvel of all. Even when we
had finally succeeded in dragging that pole prostrate upon terra firma, it was persistently disinclined to remain in that position, striving with concentrated determination to rise again and stand upright. It was necessary for six or eight of the heaviest men to get astride the thing and hold it down. In a moment of carelessness, all these men except two stepped off and relaxed their holds somewhat. Immediately the air was rent in tatters by wild yells of terror. The pole was seen to rise suddenly, carrying those two unfortunate victims clinging to its topmost tip. Gracefully its upper end rose until it pointed straight at the zenith. Fortunately, the men who had clung to it did not relax their holds, and were able to slip down to the ground, one after the other, where they arrived totally unharmed, but with every hair standing vigorously upon its hind legs.

"The foreman danced and frothed and filled me with terror, for I apprehended that he was about to have a hemorrhage, and I did not wish to be responsible for his sudden demise. That the devil had got into the pole every one seemed to believe. Never before in the history of the world had a circus pole behaved in such a scandalous, unmanageable manner. I knew, however, that my theory was demonstrated and proved a success, and in the midst of the excitement I slipped forward to the pole, reached beneath the shielding canvas which hid my equilibrium belt, manipulated the combination, and removed the marvelous invention.

" Barely had I accomplished my surreptitious purpose when that pole started to fall. Down she came, causing every one to utter yells of warning and take flight. I dodged away, secreting the belt upon my person as I did so, and a moment later our centre pole lay prone upon the ground, broken and splintered. You see, the instant I removed the belt the force of equilibrium was destroyed and the pole fell."

"Marvelous, indeed," grunted Buckhart.

"Go on," laughed Dick. "You started in to tell how you became a bareback performer."

"It gives me almost sacrilegious gratitude to note that my truthful tale has been received with attention and without the usual scornful derision," murmured Ebenezer Duck. "It encourages me to continue unto the final end.

"Of course, we had to procure another centre pole for the main tent, and for some days thereafter the astonishing performance of the original pole was the main theme of conversational converse. No one understood it, which, as you must know, was not at all surprising. I kept my secret and hugged my equili-
ground. Then away I went cantering up the incline of the rope over the top of the big tent toward the point from which the centre pole extended. Reaching that point, I turned back and came sliding down the incline. Finally, midway between the two points from which the rope was extended, I sought to duplicate the usual stunts of Mademoiselle Aerial, throwing in a few graceful little variations and decotions of my own.

“When I had completed the exhibition to my entire satisfaction, I returned to the starting point and swung myself down to the ground, where I was received with open arms by the manager and proprietor, both of whom fell on my bosom and shed tears of joy, for already crushing throngs were crowding and fighting around the ticket seller's wagon, each man apparently afraid the tickets would give out before he could buy one.

“I had saved the day, and henceforth for a time my lot was to fall in pleasant places. No longer was I to sweat and labor and be cussed around with the rest of the canvas men. I had Mademoiselle Aerial skinned an ocean league in the tight-rope performance, and for some weeks thereafter we appeared together in concert, doing that little outdoor turn for the admiration of the populace. My salary was raised from six dollars a week to sixty, and I began to feel that I was on the highroad to perspicacious prosperity.”

“But,” said Dick, as the narrator paused again, “you have not yet told us how you came to get into bareback riding.”

“Pardon, my impatient young friend. I am coming to that. One day Signor Dorando missed his cue, fell from the back of his horse and fractured his interior organism to such an extent that he set forth for a voyage into unknown regions within the hour. As he was one of our chief advertised performers, his carelessness cast a pall of gloom over every one and threw the manager into such a state of depression that he forgot himself and took seventeen drinks within the brief space of a passing hour. As he usually required only ten drinks in sixty minutes to keep him salubriously elevated, the effect of the extra seven was pernicious. Without exaggeration, I may say that he was slightly intoxicated. I found him weeping and bemoming his luck while the boys were pulling down the tents and preparing to hoist anchor and set sail for the next town.

“Straightway I gallantly came to his rescue. I offered for a hundred dollars a week additional to go on as Signor Dorando and duplicate his marvelous equestrian feats. Had the manager been perfectly sober, I doubt if he would have taken any stock in my ability to make good. In his mellow condition he accepted my terms without faltering.

“At the afternoon performance of the following day, when the ringmaster announced Signor Dorando, I came forth from the dressing tent upon the back of a proudly prancing horse. Once around the ring I rode, sitting astride, then I jumped to my feet and stood upright. I rode poised upon one toe. I rode in all sorts of impossible ways. I rode guiding eight horses and leaping from one to the other without once slipping a cog. Nothing Dorando had ever done feazed me in the least, and the thunderous applause of the congregated people was like sweetest music to my ears. From the humble, mocked, and derided Tumbleheels, I had risen to be the star of the circus.

“But, alas, for human failings! Even though my companions among the performers pretended the greatest admiration, I was aware that many of them were filled with the most rankerous jealousy. I came to know that they were plotting and conspiring against me. I became aware of the fact that I was constantly watched and spied upon.

“One day as I was dressing, Fenelon, the trapeze man, known as the Human Bird, picked up my belt and attempted to buckle it about his body. I snatched it from him with a cry of anger, and we exchanged a few acrimonious words. Henceforth Fenelon seemed to suspect that in some degree the cause of my success lay in that belt. Again and again he tried to get possession of it. I had to guard it night and day.

“One day I saw him peering from behind some curtains and watching me as I worked the combination, and removed the belt after my regular performance. A little later I changed the combination, although it now seems a piece of folly that I did so. It proved a frightful disaster. Upon the following day I donned the belt as usual, but when I came to remove it, I found that I had forgotten the new combination. I couldn't take the thing off. I worked over it a long time, and finally gave it up.

“Now comes the sad and harrowing part of my narrative. As long as I wore that belt I had to remain in an upright position. I couldn't lie down. If I tried to do so, the belt promptly jerked me back in an upright attitude. Imagine my predicament if you can. In due time I became weary and wished to sleep, but it was impossible for me to recline for the purpose of slumber. For seven dreadful days I wore that belt.
constantly, and I was compelled to do my sleeping standing up.

"The horror of it got on my nerves, and at last I began to realize that my mind was giving way before the cantuminous strain. I had fallen to talking to myself, and at times I caught myself laughing in a manner that made me sudder and turned my blood cold. My companions grew afraid of me and kept away. This angered me and made me long to rend them limb from limb. I nearly throttled the proprietor when he came round and suggested that I should have the attendance of a physician. I knew if the thing kept up much longer that I would commit a terrible crime, and therefore I resolved to get that belt off, somehow. The work was finally accomplished with the aid of a file. In that manner I cut through the thinnest point of a steel link and fell prostrate and exhausted the moment the job was done. I slept right where I fell until they aroused me in a decidedly violent manner.

"The next day I spliced the belt with stout wire when it came time for me to adjust it in order to go forth upon the tight rope with Mademoiselle Aeriel. But alas! I filing it apart in that manner, I had somehow destroyed the magnetic qualities which it possessed. When I lifted myself to the tight rope I had no mystic force to sustain me and maintain my equilibrium. I did not take three steps before I lost my balance and fell. They picked me up with a broken collar bone and three badly damaged ribs. For a long time I lay in the hospital, while the circus went on its route without me.

"When I had thoroughly recovered, I once more set about the work to restore that belt, but I was unable to accomplish the task. In my original invention I had united certain forces of which, I presume, I really knew very little, and never again was I able to bring them into cohesive action. Since then I've made two hundred and thirty-seven equilibrium belts, but not a darned one of them would equilib. Perchance you have wondered at the look of sadness and sorrow and deep disappointment which sits enthroned on my chastened, classic countenance. If so, you will now understand its cause."

With a sigh, Ebenezer Q. Duck rolled over upon his back and lay gazing mournfully at the twinkling stars.

CHAPTER VI.

THE SUSPECTED MAN.

Brad was laughing heartily as the foreman approached.

"I presume," said the latter, "that Circus has been entertaining you with one of his stretches of imagination."

Duck sat up, giving Smith a sad look of disapprobation.

"It's my misfortune," he murmured dolefully, "to have fallen among calloused and unsympathetic men, whose mundane minds are too narrow to accept the barest and most unvarnished of my reminiscences as truthful. Their doubts have added to the load of sorrow which fate hath cast upon my shoulders. Speaking of the past has filled me with such painful memories and regrets that I would retire by myself and meditate in solitude."

Saying which, he lifted himself slowly to his feet and sauntered away.

"An odd character, Cyclone," said Dick. "He certainly is the possessor of a lurid imagination, but I should think the men would find amusement listening to him."

"They get tired of it," said the foreman. "I presume it must be more or less interesting for strangers. If you'd let him, he'd talk you to death. I thought you might be tired and wish to get a little sleep, so I butted in."

Already nearly all the cowboys had rolled themselves in their blankets.

"We shall be moving early in the morning," said Smith. "Do you want to go out with the bunch, boys?"

"Sure," answered Buckhart; "that's why we're here."

"All right. Some of the men will take turns guarding the camp. We're too strong for the rustlers to bother us, so you can rest easy. Good night."

For some time after that Brad and Dick lay there talking in low tones. The stentorian breathing of the sleepers came to their ears. Occasionally far off in the night some prowling wild creature sent forth its cry. The heat, which had been so oppressive during the day, became tempered somewhat by a breeze.

"You've always mixed me up more or less concerning the locality of the Bar Z, Brad," said Dick.

"How was that?"

"Well, at times you talked about the Panhandle country, and at other times you called yourself the Unbranded Maverick of the Pecos. I find now that the Bar Z is situated between the Pecos and the Rio Grande, and the Panhandle is hundreds of miles away."

The Texan chuckled.

"You shouldn't mind such little things, pard," he
said. "When I spoke of the Panhandle country I meant all Texas, of course. Out here four or five hundred miles is not much of a distance, after all. Calling myself the Unbranded Maverick of the Pecos was simply a little whim. It sounded good to me, and so when those chaps at school thought I ought to swagger and blow off steam considerable, I invented that expression to satisfy them. I presume we were a somewhat unwelcome addition to this bunch. I knew the aversion of the punchers to tenderfeet, especially on an expedition of this sort, and that's why I was anxious for you to show right away that you weren't as tender as they fancied. You've got the fastest horse on the Bar Z, and so I knew you could run down Squinty's, Beelzebub. I chanced it that you would be able to rope the pony and bring it back, but I hardly expected you to ride the critter in such a hurry."

"The horse wasn't as bad as I expected," said Dick. "I had to throw it twice. The second time it was sensible enough not to try further tricks. Evidently the creature knows what it means to be roped."

"I reckon you've made an enemy of Squinty. Preston at the ranch is some suspicious of that gent, and that's why he wanted me to tell Cyclone Smith to keep an eye on Squinty."

"You haven't told Smith."

"Not yet, but soon. There's no use bothering him about it to-night, and to-morrow I'll find an opportunity to hand him a little conversation on the q. t. As far as I can find out, this man Squinty is a first-class puncher, but unpopular. You can understand how that happens, having seen something of him."

"Preston may be prejudiced."

"Just what I've thought myself, pard. Squinty is a comparatively new man on the Bar Z, having been with us less than three months. In that brief time, nevertheless, he has succeeded in getting himself generally disliked. Still, he does his work, and appears faithful and loyal. Even Preston could not tell just why he was suspicious of the man nor just what he suspected. It may be that Preston is jealous.""Jealous?"

"Yes."

"Why should he be jealous?"

"I am told that when Squinty came to the Bar Z, one of our men, a Mexican by the name of Manuel Lopez, was living there with his daughter, Anita. Anita, although only fourteen, was a little witch of a girl, and she had half the bunch crazy over her, Preston in particular. Every time she looked at a man with her dark eyes the gent had heart disease. She looked at Squinty a few times, and he went plumb mad. Got to chasing her around promiscuous, and she became afraid of him. Then Lopez mixes in some and invites Squinty, vigorous and energetic, to keep away from Anita. There were indications which pointed to a clash between Lopez and Squinty, and my father, seeing how things were moving, advised Smith to send one of the two out on patrol duty. You remember one occasion on which I told you how the cattlemen down this way maintained a patrol to watch out that their cows did not stray away careless over into Mexico, escorted by Injuns or greasers. Well, Smith sent Lopez out on the patrol, and told him to take Anita along, allowing that was the simplest way to restore peace and serenity around the Bar Z."

"According to reports," said Dick, "this patrol doesn't seem competent to prevent cattle rustling."

"When you come to cover a range of some hundred miles along the Mexican border with a few scattering men, and expect them to keep rustlers from dropping over into United States territory and running off cattle now and then, you're up against a colossal proposition. The patrol has cut down rustlers to a large extent, but has not been able to obliterate the evil. Once in a while one of the patrol riders is found shot full of holes, and occasionally one disappears completely, as if he had dropped off the face of the earth. It's a lonesome business, and it can't be called safe. As a rule, men had just about as soon be condemned to a penitentiary as sent out upon the patrol. I reckon if he hadn't had his daughter for company, Lopez would have jumped the job long ago."

"Do you think it worth while to trouble the foreman with Preston's suspicions? Isn't it likely that man is simply prejudiced against Squinty on account of the quarrel over the girl?"

"Yes, and on account of Squinty's mighty disagreeable ways. Still, I was some glad to have an excuse for joining this bunch. It was better than loafing around the ranch doing nothing. I suppose we'd better take Cyclone's advice, and sleep some."

An hour or two after they had rolled themselves in their blankets Dick was awakened by some unknown cause, and in a twinkling he became filled with a peculiar sensation of danger. Nevertheless, he lay perfectly still, with every sense on the alert, listening and watching.
A moving shadow like that of a tiny cloud drifted slowly across his prostrate figure. Simultaneously he heard the faintest sound, like a slow footstep, and then he saw a man standing directly over him.

“Well,” said Merriwell quietly, “what do you want?”

“Huh!” grunted the man. “You must sleep light. I reckoned you’d be putting it in some after your ride from the ranch.”

It was Squinty.

“I am a rather light sleeper,” said the Yale youth, in the same quiet manner, “and I have a way of waking up when any one comes prowling around in my vicinity. You haven’t answered my question.”

“Though I don’t consider it necessary any,” retorted the cowpuncher sourly, “I’ll explain for your edification that I’m taking my turn standing guard.”

“Is that all?” murmured Dick. “Well, you don’t need to pay particular attention to me.”

Squinty shrugged his shoulders, deigned no response, and turned away, departing with the same stealthy step.

“It’s plain to understand how a man of his habits and disagreeable personality can make himself obnoxious and an object of suspicion,” thought Merriwell. “Nevertheless, he may be as square as a brick.”

In a short time Dick was sleeping again, and he remained undisturbed until Jim, the cook, rose in the hour before daybreak and started his fire. The night had passed quietly.

Having prepared breakfast in a remarkably short time, the cook aroused the slumbering cowboys with his vigorous calls to “turn out.” The men stirred in their blankets, grumbling and growling, and in a short time one and all were making a raid on the food and the coffee prepared by Jim.

Breakfast over, the foreman gave certain instructions to the listening men, following which the bunch lost little time in rounding up and saddling the horses, riding silently away from the mess wagon as a pink flush rose in the eastern sky.

By the time the full light of day had flooded the plain those horsemen were mere vanishing dots in the gray distance, and, each man having carried enough grub to suffice him at midday, the cook knew he would see nothing more of them until nightfall, when they would return to the mess wagon at the appointed place.

With languid deliberation Jim washed the frying pan and tin dishes, stowed things away in a wooden chest in the wagon, caught and harnessed the mules, hooked them onto the wagon, and set forth toward the west. All day long he traveled slowly toward a low-lying range of the Diablos, making only one long halt at midday near a slimy water hole. Late in the afternoon he reached the springs at which he was to stop. The pison-covered foothills seemed near at hand, although they were really some twenty miles distant.

The cook unharnessed the mules, watered and hobbled them, and turned them loose. Then he built a fire and made preparations for supper while waiting the reappearance of the bunch. In due time he saw them coming.

They did not struggle in by twos and threes, as on the previous night, but came in a body; and, as Jim manipulated the frying pan and stacked a pile of brown flapjacks, they thundered up to the mess wagon, whooping and yelling like Indians.

Only one man was missing, and this proved to be Squinty. Turner, who had set forth in the morning in company with Squinty, stated that they had separated early in the forenoon and he had not since put eyes on the sour, crabbed little cowpuncher.

CHAPTER VII.

ANITA.

“Mebbe,” said Turner, as they were eating supper, “Squinty, he goes off by his lonesome looking for the little greaser gal. We’re getting some near the locality of Lopez’s range.”

“If Squinty goes monkeying around her,” observed Bill Horn, “Lopez is liable to shoot him up some.”

But while they were talking in this manner Squinty himself came riding his weathered pony leisurely into camp. On being questioned, he acidly laid the blame of the separation on Turner. Why he had been delayed about reaching the camp he did not state.
Supper over and pipes lighted, the men sat about discussing the occurrences of the day. Dick listened with interest to their quaint, drawling, dryly humorous conversation. Although they had seen no sign of rustlers, all were of the opinion that they were now in a region where cattle thieves might be encountered any day.

When the general conversation waned and the men began to roll themselves in their blankets, Ebenezer Duck again joined Dick and Brad and started in on one of his characteristic yarns of circus life. The foreman cut him short, however, calling sharply to him and bidding him let up.

"The sound of your voice may be music to your own ears, Circus," said Smith; "but to-night it proves right annoying to me. I'm some desirous of sleeping, and so I'll thank you to close the escape valve and shut off the hot air."

"That's the way," muttered Duck sadly—"that's the way whenever I find appreciative listeners to whom I can reminisce. Somebody always rises up and howls like a wolf. I suppose I'll have to take Cyclone's gentle hint or get myself magnificently disliked. Sorry it's impossible for me to continue this entertaining little scrap of autobiography. We'll have to break it off right here and mark it 'continued in our next.'"

Slumber had not closed Dick Merriwell's eyes when he heard the unpleasant sound of Squinty's voice, and discovered that the man was talking to Cyclone Smith. Squinty's words, although guardedly spoken, were distinct enough for Dick to get the drift of his statement.

"I talks none whatever before the bunch," the puncher was saying, "for I knows if I do they riles me up some a-joshing about the girl. Therefore I waits until I gets this chance to speak with you alone, Cyclone. I have been some suspicious of Lopez for a right long while. To-day I thinks I'll visit him, providing he's at home."

"And, of course," put in Smith, "Anita was no attraction whatever."

"I'm not a-saying that," admitted Squinty. "She's certain a peach, everything considered. Well, I shakes Turner and goes off by myself looking for Lopez. I finds his dugout yender in the hills, but I am some wise about approaching it careless. I leaves my horse and takes up a position where I can watch the place convenient, for I observes a couple of saddled critters hitched outside, and I suspects mebbe that Lopez has callers. In this I'm n'one mistaken. After about two hours, Lopez himself comes out, along with a pair of as onery-looking greasers as ever I clapped peepers on. They stands outside in plain view and talks a bit vigorous. I sees them gesticulating and pointing, and finally Lopez seems to say buenos dias, and they rides off. Now, Cyclone, I'm telling you this without any particular side remarks, and you're welcome to figure it out any way you please. Lopez is the only greaser the Bar Z has on its patrol."

"What do you make of it, Squinty?"

"Well, as you asks me, I'll own that I reckons mebbe Lopez has dealings with some gents he wouldn't care to be seen talking with friendly and familiar."

"You think him a traitor?"

"If every man on the patrol does his duty, Castro and his thieving bunch can't operate successfully without being detected and reported. It's my judgement it might be a good plan to watch Manuel Lopez some attentive."

"Perhaps you're right, Squinty," said the foreman. "I'll take the matter into consideration."

Midnight had passed when the sentry aroused the sleepers with the statement that some one was coming mounted and riding hard. The faint sound of hoofbeats drifted through the night, and the approaching rider was soon seen. Straight toward the camp came the unknown. The challenge of the cowboys was answered by a feminine voice, and a few moments later a dusty, foaming horse, bearing a slender, dark-haired girl, stopped in the midst of the surprised men. By the light of the moon Dick saw that the girl was decidedly graceful and really pretty.

"It's Anita!" cried several voices.

"Where is Mr. Smith?" panted the girl.

"Here, Miss Lopez," said the foreman, stepping forward.

She leaped from the back of the horse at once. The animal stood with its head hanging, its sides heaving and every limb trembling.
“Mr. Smith,” said the girl, springing toward him, “Castro is in the hills.”
“How do you know?”
“We have seen him—seen him and his men. Yesterday my father saw some suspicious-looking men, and fancied he was watched. This night immediately after dark and before the moon rose, we left the dugout and concealed ourselves near by with our horses saddled and ready. My father believed we would have a visit from the rustlers, and he was not mistaken. Shortly after the moon rose several men rode up to the dugout and demanded admission. One of them must have been Castro himself. Getting no answer, they smashed down the door and broke into the dugout with their weapons in their hands. They came out again cursing frightfully with disappointment. Some one told them in Spanish that my father and I must be near, for we had been seen there just before nightfall. They were ordered to scatter and search for us.

“Then my father, fearing we would both be discovered and captured, whispered instructions in my ear. He told me he had heard from Crawford, the patrol to the north, that an outfit from the Bar Z was coming and would probably reach Pampa Springs this night. He told me he would decoy the rustlers away, warned me to keep hidden until he had done so, and then I was to ride for these springs and report to you, if you were here. I have always obeyed my father. I watched him lead his horse some distance away in the shadows and disappear. A few moments later, mounted upon a pony, he broke out into plain view, yelling defiance to the rustlers. Away he went with them in pursuit and firing upon him. I don’t think he was touched. As soon as they had disappeared I mounted my own horse, followed a steep and dangerous path down into the lower valley, and came here as fast as I could. Familiar with the Diablos as he is, I feel sure my father had no trouble in giving those men the slip unless he was wounded by their shots.”

The girl’s story aroused the cowpunchers. Some swore softly, while others expressed their feelings more loudly.

“How many men did you see, Miss Lopez?” questioned Smith.

“There were seven of them. I took care to count them.”

“And that must be Castro’s complete gang. There are twelve of us, counting the cook and the two boys. Without Jim we outnumber the rustlers. I opine there’s none of us who would hesitate about meeting those whelps.”

Immediately the men expressed themselves as more than eager to encounter Castro and his band.

“I opine we’re good for three times as many onry greasers,” said Bill Horn.

“Sh!” hissed Turner. “Don’t forget the gal is greaser.”

This filled Horn with confusion, and he retired precipitately.

“Boys,” said Smith, addressing the bunch, “you’ve had some sleep, and the horses are rested. What do you say if we go into the Diablos without further delay?”

They were ready. Even Jim was eager to go, but the foreman objected to this.

“You’d have to ride a mule,” he said, “and you couldn’t keep with us. Besides that, you’d leave the mess wagon and outfit alone and unprotected. I think the girl had better stay here with you. You can look out for her.”

“No, no!” cried Anita. “I must go with you. I shall show you the best way.”

“Having once served on the patrol myself,” said Smith dryly, “I have an idea that I know these parts pretty well. However, Miss Lopez, if you’re dead set on wearing yourself out that fashion, of course we can’t object. Nevertheless, your horse is plumb done up, and that makes it inconvenient.”

“I can ride double with some one,” she said. “When his horse tires I can change. I must go with you. I shall go even if I have to start on foot.”

“Then certain,” bowed Cyclone, “we can’t be ungrateful enough to let you foot it, and I presume there’ll be several of the boys quite willing to take you double.”

“Sure,” agreed Bill Horn, having recovered his composure and stepped forward. “I opine most of us would be willing to do that temporary or permanent.”

Brad Buckhart now advanced and spoke to the girl.
“Anita,” he said, “you remember me, don’t you?”
“Oh—oh, Mr. Brad!” she breathed in surprise. “Are you here? Why, I didn’t know that.”
“I sure am here,” laughed Brad, “ready to get into this mix-up with those rustlers if we have the good luck to find them. Let me introduce you to my college chum and pard, Dick Merriwell. Dick, this is Miss Lopez.”

The girl put out her hand, and Dick took it. The moment their fingers touched Anita seemed to feel a strange electric thrill, and after looking for an instant into Dick’s eyes, she turned her head and her eyelashes drooped.

“I’m glad to meet Mr. Brad’s friend,” she murmured.
“You see I call him that because when at the ranch we speak of his father as Señor Buckhart. Two or three times I have heard Señor Buckhart talk of letters from Brad, in which he told much of Mr. Merriwell.”
“Saddle up, boys,” directed Smith.
Then he turned to Dick and Brad.
“We’re liable to get into a warm mix-up with Mr. Castro,” he said. “There may be more or less shooting. Perhaps you boys hadn’t better come along.”

“Look here, Cyclone,” growled Brad offendedly, “what do you take us for? You’ve seen a right good bit of me, and you ought to know I’m not built of the stuff to stay behind when there’s prospect of real sport like this.”

“But your friend——”
“You couldn’t keep him back unless you roped and hobbled him. You can bet your boots he will be in the midst of it if there’s anything doing.”

“All right,” said Smith, shrugging his shoulders and turning away, “I’ll get my pony. As you’re coming along, you’d better saddle up immediately. The boys will be some impatient to get off.”

“Anita,” said Brad, “my pard and I can take care of you. You will take turns riding double with us, if that’s agreeable.”

“Thank you,” said Anita. “It’s most agreeable to me.”

Again she lifted her eyes until they met Dick’s, but let her dark lashes droop immediately.

CHAPTER VIII.

A SURPRISING DISCOVERY.

For a time Anita rode behind Brad, but finally, in order not to exhaust the horse, she changed and rode with Dick. One of her small brown hands clung fast to Merriwell’s belt, and at times they exchanged a few words.

The men were strung out in a straggling squad, Smith leading, for he knew the precise location of the dugout for which they were bound, having once served on the patrol. The rolling plains became more broken as they approached the foothills of the Diablos. Slowly, almost imperceptibly, the piñon-darkened mountain drew near.

During that night ride through the channel of their desultory spasmodic conversation Dick and Anita became fairly well acquainted. He found her remarkably bright and intelligent for one who had seen so few advantages and followed such a life. Her voice was soft and full of liquid music, and she spoke English with just the faintest sort of an accent that gave her words a peculiar charm.

It was not hard to understand why this girl should prove fascinating to the men on the ranch. Even Dick felt a touch of the magnetism which she seemed to radiate.

Although not quite fifteen years of age, Anita looked to be two or three years older. She was also one of those marvelously self-reliant little creatures who have a way of appearing extremely helpless and dependent at times. True, this never happened except on such occasions as some strong-armed member of the opposite sex was at hand to demonstrate his gallantry, devotion, and heroism.

How it came that this girl of the Southwest, with her brief and limited experience, should understand that most men are built of such stuff that they prefer the discreetly clinging and dependent girl to the constantly self-reliant kind who always seem able to take care of themselves in any situation may only be guessed.

In times of peril Anita could be as cool and clear-headed as a man, and this night she had ridden alone from the mountain dugout to the cowpuncher camp.
upon the plains; but, talking with Dick on the return journey, she seemed more like a child who might be timid to the point of terror if left alone and unprotected. And there seemed nothing of shamming or pretense in this.

Naturally, she was somewhat worried for her father’s safety, although she declared that he knew the mountains well and was so clever and full of resources that it did not seem possible he would permit himself to be trapped by the rustlers.

At last they were amid the foothills, and the barrenness of the plains gave place to piñon-covered slopes. In this region there chanced to be few of the vast chaparral thickets which cover other portions of Texas with almost impenetrable jungles of tangled thorns and branches and briers. Even mottes of live oaks with their branches draped in funereal Spanish moss were seldom seen. Once this land had been considered by American cattlemen as barren, desolate, and unprofitable, but the success of Mexican raisers had finally inspired the Americans to push into those regions to follow the same adventurous, precarious calling. With greater natural energy and improved methods, the American had soon demonstrated his superiority over the Mexican Spaniard.

As had happened farther north when the small cattlemen became first maverick hunters and later rustlers, many of the scattered native cow raisers of the far Southwest found it more profitable to pilfer from the vast herds of the big ranchers than to carry on the cattle business in its former style. And so all along this border land of the Rio Grande cattle rustling thrived, in spite of rangers and vigilantes. At intervals bands of cattle thieves gathered below the river, crossed it secretly, on to American soil, made their forays and ran off many head of beees. These depredations proved a constant source of irritation to the ranchers, as well as no inconsiderable damage and loss.

Therefore a number of ranchmen had banded together for the purpose of protection, and the establishment of a patrol to watch for raiding rustlers was one of their methods of guarding their property. The men sent out upon patrol duty were always hardy, familiar with the country, willing to live a lonely existence, and supposed to be honest and trustworthy. To a degree they had succeeded in cutting down the loss of their employers’ cattle through stealing, but it would have required a large army to safeguard the entire border line.

The morning sun was gilding the barren crests of the higher mountains when the bunch from the Bar Z arrived at the dugout of Manuel Lopez. They approached the place with due caution, which, however, seemed unnecessary, for, although the door of the dugout was smashed and broken, they found no living creature anywhere in the vicinity. The broken door seemed evidence sufficient to substantiate the story of Anita.

Nothing within the place had been molested. Although the dugout consisted of only one room, that room was unusually large and surprisingly comfortable. The floor was covered with Navajo rugs. There were hand-made tables, chairs, and beds. There were cupboards and shelves for the dishes, a small iron cook-stove, some magazine pictures upon the walls, a guitar, and a stack of music. Everything was scrupulously neat and carefully cared for. For the dwelling place of human beings, no dugout Merriwell had ever seen could compare with this in comfort and attractiveness.

Here the men had breakfast, Anita doing the cooking, with Merriwell and Buckhart showing surprising willingness to assist and serve.

Breakfast over, Smith took Brad aside and talked with him for some time, while the men lounged and smoked their pipes and cigarettes. Finally Dick was called and told that the foreman and Brad were going out on a reconnoitering expedition.

“We allow it’s best to leave the boys here for the present,” said Brad. “Smith and I have covered this region, and we know practically every foot of it. Maybe it will be a good plan for you to stay here with the others and make sure that the little girl is not annoyed. I opine the job won’t be a heap disagreeable.”

The rancher’s son laughed as he concluded, but Merriwell refused to be disturbed by this jollying.

Not far from midday Brad and the foreman were surprised to come upon Squinty, who, with his rifle
across his knees, was sitting upon a boulder apparently waiting for them.

"What are you doing here?" demanded Smith. "We left you with the rest of the bunch."

"Yep," nodded the wizened cowboy, rising. "I know yer did, but it proves some unpleasant for me lingering there. Not wishing to make myself unpopular by getting into difficulty with Mr. Brad’s friend, I decided to peek out."

"Why should you have any difficulty with Merriwell, Squinty?" asked Buckhart.

The man twisted his face into a disagreeable grin.

"He sure became some gay and attentive with Anita. He watches her persistent, not giving any one else much opportunity to talk with her."

"Oh, is that it?" grinned Brad. "Well, he was instructed to look after her."

"Squinty," said Smith, "you’re old enough to know better. You’re only one of several in the bunch who are right smitten on that same girl, but what do you allow she wants of a lot of old has-beens? She’s too young to fancy such back numbers. It’s natural she should feel some interest in a chap like Merriwell, who is nearer her own age."

Squinty did not seem particularly pleased with this sort of talk.

"Mebbe," he growled, "if she was particularly desirous of fooling us she’d do some better being agreeable to me."

"Fooling us?"

"Yep."

"What do you mean?"

"Since I wanders off by my lonesome I discovers something interesting. My horse is picketed safe, and I prowls around some on foot. Accidents gives me a squire at a few gents who fancy themselves hid safe and secure not far distant. If you gents want to look that party over, all you has to do is leave your horses and hoof it after me."

"Who are they?"

"Waal, they certain looks to me a heap like old Castro and his gang."

"Castro!" exclaimed Smith. "You don’t mean to say you have located the rustlers?"

"I opine yes."

"In that case you’ve certainly done something worth while," declared the foreman. "Do we want to get a look at them? Ask us."

"Come on," invited Squinty.

He led them to a spot where they could leave their horses hidden amid the timber. From that point they climbed by a difficult route to a lofty wooded ridge, which they crossed. On the far side of the ridge they stole silently through the piñons and crept at last on hands and knees to a point from which they could look down into a small open valley or pocket.

Down there a number of horses were grazing, and some men were lounging about. All were armed, and the most of them wore the picturesque dress of Mexicans. Three of them were engaged in a game of cards upon a blanket spread on the ground.

"Thar!" whispered Squinty, with satisfaction. "I judge them’s the varmints we’re looking fur."

"There’s no doubt about it," breathed Smith. "They’re the rustlers."

"Wangh!" grunted Buckhart. "If we only had the boys here now——"

"You’d likely find some trouble getting down that," said Squinty. "I dunno what they enters this yere pocket, but it’s a-plenty apparent that they didn’t ride down into it careless from any old direction."

Smith’s keen eyes were looking those men over. Suddenly he whispered:

"That tall fellow yonder who is talking with another man must be Castro himself."

"I judge that’s correct," came from Squinty. "Mebbe you takes a good look at t’other gent."

The foreman did this and swore.

"By the everlasting!" he exclaimed hissingly, "it looks like Lopez!"

"If it ain’t Lopez," grinned Squinty viciously, "I’ll eat my hat."

"What do you think of that!" murmured Buckhart.

"I says to you a short time ago," murmured the little cowpuncher, "that the gal would ‘a’ been a heap more sensible fooling us if she’d made it agreeable
enough for me to linger with the rest of the bunch at the dugout. Now you get my meaning."

"As sure as shooting," said Smith, "Manuel Lopez is a traitor."

"As sure as shooting, he is," agreed Squinty. "Of course I'm right sorry for Anita, but it's proper and just that we stretches the neck of Lopez next time we meets up with him."

Smith backed away from the brink and sat upright, his brow puckered into an ugly frown.

"That's how it happens that we've been losing so many cattle over this way," he muttered. "Lopez stands in with those cursed rustlers."

"But," said Squinty, also retreating, "he's none aware that we're dead onto him."

"What's the proper thing to do, Smith?" asked Brad.

"I know how to get into that valley," said Cyclone.

"Apparently those whelps are settled there for to-day. It's up to us to get the bunch and drop down on them, which we can do."

They retraced their steps across the ridge, slid down by a short cut, and found their horses. Squinty kept with them and produced his own horse from another hiding place half a mile away.

Back to the dugout they rode.

CHAPTER IX.

ANITA'S APPEAL.

But when the punchers entered the valley fully expecting a deadly fight with the rustlers, they were both disgusted and disappointed to find that the men they sought had departed. The valley was deserted.

However, the cattle thieves left a trail, and this was taken up and followed with grim determination. It brought them out of the mountains upon the south, and at nightfall they found themselves upon the border of a vast barren stretch of sand dunes known as Dead Desert. Across this desert the wind seemed forever sweeping and whirling and playing all sorts of queer pranks with the sand, which was gathered up in great clouds, whirled about in eddies like miniature waterspouts, and moved and shifted with such unceasing persistency that the face of the desert was ever changing like the surface of a stormy sea.

In this desert the trail was obliterated and lost. The men knew that waterless waste stretched away for league upon league, and with night approaching there was not one chance in a million of following and overtaking the rustlers.

Disappointed and disgusted, Cyclone Smith turned back.

The men of the bunch had learned of Squinty's discovery concerning Lopez, and they agreed that there was something coming to the treacherous Mexican.

The moon had risen, and its white light fell upon the canvas top of the mess wagon standing within ten rods of the dugout as the party once more approached. Jim was talking with Anita, but he heard the men coming and got busy with supper the moment his hilt was answered.

In silence they cared for their horses and gathered to eat supper. The girl asked a few questions, but learned only that they had failed to find the rustlers.

Supper was over and the men were smoking and talking in groups, when a horseman rode boldly up and dismounted.

It was Lopez, who was greeted joyfully by his daughter. The Mexican was surrounded at once by a number of men. He told a story of hot pursuit by the rustlers, whom he had finally tricked, escaping, however, only after a hard, wearisome, circuitous ride.

They permitted him to follow Anita into the dugout. Then Squinty, examining the dusty, tired horse, called attention to the fact that the animal bore a peculiar brand which showed evidence of having been burned over another brand. Then Bill Horn made the discovery that he knew the pony well, having once ridden it as his own until it stepped into a hole and lamed itself.

"Which seems evidence enough," said Turner, in a low tone, "that this yere cayuse belongs to the Bar Z, but has been stolen."

They gathered in a crowd and held a low-spoken consultation. Only for the girl, there would have been no hesitation about their course of action. It was agreed, however, that Anita must be taken away.
It was Turner who walked into the hut and proposed that Anita should start in company with three others for the ranch.

"It’s none safe for her here at present," said Turner. "There’s no telling when we has it hot and lively with them thar rustlers. Jim, Carter, and Squinty will travel with her. The rest of us stays here a while."

Then Anita showed that she had a mind of her own. "I’m not afraid," she declared immediately. "I live here a long time with my father. When the rest go to the ranch I shall go if my father goes."

"Turner scratched his head. "We seldom disobey orders from Cyclone," he said. "He’s the foreman of this outfit, and what he says goes."

"Then why doesn’t he come and give his orders?" questioned the girl.

Smith had seemed to shirk that task. "He has plenty other things to do," muttered Turner. But he could make no impression on the girl. Seeing this, he retired in disgust and reported.

One by one several of the men entered the dugout. It was Squinty who took it on his shoulders to put a few perplexing questions to Lopez. The Mexican answered promptly enough, although he seemed to betray certain hidden uneasiness.

Dick Merriwell had stepped inside, but not once did he meet Anita’s inquiring eyes. Her manner of looking at him gave him such discomfort that finally he retired.

She followed him outside at once. He was surprised when she hurried to him and grasped his arm with both her small hands.

"What is it, Señor Dick?" she demanded in a vibrant whisper. "I know the men behave strangely. Why, I cannot tell, but there is fear in my heart. I’m certain they mean harm to my father. Señor Merriwell, don’t let them hurt my father."

He was seeking words with which to reply, when there issued sounds of sudden commotion from within the ranch. There were loud cries and the noise of a struggle.

Without a sound Anita rushed back, Dick following her.

The men had seized Lopez, bound his arms behind his back, and forced him down upon a chair.

"Why do you do this?" cried the girl. "What has my father done?"

"We’re plumb sorry for ye, Anita," said Squinty; "but your old gent has been ketched with a rustled and rebranded cayuse in his possession. He’s been seen in company with them cussed rustlers. He’s a traitor."

"It’s not true!" she almost screamed.

"Somebody take keep of her," said Squinty. "That’s a convenient tree just outside the door."

He attempted to thrust the girl aside. "Don’t touch me!" she panted. "My father is innocent! You shall not lynch him!"

"Go ahead, boys!" shouted Squinty, seizing her.

In another moment he felt himself grabbed by the neck, and the girl was torn from his hands. With a snapping twist Merriwell sent Squinty sprawling at the far side of the room.

CHAPTER X.

THE CAPTIVE AND HIS ESCORT.

The man came up instantly, wrenching forth a pistol, but Brad Buckhart leaped upon him and twisted the weapon from his hand.

"No, you don’t!" rasped the Texan.

Squinty frothed forth a string of oaths, which, however, were cut short by Cyclone Smith, who now took full charge of affairs.

"Bottle up that language," the foreman commanded, and there was something in his low-spoken, quiet manner which caused the furious little cowboy to close up. "Whatever course is pursued with regard to Lopez," said Dick Merriwell, "no one but a brute will put violent hands on Anita. I don’t belong to this outfit, but, though I may not last a great while, I’ll do my prettiest to knock the packing out of any person who touches the girl. Lopez is caught and cannot get away. Why not give him a square show?"

"That’s proper," nodded Smith, "and he shall have a square show. He shall have a chance to prove his innocence."

"Yah!" sneered Squinty. "You know he’s guilty,
Cyclone, for you had evidence with your own eyes—
good enough evidence to hang him."

"Perhaps so," admitted Smith. "I’m not denying
that things look a-plenty hard for Lopez. Nevertheless,
I judge the most of us are somewhere near human,
and we’ve got some feelings for the little girl. Therefore,
I say Lopez shall be taken to the Bar Z and given
a square, fair deal. If any person present has any ob-
jections to raise, let him speak up."

His eyes were fixed on Squinty, and somehow that
individual was suddenly cowed into silence. For a few
moments no one uttered a word, but finally, drawing a
long breath, Bill Horn said:

"I always backs up Cyclone. What he says goes
with me, and I reckon it goes with the rest of the
bunch."

"Sure. Sure," came from the men.

Anita clasped Dick’s hand, breathing her thanks.

"It was you who did it," she whispered. "You
saved my father from being lynched, and I’ll never
forget."

Dick felt that she was giving him altogether too
much credit, for he realized that alone he could not
have prevented the lynching of Lopez. It was Smith
who had settled the matter.

"All right, gents," said Squinty sourly. "Of course
I stands with the rest of the outfit. All the same,
obody ever puts paws violent on me and I forgets it."

Which was a threat aimed at Merriwell, who, how-
ever, seemed to ignore it.

Not so with Brad Buckhart. Ere handing over
Squinty’s pistol, the rancher’s son said:

"Look here, you, if you do my pard any damage un-
derhand, I’ll have your hide for tanning leather, or
my name’s not Buckhart. Get that? Do you hear
me warble? Think it over and digest it some?"

"Bah!" said Squinty. "You’re some young, and a
heap inclined to talk."

"Up to date," returned Brad, "I’ve succeeded fairly
satisfactorily in backing up whatever remarks I’ve
ventured to make. As the son of old man Buckhart, I
pledge you earnest and sincere to put my father after
you with every man and every influence he can sway if
you carelessly forget my little hint regarding my pard.

A word to the wise is usually sufficient, but mebbe
you’re some lacking in wisdom, though for your own
sake I hope not."

It was decided that for the present Lopez should be
confined in the dugout and thoroughly guarded. Ev-
ey weapon was removed from the interior of the hut.
The men filed out, but Anita remained with her father,
whose bonds she released.

Smith put Turner and Circus on guard, and every
one knew the captive would not have one chance in a
thousand of escaping if he attempted to make a break
for it.

Some of the men gathered for a consultation, but
Squinty suddenly withdrew and would have no part
in it.

After a time the foreman called Dick, Brad, and Bill
Horn from the others.

"Boys," he said, "I have some doubts about our ever
being able to take Lopez through to the ranch with
this bunch without an accident happening to him. It
would be a simple matter for some one to create a dis-
turbance and set up an alarm, which would give an op-
portunity to fill the Mexican with cold lead. It might
be a fake cry of rustlers, or anything of that sort. The
men have a decided distaste for horse thieves in gen-
eral, and especially for one who has played such a
treachery double game as Lopez seems to have done.
I’m a heap sorry for the little girl. Now, to make sure
that the greaser is escorted safely to the ranch, I have
devised a little plan. I’m going to trust you three to
take him through. I know I can rely on Horn."

"Thank ye, Cyclone," said the big cowboy.

"And I’m likewise sure," continued Smith, "that
neither of you boys feel that Lopez should be let off
without proper punishment, even though you did not
wish to see him hanged before the eyes of the girl.
I’m going to keep all the rest of the bunch out looking
for rustlers a while longer. You three will take Lopez
and the girl back to the Bar Z, and you’ll start early in
the morning. We’ll have every arrangement made for
you to start and get off before the others fairly under-
stand what’s doing. You shall have a pack horse, car-
rying sufficient provisions to last you until the ranch
is reached. By taking the shortest possible route we
covered coming here, you can get to the Bar Z in a little more than a day and a half. Horn ought to know the best and shortest course."

"I opin I do," nodded Bill.

"I know you'll treat the girl as decent as possible, but don't give her a chance to set Lopez at liberty. Don't let her fool you an.""

"We won't, Smith," promised Buckhart.

An hour before daybreak Lopez, with his arms once more securely tied, was quietly taken from the dugout and escorted to the spot where the saddled horses and the pack animal waited. Anita crept close to her father, trembling and fearful, although assured that this was a move to insure him safety from the hands of the punchers. The Mexican was hoisted astride a pony, and the little party set forth, Bill Horn, with his rifle in his hands, riding a rod behind the captive. By daybreak they were in the lower foothills.

All day they journeyed toward the ranch, and at nightfall camped in a motte of live oaks, where there was a grassy glade and a small spring. That the place had frequently been chosen by other campers was apparent. The embers of former fires were found near a small lean-to of brush and poles.

"Here," said Dick, with a gesture toward the lean-to, "is Señorita Anita's bedroom. The rest of us can make ourselves comfortable outside."

They cared for the horses, built a fire and prepared supper as darkness deepened in the timber. Anita helped, and Lopez sat on an old log watching their movements with an air of unconcern which was remarkable, whether assumed or genuine.

Bill Horn fondled a ready pistol during the time that the Mexican's hands were released that he might eat, drink, and enjoy a cigarette.

"No need to watch so close, Señor Horn," said the captive, with a bland smile. "If I feel sure I get square deal at Bar Z I go there straight if you set me free now."

"Mebbe so," nodded Bill dryly; "but all the same, I opin it'll be some judicious to take proper precautions to land you there."

"My father will prove that he is no rustler," said Anita. "I know he is faithful to Señor Buckhart."

"I hopes you're right, little gal," said Bill. "I wants to state that this yere business is right unpleasant for me, for though I ain't never pestered yer none, same as some of the others—Squinty in particular—I admits I never puts blinkers on yer that I don't get a severe case of palpitation. Excuse me for being so outspoken. These yere remarks sort of come forth unbidden. I'm proud to say that I'm not sech a fool as Squinty. Knowing that I'm naturally right onhandsome and a heap older than you, I figgers it out useless fur me to prance around admiring and obnoxious."

She gave him an odd look and a strange flashing smile.

"Thank you, Señor Bill," she said. "It's big men I always admire, not little dried-up ones like Squinty."

"Wow!" exploded Bill, who seemed nearly upset by this. "If I was ten or fifteen years younger, such a remark might strike me a heap encouraging. Howsomer, everthing considered, I loses my head none. Lopez, we're going to truss you up as comfortable as possible for sleeping purposes, but it'll be wise of you not to do an unnecessary amount of twisting and squirming in the night, for you'll be watched constant and close."

"Never fear, señor," smiled Lopez. "Even though you don't believe, I say again I would not leave you if I could."

It was Brad who bound the Mexican. Lopez was given a blanket and a spot near the fire for a bed. Anita retired to the lean-to. By lot it fell to Horn to stand guard during the early hours of the night. Wrapping themselves in their blankets, Dick and Brad were soon sleeping soundly.

CHAPTER XI.
TRICKED.

In due time Horn aroused Dick, who was to take the second watch.

"Everything calm and serene, boy," said the puncher. "The little gal seems restless, for I've heard her stirring now and then; but Lopez is sleeping as peaceful as a kitten."

Dick rose and went on duty, Bill Horn stretching
himself in a blanket and beginning to snore in a wonderfully brief space of time.

The moon had risen and was setting its white light through the openings of the foliage. The mist was filled with soft nocturnal murmurings. The air was close and warm.

For a time Merriwell walked up and down, but finally he seated himself on the old log and fell to thinking of the strangeness of his position. It gave him a queer, indescribable sensation to realize that he was in that far Southwestern land guarding a man charged with a crime, which, in the eyes of cattlemen in that country, was far more odious than manslaughter.

A faint sound behind him caused him to start and turn quickly. He saw the girl coming forth from the lean-to bearing her blanket in her hands.

"Ah, Señor Merriwell," she whispered, "I cannot sleep in there, it is so warm—so warm. The air is close, and I cannot breathe. Then I keep thinking of my father. Let me sit by you a little while. Let me talk to you, for I think I must talk to some one."

She came and found a place beside him on the log. A shaft of moonlight touched her face and made her dark eyes look larger and handsomer than usual. There was a singular attractiveness about her dusky oval face. Her lips were full and finely formed, and she had small, shapely, pearly-white teeth.

"I am glad it is you to whom I can talk," she murmured, "I have so much to thank you for. It was you who saved my father. It was you who kept the men from lynching him."

"I think you give me too much credit, Anita," said Dick softly. "I simply interfered when that vicious little whelp Squinty put hands on you. That made me a trifle hot under the collar."

"Hot under the collar," laughed the girl. "You mean it made you mad. I know what that is. But when I get mad, I lose my head. You do not. You keep steady. You have not such a temper as Anita."

"On the contrary, I've got a temper like a cold chisel. It was not so many years ago that I used to lose my head when I lost my temper. I became perfectly frantic and unreasonable. Experience taught me the folly of that. I learned that a person who permits himself to go blind with anger is weakened and easily conquered by one who restrains and commands his passions. Having learned this, I fought long and hard to become master of myself under all conditions."

"Do you think they will give my father a square deal at the ranch?"

"I'm positive of it, Anita."

"Then they will find he is innocent. I know—I know how faithful he has been to Señor Buckhart. Squinty hates him. Only for the danger to my father, I would have laughed when you threw Squinty across the dugout like he was a baby. It was brave, Señor Dick. It made me love you."

Dick caught his breath in dismay.

"Yes," she whispered hastily, creeping a bit closer, "it made me love you. I love you because you saved my father. I would do anything to prove it."

He moved away.

"You're decidedly impulsive, Anita," he said. "I'm afraid——"

"Oh, you do not understand me, Señor Dick. I have to speak what my heart feels. I am only a poor little Mexican girl. I know that. You are an American. Americans always have many sweethearts. Anita tells you what is in her heart not that she thinks she may be your sweetheart—oh, no. If she is silly, she is not as silly as that. It is her way of showing gratitude, that is all."

Merriwell breathed easier.

"And that isn't necessary," he said. "Right is right, and justice is justice. I have always tried to stand for what was right and square."

"Still, did you not think of me when you took such a chance with those men? It was a chance, for such men shoot quick. Squinty would have shot you, only for Señor Brad."

"Only for the fact that I knew Brad was handy enough to fall on Squinty," said Dick, "I should have lost no time in getting my own hardware ready for action."

"Oh, you are brave!" breathed the girl—"you are brave and young and handsome! There are not many like you on the range."
"I beg you!" laughed Dick embarrassed. "You're too enthusiastic, Anita. It's decidedly disturbing."

"I have said it," she whispered. "It is my way. I could not help telling you. It is not the way of American girls, I know. I have lived much alone with my father. When they have found that he is innocent, he will go back to the patrol and I shall go with him. There I shall see few men, and probably never again one the same as you."

"Great Scott!" thought Dick. "I've got to cut this short somehow."

Aloud he said:

"It will be another hard ride in the morning, Anita. Hadn't you better get what sleep you can? Bill Horn told me you were restless, for he heard you stirring. If you can't sleep in the lean-to, perhaps you can find a comfortable spot outside."

"I will try," she said, rising with her blanket grasped in both hands.

Suddenly, without the slightest warning, she leaped like a pantheress upon him, flinging the blanket over his head and shoulders and twisting it about him. He was pitched forward from the log and hampered and tangled in the blanket. He felt her weight upon him, felt her struggling to keep him entangled and helpless, and then——

There was loud voices, sounds of tramping feet and scuffling. A single shot was fired. Next, having cast the girl aside and turned himself clear of the blanket, Dick rose to find himself looking in the muzzle of a pistol held in the hands of a fierce, unkempt Mexican, who savagely ordered him to put up his hands.

---

CHAPTER XII.

A PROMISE KEPT.

Horn and Buckhart were captives, Lopez had been released, and the glade was full of treacherous, picturesque, fierce-appearing men, all armed to the teeth. Some one relieved Dick of his pistols. He was helpless, and it was worse than folly to resist.

Looking around, he saw Anita with her father.

"The treacherous little cat!" he muttered bitterly.

Those men were the rustlers, led by Castro himself. Somehow, while Bill Horn stood guard one of the rustlers had crawled like a snake to the rear of the brush lean-to and whispered with Anita. Had she been given a little more time, the girl would have attempted to deceive and trick Horn as she had Dick. It happened, however, that Bill's time to turn in had come, and therefore Anita was compelled to try her wiles upon Merriwell. She had accomplished her purpose, and the captors were now captives.

The leader of the rustlers, Castro himself, rolling and lighting a cigarette, announced his intention to stand the prisoners up to be shot.

Instantly Lopez stepped forward and faced Castro.

"It shall not be," he said in Spanish. "They have treated me kindly. They are my friends. You shall do them no harm, brother."

Anita seconded her father.

"They are our friends," she asserted. "If you harm them you must first harm me."

"But they were taking you to the ranch to hang you, Manuel," said Castro.

"They were taking me to the ranch to prevent the others from hanging me, Castro. At great risk to themselves they protected me. Yesterday I was seen with you, and therefore I am believed false to my employer and a cattle thief. Señor Buckhart has ever treated me like a man. This is his son. This is the friend of his son. Should I be a man if I permitted you to harm a hair of their heads?"

"Waugh!" muttered Bill Horn, who understood Spanish fairly well. "I opine I'm some muddled on this business."

"Keep still, Bill," said Brad. "I don't quite get the lay of the land myself."

Lopez turned to Buckhart.

"You shall understand," he said. "Castro is my brother, whom I have not seen in more than ten years. Night before last he came to the dugout, but I didn't know him then. I was watching for him to come. Anita has told you how I led them away in pursuit of me and gave her a chance to ride and carry a warning to the men from the ranch. It was true, every word."

"It was true, every word," corroborated the girl.
"But I rode into a trap," continued Lopez. "I was roped, dragged from my horse, and made captive. The men who caught me didn't know I was Castro's brother. I was taken to their chief, and he recognized me at once. Instantly he ordered them to set me free. I stayed with him many hours talking. We talked of a great many things. At any time I was at liberty to depart. I begged my brother to go over the river into Mexico, and he promised me that he would do so. We didn't know that Senor Brad, in company with Senor Smith and Squinty, had seen us. I am speaking the truth. I am not a rustler. My brother is Castro, a leader of rustlers. How can I prove this if I go to the Bar Z? Show me that I may prove it to the belief of every one and I will go."

Brad shook his head.

"I admit, Lopez," he said, "that it might be some difficult to prove. I likewise admit that it's my opinion the majority of the boys wouldn't take a whole lot of stock in such a yarn."

"I know it," nodded Lopez,—"I know it, and so I shall not go to the Bar Z. I shall go elsewhere, far away, and Anita will go with me. But you, Senor Brad—you and your friends will return to the Bar Z unharmed, for my brother will do what I ask of him. I request that you tell them all that has happened. With Castro we'll set our course straight for the river and Mexico."

Castro, tossing aside his cigarette, said:

"It shall be as Manuel desires. He is an honest man. Is it his fault that I, his brother, am a cattle thief? You know where to find Cactus Springs. There we shall leave your horses and your weapons, for you could not travel without horses to the ranch, and your weapons you might need."

"Waah," said Bill Horn, "permit me to observe, Castro, old gent, that I don't see what we've got any kick coming on this yere deal. If you keeps your word, I'll admit that my previous opinion of rustlers will be some altered and softened."

"You shall see that Castro is a man of his word."

The chief then gave a few curt orders to his men, who got into action without delay. In a few seconds they were ready to depart.

Anita hesitated. Suddenly she turned and ran to Dick.

"Oh, senor—Senor Dick, forgive me!" she pleaded. "It was for my father that I deceived you. It was to save his life I did it."

"No hard feelings, little girl," assured Dick. "I fancy it will be the wisest thing for your father to put a good long distance between himself and the Bar Z."

"Si, senor, it is wise. We are going. Adios. We shall never meet again. Anita deceived you, but still when she speak she speak what was in her heart."

She caught one of his hands, lifted it to her lips, turned, and vanished like a shadow into the darkness of the timber.

* * * * * * * * *

Three hours after daybreak a trio of dusty, wearied men arrived at Cactus Springs, where they found their horses and their weapons, precisely as Castro had promised.

"Well," said Brad, in deep satisfaction, "this is one time a greaser certainly kept his word. Everything considered, I'm not regretting that Lopez is at liberty and touching the high places in the direction of the Rio Grande."

"The only thing to regret," said Dick, "is that an honest man like Lopez should have such a reprehensible brother."

"But what's filling me with deep sorrow," sighed Bill Horn, "is the fact that I'll never clap peepers on little Anita no more."

THE END.

The Next Number (697) Will Contain.

Dick Merriwell's Ranch Friends;

OR, SPORT ON THE RANGE.

---

Climbing a Wall of Water.

A glorious summer evening on the coast of China; a blaze of sunlight kindling into a broad lake of gold the wide, smooth expanse of Hang-chow Bay, which makes a deep wedge-shaped dent in the coast not far to the northeast of Shangwei. The close-packed houses, and thatched roofs, and tall, glittering pagodas, and waving flags, and quaint, boxlike vessels of the Chinese ports, hang-tang-chow-floot, clustering along the shore just where the Tsin-Tang River poured itself into the bay; and is lost in a cloud of the smooth, bright waters, a tiny rowboat managed by a native boatman, with two white men seated in her stern.

"Well, Newman," said the elder of the two, with a quiet smile, "does this country meet your views, so far? It will give you some new experiences to write about before you have done with it, or my name is not Tom Smart.

"New experiences? I should rather think so!" cried the younger man, who seemed to be a fresh arrival. "Why, everything here seems to be just the reverse of what one sees anywhere else, just like the land of Wonders. Foremost in the story, where the old woman ran over the train, and the man fell into the boy and was drowned, and the apple tree tumbled off the thief and broke its limbs, and the gun came to grief because it didn't know the man was loaded. The compass points south, and white is deep mourning, and it's rude to take off your hat in a house, and old men fly kites, and women draw the plow, and a puzzled man scratches his hip in place of his head, and a friend shakes his head when you're right.

Here he suddenly broke off, to point at a Chinese boat that was coming slowly toward them from the other side of the bay, with an even staring eye painted on either side of her bow, broad, heavy bow.

"What on earth is the meaning of that affair?" said he, wonderingly.

"Ask Si-Long here—he will tell you," said Mr. Smart, who seemed not a little amused by his guest's amazement at all he saw.

And Fred Newman turned, as directed, to the Chinese boatman, a queer little wizen "John," whose smooth, yellow face, broad straw hat, and big gray focation gave him quite the look of a big doll, a likeness still further borne out by his narrow, half-shut eyes and unchangingly immovable features, as well as the long pigtail of tightly plaited hair that hung half way down his back.

"Plenty good—all same boat so," he said in "pidgin English," in reply to Fred's query. "Boat no have eye, how can see?"

And then Si-Long bent to his cars again, with a strength and timeliness of which his meager frame—unconsciously compared by Newman to an outworn sausage—might well have seemed quite incapable.

"Do all these fellows talk English?" asked Fred.

"Most of them talk the kind of English that you have heard, "pidgin English," as they call it—"pidgin" being the Chinese way of pronouncing "business." It is a curious fact that the northern and southern Chineens, not understanding each other's dialect, often have to fall back on "pidgin English" as their only means of communication. A man from Peking, you know, wouldn't understand a man from Hongkong in the least; so then this broken English comes in. But the most awkward thing of all is that a Chinese word which means one thing in one province, means the very opposite in another. If I were to say 'man-man' to a Canton boatman, he would slack rowing at once; if I said the very same thing to Si-Long here, he would begin pulling away for all he was worth.

"He doesn't look as if he could do much in that way," said the young athlete, eying Si-Long's meager form with contempt.

"Can't he, though? You should just see him when the 'bore' comes—that's a big tide wave, you know, that comes rushing up the bay every now and then, in a regular wall of water yards high, that looks as if it would sweep away the very town itself; but, strangely enough, just a mile or two above the town, it melts away to nothing."

"A very great bore, no doubt," said Newman, grinning at his own joke.

"It must be worth seeing, though; how often does it occur?"

His host was just about to reply, when he suddenly checked himself, and bent his head forward, as if to listen to some distant sound. Fred Newman, seeing him do so, did the same, and heard, or thought he heard, a dull, far-off rumble, not unlike the roll of distant thunder.

As Mr. Smart caught the sound, his grave face brightened visibly.

"We are in luck," he cried; "here is the tidal wave just coming now; this is the very next time to see it where we are now, right out in the middle of the bay."

There were few braver men alive than Fred Newman; but, bold as he was, he did not quite share his friend's delight in the prospect of viewing the spectacle of this open bay, the advance right upon them of "a wall of water yards high," rushing in "as if it would sweep away the very town itself."

There was no time to think of it, for all at once his friend called out: "Here it comes! and now you will see something worth looking at."

And then Mr. Smart said a few words in Chinese to Si-Long, the boatman, who at once put the boat's head about, and began pulling hard up the bay toward the town.

Fred naturally thought that they were flying from the coming peril, and was not sorry that they did so. He was not a little puzzled, indeed, to make out why they should run right up the centre of the bay, instead of making at once for the shore, where they would have been safe. But he took it for granted that they must know best, and made no remark.

Meanwhile, the other boats had caught the alarm, and all was confusion. The air rang with shouts in various languages—Chinese, Japanese, Malay, Hindustani, Portuguese, French, and English—and men of all ages and all colors, brown, yellow, or white, were seen dashing in all directions, those on shore hauling up their boats on the beach in frantic haste.

At the same time Fred Newman, strain his eyes down the bay as he might, could see nothing but a glittering line drawn right across the mouth of it, as if a silver cord had been suddenly stretched from shore to shore; but the strange noise that had first caught his attention still continued, and grew louder and louder by degrees, till it seemed to make the very air tremble.

When the young man turned to look once more, a few moments later, he was quite startled to see how vastly that slight streak had grown, and with what whirlwind speed it was approaching them. The slender white thread was now a rushing sheet of foam, towering higher and higher every instant—a "regular wall of water," in fact, just as Mr. Smart had said—and, even as he looked, he saw it strike a good-sized junk and fling it up in the air, for he could plainly see, for one moment, the line of the horizon underneath the doomed vessel.

At that very moment Si-Long put the boat about once more, and headed straight toward the coming death!

"I say—" began Fred excitedly; but his remonstrance was cut short by a dash of cold spray, which took his breath as if some one had clutched him by the throat, and the next moment there came a rush and a deafening roar, and up, up, up he went, as it seemed, into the very sky, amid a blinding whirl of foam—and then down again with a dizzy, sickening plunge, such as one feels in a troubled dream, when falling from a seemingly measureless height.

Then, all in a moment, foam, spray, uproar, and the great wave was gone, as if they Lad never been; and the bay was floating quietly on smooth water once more, while, far in the distance, the watery wall that had so nearly overwhelmed them was rolling past the town.

"Where on earth are we?" gasped Fred Newman, as he stared about him in blank amazement.

"Why, safe over the 'bore,' to be sure—and very neatly done it was," said his host gluckly, "what you say to Si-Long now? I wanted you to see what he can do."

"It was very kind of you, and I can't tell you how grateful I am," said the young man, with intense sarcasm; "but, on the other hand, I think that another time, I should prefer to witness his skill from the shore."

FISHES IN HOT WATER.

A French naturalist, describing a recent tour in Guatemala, tells of a species of fish which he found in the boiling lake of Amanitic. It is called the 'fish of fire,' and he says that he has learnt at all about the high temperature of the water in which it passes its days and nights. The Amantani Lake is fed by numerous springs, and the place is one which means scalded fingers. However, ebullition is somewhat tempered to a parboiled species, as the really boiling water rises to the surface, leaving a temperature of ninety-five degrees Fahrenheit at the bottom.
NEW YORK, August 14, 1909.

TERMS TO TIP TOP WEEKLY MAIL SUBSCRIBERS.
(Payable in advance.)

Single Copies or Back Numbers, 8c. Each.

3 months.................. 65c | One year............... 92.00
6 months.................. 65c | 2 copies one year..... 4.00
1 year.................... 85c | 3 copies two years.... 4.00

How to Send Money—By post-office or express money order, registered letter, bank check or draft, at our risk. At your own risk if sent by surface, coin, or postage stamps in ordinary letters.

Receipts—Receipt of your remittance is acknowledged by proper change of number on your label. If not correct you have not been properly credited, and should let us know at once.

GEORGE G. SMITH, Proprietor.

STREET & SMITH, Publishers.

78-80 Seventh Avenue, New York City.

TIP TOP ROLL OF HONOR.

Following the suggestion of Mr. Burt L. Standish, that appeared in his letter to Tip Top readers in No. 48, 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.

R. F. Vanatta, Denver, Colo.
E. P. Sclocum, Iowa.
R. A. Lee, West Virginia.
Russell Ransom, Virginia.
E. J. Silverman, Oklahoma.
William Quackenbush, Albany, N. Y.
Frederic B. Eastman, Canada.
Allan F. Malone, Arizona.
V. D. Reynolds, New York State.

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 fine 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 Georgia.)

Although I have read "Tip Top" only about six months—with the exception of some of the early days—I have come to realize that there is nothing like it in the line of juvenile fiction. In short, it is truly the "king of weeklies." I am not an athlete myself, but I admire it in my one, and I truly love to read about athletes. From Dick and Frank Merriwell I have received much benefit in self-control. I think I can truthfully say that I have increased the reading of "Tip Top" in my neighborhood about a dozen. I am going to continue in the good work. Wishing a long and happy career to Burt L. and all connected with "Tip Top," I remain, as ever, a loyal reader and helper,

G. R. M. RAINBOW.

It is not much of a task, after all. A dozen copies loaned to a dozen boys, and the harvest is great. "Tip Top" speaks for itself. It widens an unconscious influence, and once a boy becomes interested in the clever stories of sport and school life, it becomes a habit that is difficult to break away from. And best of all, this influence does a boy a world of good. No lad can read "Tip Top" constantly without imbuing some of the moral atmosphere surrounding the stories. Whether he admits it or not he must sooner or later grow to view things with the clear vision of a Merriwell. It raises his ideals to a plane far above that which he used to occupy. In a word, it does him good to mingle with Dick or Frank and their friends.

(A letter from West Virginia.)

I am a great reader, and of all the stories I have read, the Merriwell tales in the "Tip Top" and the Mental Library are my favorites, as Brad says, "That's whatever." I have just finished the last number of "Tip Top," 685, and I think Wicked Weems is the dullest ball player I ever heard of. I have been reading "Tip Top" for about seven years, and I get other boys in every town I visit to read them, and one copy works like magic on them; they never stop as long as they can procure a copy. Frank, Dick, Bert, Brad, Claxton, Ethel, Inza, and June are my favorites. Wishing long life to "Tip Top," I remain to all loyal Tip-Toppers, and hoping to see this in print soon, I remain a loyal Tip-Topper.

ARTHUR P. R.

So continue to spread the gospel of "Tip Top," and may your days be long in the land. We are glad to hear from such energetic disciples.

Having read the "Tip Top Weekly" for nearly four years, I shall take the privilege of writing a few lines to let you know of my great love and admiration for the great "king of weeklies." I have kept "mum" as long as possible, so I shall have to let loose, "you hear me shout?" I do not believe any publication could possibly do as much good as the great "Tip Top Weekly." At any rate, I know from my own experience and from those around me. About once a week I gather all the children in the neighborhood around me in my study room and read a "Tip Top Weekly" to them. Well, you should see the expression of happiness on their faces when they leave. Once in a while they get a bit sappy, that is when I read a "Tip Top," as "Dick Merriwell's Regret," "Dick Merriwell's Red Comrade," etc. Really, I felt like crying myself when I read them. Well, I certainly can make praise. I think Standish enough for his splendid work, and hope he will have a long and prosperous life, and continue to write about Frank and Dick for a long time to come. He has a way about his writing that makes it so very interesting. I like Frank, but Dick and Joe Crowfoot are my favorites. Their characters are simply grand. They are such noble fellows. Among the girls I like Rose, Doris, and Claudia. I hope Rose will become Joe Crowfoot's bride some day. Just one thing about the Mental Library: I have tried and tried over again to get "Frank Merriwell's Brother." It seems to be out of print. I wish you would let me know if it were. I remain a loyal admirer of the great king of weeklies.

F. N., Los Angeles, Cal.

"Dick Merriwell's Brother," No. 431 of the New Medal, can be easily procured by sending stamps to this office, nineteen cents in all, including postage. It is in much demand, since it records the finding of Frank's brother. Your words of cheer are appreciated.

(A letter from Texas.)

Having read "Tip Top" for so long, I thought I would express my admiration for the "king of weeklies." I read the "first big chunk" of "Bill Bruce, of Harvard," and it is just like all the rest of Burt L. Standish's writings, which are unequalled. I am doing all I can to push dear old "Tip Top," and I succeeded in getting a good many readers. Five of us boys have got up a club called the "Tip Top Hustlers." Every Sat-
We wish your club every success in the world, and trust that its members will always be guided by the principles that carried the Merriwells to many a goal.

(A letter from Arkansas.)

I have been reading "Tip Top" for seven years. It has done me more good than anything I have ever read. I have done all I could to get my friends to read the magazine, have even gone so far as to get old people to read it, and they always speak very highly of it. I think for good, clean literature it has no equal. Very respectfully,

E. G. Moxon.

You never wrote truer words in all your life, and a host of discerning boys agree with you. The fountain seems well-nigh inexhaustible, and there are new pleasures pouring forth every week.

I have been reading the "Tip Top Weekly" since No. 190, and think it is one of the best ever published. I have also found it is not got. I can speak without a peer in the literature for enlivening the American youth. It inspires all to imitate the conduct of the heroes of heroes, Frank and Dick Merriwell. As it has influenced me for good, I feel that likewise it has inspired the minds of many a boy and young men to live a better life. One could not say too much concerning the admirable qualities of Frank Merriwell. Unselfish, forgiving, fair and clever in all dealings, disdaining trickery, and a falsehood, of unconquerable will, a conqueror of all bad habits; in short, one of nature's noblemen. And Dick bids fair to equal, if not surpass, "Merry," in reaching perfect manhood, for he is overcoming his faults and proving himself a true Merriwell. In our section of the city there was a club called Nitecows' Boys' Club, which was a very dull club. I joined the club, and after a few months made it one of the best clubs in the city. "How?" I advised them to get a physical instructor, which they did, and to use Frank Merriwell's Book of Physical Development. When I first joined the club the members numbered thirty-two, but now they number over three hundred and eighty, and I have got many of them to read "Tip Top." Every Friday the boys are lined around the reading tables reading good old "Tip Top." Hoping to see my letter to print in the near future, wishing Burt L. Standish a long life, and success to "Tip Top." G. R. KARGROW.


Since you have been so earnest in your labor for "Tip Top," it is only fair that your name should appear among those who have done good things in behalf of the magazine. Therefore, we have written it thus.

(A letter from Arkansas.)

I am a reader of your magnificent weekly, and a more ardent one I think would be hard to find. I have had more pleasure reading "Tip Top" than any other publication I ever handled, and I do not believe I ever will find one that I will love half so well. "Tip Top" has done more for me than any influence next to that of my dear mother. Reading "Tip Top Weekly" has given me an ambition to do better, greater, and nobler things. I cannot find words to express my appreciation of Burt L.'s splendid stories. I can read them under circumstances where other stories would not attract me. I let any one read my "Tip Tops" that will. I would give much for all back numbers of "Tip Top" I have got good parts of "Tip Top" anywhere I go with pride. I could not resist the temptation to write to you and praise "Tip Top." I hope to read your king of weeklies for many years to come. Yours truly,

Jesse Carter.

Well, friend, if you are so anxious to read the earlier stories in "Tip Top" why not send for the first few Medall Library containing these, commencing with No. 190. Thus you will enjoy the stories of Frank Merriwell's early trials and triumphs, and begin to build up a fine library, of just the sort a boy delights in. Read what we have to say about this on the outside cover of this number.

FRANK MERRIWELL'S BOOK OF PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT.

The art of boxing and self-defense, by Prof. Donavan.

U. S. Army Physical Exercises, revised by Prof. Donavan.

Physical Health Culture, by Prof. Donavan.

PROF. FOURMEN: Being a reader of the famous "Tip Top Weekly" and your physical culture hints, I would like to have you compare my standing with the average boys of my age. Weight, 123 pounds; neck, 13 inches; calf, 13 inches; ankle, 9½ inches; biceps, 9½ inches; foresarm, 10 inches; wrist, 7 inches; thigh, 18 inches; chest, normal, 35 inches; expanded, 37½ inches; waist, 27 inches; age, 18 years 2 months; height, 5 feet 4 inches. 1. How are my measurements? 2. Is there any cure for muscle binding? 3. What is the best way to get a good complexion? 4. Rubber gym. slippers, I was told, are not good to wear, as the rubber prevents the electricity from entering the body, and resulting in eyes, ear, tooth, and other aches. Please tell me if I was being kidded. 6. Is it harmful to drink with alcohol? 7. Please let me know how I can strengthen my arm so as to obtain a swift delivery, as I expect to pitch for a baseball team this summer. When my arm is tired from pitching I have soreness in my armpit. I work in a machine shop nine hours, also get nine hours sleep. The books I have on physical culture are: U. S. Army Book of Physical Culture, Frank Merriwell's Book on Physical Development, and your book on Physical Health Culture. I am reading your book I found on page 140, How to dress for health and beauty. I was glad to know that you encouraged the athletes to have their clothing suspended from their shoulders, rather than from the hips. Also to tell how to dress correctly. In winter I used to go about without any underwear, wearing simply a pair of tights and a jersey for underwear. Now, however, it is quite noticeable as I have kept the second method. I have sent you, and hope to see it printed in "an ideal publication for the American youth." Thanking you for past favors, I wish I feel that I cannot express my thanks enough for answering my first letter, and wishing long life to all those who are interested in "Tip Top," I remain,

AN AMERICAN BOY TIP-TOPPER.

1. Weight 15 pounds above the average. Chest 1 inch short.
2. Massage is a good remedy. 3. It takes a long time for a sprain to heal. You must not be discouraged. 4. Variety in running is the best course. 5. Most athletes use them, I believe.
6. Alcohol is good. About all embrocations contain it. 7. Only by exercise.

PROF. FOURMEN: I have been a reader of "Tip Top" for more than two years, and I would like to give you my measurements. Age, 12 years; weight, 75 pounds; height, 5 feet 1 inch; chest, normal, 30 inches; expanded, 31 inches; waist, 20 inches; ankle, 9 inches; calf, 13 ¼ inches; wrist, 63 ⅞ inches; thigh, 18 ¾ inches. Would you please tell me my weak and strong points? Wishing you continued success, I am, yours very truly,

New York City.

FRANCIS SINGLET.

You need to get to work to straighten out the irregularities in your make-up. For instance, while your weight is 75 pounds when it should be 95 pounds, still your waist is 29 inches when, to be only normal, it should be 24 inches. Fortunately your chest is right.

PROF. FOURMEN: Having read "Tip Top" about two years, I take the liberty to ask you a few questions and send my measurements for criticism. I am 15 years 1 month old; height, 5 feet
7 inches; weight, 133 pounds; chest, normal, 33 1/2 inches; expanded, 35 3/4 inches; contracted, 32 1/2 inches; waist, 20 inches; wrist, 9 inches; calf, 14 inches; neck, 14 inches; wrist, 7 inches; forearm, 10 3/4 inches; biceps, normal, 10 5/8 inches; flexed, 13 inches; thigh, 20 inches; ankle, 9 1/2 inches. Of course these measurements were taken stripped. Drink neither tea nor coffee nor liquors, nor do I smoke. I can run 100 yards in 12 seconds; 3 miles in 171/2 minutes. Am I built for a runner? Wishing all good luck to "Tip Top," and thanking you in advance for your information, I remain, yours truly.

Manchester, N. H.

P. S.—I measure 16 1/2 inches across the shoulders.

Weight good. Chest expanded about what it should be normally. You should make a good runner when you have put the "steam boiler" in perfect shape—gained those inches in lung capacity that are lacking now.

PROF. FOURMEN: Having read "Tip Top Weekly" for a number of years, I now take the time to ask you a few questions. Please tell me how I can improve in my condition? I am 16 years 6 months old; weight, 120 pounds; height, 5 feet 11 1/2 inches; neck, 13 inches; chest, normal, 31 1/2 inches; thigh, 20 inches; ankle, 10 3/4 inches; calves, 14 inches; across shoulders, 15 inches. Please tell me what to do to be tall and strong. Hoping to see my letter in print, I close with three cheers for Street & Smith, Syracuse, N. Y. AN "ADMIRER".

It is very simple. Your chest is all right, fortunately, but you weigh 20 pounds more than you should. You must exercise much, and it would be wise for you to get one of our manuals so that you can lay out a good course. After you have carried this on diligently and faithfully for 3 or 6 months write me again, and I am sure the report will be of the right sort. As to your growing tall, that is something beyond our ken. We can only assist Nature by standing erect. Some boys stunt their natural growth by such habits as smoking. I trust this is not the case with you.

A LETTER FROM ILLINOIS.

PROF. FOURMEN: I will be 16 years old in June. In school clothes I weigh 145 pounds; my height is 5 feet 8 inches; chest, normal, 33 1/2 inches; expanded, 36 1/4 inches; neck, 14 1/4 inches; biceps, 13 inches; hips, 34 inches; waist, 31 inches; thigh, 21 inches; wrist, 7 inches; calves, 14 1/2 inches; across shoulders, 17 inches; forearm, 11 inches; ankle, 10 3/4 inches. I would like to be a good athlete. High jump, around 4 feet; standing broad jump, 8 feet. Have been taking cold baths in the morning and running about a mile and a half every morning to get good wind. Would like to enter for something on the track or field this year. We had a basket-ball team last year; I played guard and am in fair shape, a little heavy, I think. Thanking you in advance, and hoping to see this in next week's paper, I remain,

AN EAGER WAITER.

P. S.—Please state my weak points and send price of manual to build up the weak spots. Tell me where I am strong in points.

You weigh quite enough, but lack 3 1/2 inches in chest measurement. You will find our manual listed above the letters of this department.

PROF. FOURMEN: Being a reader of "Tip Top," I would like to ask a few questions. I am 13 years 6 months old; height, 5 feet 3 1/2 inches; weight, 113 pounds; chest, expanded, 31 inches; normal, 29 inches; waist, 38 inches; wrist, 6 inches; neck, 13 3/4 inches; biceps, 9 inches, expanded. How are my measurements? Am I overweight? I play all games. Don't eat sweets or drink tea or coffee. Hoping to see this in next "Tip Top," I remain, yours truly.

E. B. Plainfield, Conn.

Well, you are not so badly off, citizen. In weight you are a few pounds over the average. But your chest should border along 33 inches normal, and there is where you should get your licks in. Nothing will pay you better in the long run than to build up a fine pair of "bellows" that will stand you in good stead all through life. All athletes find great need of strong lungs.

tip top baseball tournament for 1909

The great interest taken by enthusiastic amateur baseball teams all over the country in our contests for some years past, has induced us to once again enter the field with a tempting offer. So here it is, boys: 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 1909, 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. When possible, send newspaper accounts of your games also to substantiate the score. DON'T FAIL TO SEND IN YOUR COUPON AT ONCE. No notice taken of any score not entered on a coupon cut out of Tip Top. Coupons must be properly made out, one for each game.

TIP TOP BASEBALL TOURNAMENT FOR 1909—TIP TOP BASEBALL TOURNAMENT COUPON

NAME OF TEAM.... TOWN.... STATE.... OPPONENT'S NAME.

PITCHER.... CATCHER.... 1B.... 2B.... 3B.... SS.... R. FLD.... C. FLD.... L. FLD.... MANAGER.

1909—TIP TOP BASEBALL TOURNAMENT COUPON.

WINNER.... FINAL SCORE....
HOW ABOUT THIS?

"The greatest baseball story I ever wrote"—Burt L. Standish says so, and he ought to know—is now running in

THE POPULAR MAGAZINE

and some of "Burt L.'s" boys are not reading it! ARE YOU ONE OF THEM?

THE SECOND INSTALLMENT OF

BILL BRUCE OF HARVARD

is even better than the first, and the others will be better still. If you have missed any, get the back numbers and start reading this great story NOW.

THE POPULAR is the biggest magazine in the world.

It is the only magazine devoted entirely to stories of action and adventure.

It is the only magazine which contains complete in each number a full length novel.

Each number contains one or more stories of college athletics.

Each number contains one or more detective stories.

Each number contains two or more Western stories.

It is the only magazine, except TIP TOP, in which the work of Burt L. Standish has ever appeared.

FIFTEEN CENTS ON ALL NEWS STANDS

STREET & SMITH, PUBLISHERS, NEW YORK
ALL OF THE BACK NUMBERS OF

TIP TOP WEEKLY

THAT CAN NOW BE SUPPLIED

180—Dick Merrick's Trust
181—Dick Merrick's Spark
192—Frank Merrill's Touch
194—Dick Merrick's Starstruck
195—Frank Merrill's Limbo
197—Frank Merrill's Flack
199—Frank Merrill's Temptation
202—Frank Merrill's Work
203—Frank Merrill's Breeze
204—Frank Merrill's Opponent
212—Frank Merrill's Football
217—Frank Merrill's Handicap
214—Frank Merrill's Stroke
215—Frank Merrill's Battery
231—Frank Merrill's Archer
232—Frank Merrill's Double Play
233—Frank Merrill's Find
244—Frank Merrill's Hurry
236—Frank Merrill's Captivity
238—Frank Merrill's New Promotion
237—Frank Merrill's Power
245—Frank Merrill's Policy
238—Frank Merrill's Precedent
410—Frank Merrill's Generalship
411—Frank Merrill's Kick
424—Frank Merrill's High Jump
241—Frank Merrill's Brass Shot
244—Frank Merrill's Shrewdness
245—Frank Merrill's Entertainments
246—Frank Merrill's Mastery
247—Frank Merrill's Dilemma
248—Frank Merrill's Search
250—Frank Merrill's Ring
251—Frank Merrill's Party
252—Frank Merrill's Life Struggle
505—Frank Merrill's Skill
504—Frank Merrill's Club
505—Frank Merrill's Scheme
506—Frank Merrill's Merry Move
557—Frank Merrill's Hands
558—Frank Merrill's Suspicion
559—Frank Merrill's Team
560—Frank Merrill's Sweetheart
561—Frank Merrill's Besom
562—Frank Merrill's Deceived
563—Frank Merrill's Coach
408—Frank Merrill's Fire
409—Frank Merrill's Great Profile
410—Frank Merrill's Revolution
411—Dick Merrick's Lead
414—Dick Merrick's Trap
415—Dick Merrick's Bait
416—Dick Merrick's Child
417—Dick Merrick in Constil
418—Dick Merrick's Tendency
419—Dick Merrick's Influence
420—Dick Merrick's Disc
401—Dick Merrick in Constantinople
402—Dick Merrick on the Nile
403—Dick Merrick's Curie
404—Dick Merrick's Triumph
405—Dick Merrick's Achievement
406—Dick Merrick's Pharaoh
407—Dick Merrick's Egypt
408—Dick Merrick's海拔
409—Dick Merrick's Discovery
410—Dick Merrick in Constantinople
411—Dick Merrick's Lead
412—Dick Merrick's Influence
413—Dick Merrick's Disc
401—Dick Merrick in Constantinople

558—Dick Merrick's Joke
559—Dick Merrick's Steer
560—Dick Merrick's Partner
561—Dick Merrick in the Tank
562—Dick Merrick's Captive
563—Frank Merrill's Tailor
564—Frank Merrill's Traitor
565—Frank Merrill's Horse
566—Dick Merrick's Intruder
567—Frank Merrill's Buff
568—Frank Merrill's Ringer
569—Dick Merrick's Silent Work
570—Dick Merrick's Meditation
571—Dick Merrick's Skill
572—Dick Merrick's Magneto
573—Dick Merrick's System
574—Dick Merrick's Salvation
575—Dick Merrick's Turning Point
576—Dick Merrick's Affair
577—Dick Merrick's Party
578—Dick Merrill's Seller
579—Dick Merrill's Team
580—Dick Merrill's Hurdy-Gurdy
581—Dick Merrill's Best Work
582—Dick Merrill's Respite
583—Dick Merrill's Disadvantage
584—Dick Merrill's Rest
585—Dick Merrill's Secret Rival
586—Dick Merrill's Right Guard
587—Dick Merrill's Friendly Hand
588—Dick Merrill's New Boy
589—Dick Merrill's Mode
590—Dick Merrill's Aids
591—Dick Merrill's Halt
592—Dick Merrill's Retaliation
593—Dick Merrill's Now or Never
594—Dick Merrill's Young Crew
595—Dick Merrill's Fast Nick
596—Dick Merrick's Double Bottle
597—Dick Merrill's Vanishing
598—Dick Merrill's Advice
599—Dick Merrill's Influence
600—Dick Merrill's Openness
601—Dick Merrill's Annoyance
602—Dick Merrill Held Back
603—Dick Merrill's Drop Kick
604—Dick Merrill's Trip
605—Dick Merrill's Aft Voyage
606—Dick Merrill's Churn
607—Dick Merrill's Summer
608—Dick Merrill's Demand
609—Dick Merrill's Summertime
608—Dick Merrill's Proposal
609—Dick Merrill's Spook
610—Dick Merrill's Hotter
611—Dick Merrill in the March
612—Dick Merrill's Fight for Fortune
613—Dick Merrill's Triumph
614—Dick Merrill's Trick West
615—Dick Merrill's Predicament
616—Dick Merrill in Mystery Valley
617—Dick Merrill's Propost
618—Dick Merrill on Top
619—Dick Merrill's Trip West
620—Dick Merrill's Aft Voyage
621—Dick Merrill's Midnight
622—Dick Merrill's Stand
623—Dick Merrill's Circle
624—Dick Merrill's Death
625—Dick Merrill's Joke
626—Dick Merrill's Muery
627—Dick Merrill Watched
628—Dick Merrill Doubled
629—Dick Merrill's Distress
630—Dick Merrill's Reach
631—Dick Merrill's Hunch
632—Dick Merrill's Strategy
633—Dick Merrill's Intrusion
634—Dick Merrill's Steer
635—Dick Merrill's Ringer
636—Dick Merrill's Favorite
637—Dick Merrill's Young Clipper
638—Dick Merrill's Steading Stand
639—Dick Merrill's Record Work
640—Dick Merrill's Shoulder
641—Dick Merrill's Desperate Stand
642—Dick Merrill's Example
643—Dick Merrill's Bluff
644—Dick Merrill at Gal's Gallop
645—Dick Merrill's Inspiration
646—Dick Merrill's Shooting
647—Dick Merrill in the White
648—Dick Merrill's Red Comet
649—Dick Merrill's Ranch
650—Dick Merrill in the Huddle
651—Dick Merrill's Brand
652—Dick Merrill's Red Guide
653—Dick Merrill's Rival
654—Dick Merrill's Secret Work
655—Dick Merrill's Way
656—Dick Merrill's Red Visitor
657—Dick Merrill's Rope
658—Dick Merrill's Longresa
659—Dick Merrill's Protection
660—Dick Merrill's Reputation
661—Dick Merrill's Reputation
662—Dick Merrill's Restraint
663—Dick Merrill's Addition
664—Dick Merrill's Driving
665—Dick Merrill's Cheers
666—Dick Merrill's Theory
667—Dick Merrill's Encouragement
668—Dick Merrill's Great

PRICE, FIVE CENTS PER COPY

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

STREET & SMITH, Publishers, 79 Seventh Ave., New York City
EARLY NUMBERS OF THE
TIP TOP WEEKLY
ARE PRESERVED IN THE NEW MEDAL LIBRARY

The following books in the NEW MEDAL LIBRARY contain numbers 1 to 417 of the TIP TOP WEEKLY. Many of the individual numbers before 417 are entirely out of print so that the thousands of boys who are interested in the early adventures of Frank and Dick Merriwell and who want to read everything that was written about them, will welcome this opportunity to secure their favorite reading in a form that is more readily preserved. PRICE, FIFTEEN CENTS.

150—Frank Merriwell's School-days.
157—Frank Merriwell’s Chums.
178—Frank Merriwell's Foes.
184—Frank Merriwell’s Trip West.
189—Frank Merriwell Down South.
193—Frank Merriwell’s Bravery.
197—Frank Merriwell’s Hunting Tour.
201—Frank Merriwell in Europe.
205—Frank Merriwell at Yale.
209—Frank Merriwell’s Sports Affair.
213—Frank Merriwell’s Races.
217—Frank Merriwell’s Bicycle Tour.
225—Frank Merriwell’s Courage.
229—Frank Merriwell’s Daring.
233—Frank Merriwell’s Athletics.
237—Frank Merriwell’s Skill.
240—Frank Merriwell’s Champions.
244—Frank Merriwell’s Return to Yale.
247—Frank Merriwell’s Secret.
251—Frank Merriwell’s Danger.
254—Frank Merriwell’s Loyalty.
259—Frank Merriwell in Camp.
262—Frank Merriwell’s Vacation.
267—Frank Merriwell’s Cruise.
271—Frank Merriwell’s Chase.
276—Frank Merriwell in Maine.
280—Frank Merriwell’s Struggle.
284—Frank Merriwell’s First Job.
288—Frank Merriwell’s Opportunity.
292—Frank Merriwell’s Hard Luck.
296—Frank Merriwell’s Protege.
300—Frank Merriwell on the Road.
304—Frank Merriwell’s Own Company.
308—Frank Merriwell’s Fame.
312—Frank Merriwell’s College Chums.
316—Frank Merriwell’s Problem.
320—Frank Merriwell’s Fortune.
324—Frank Merriwell’s New Comedian.
328—Frank Merriwell’s Prosperity.
332—Frank Merriwell’s Stage Hit.
336—Frank Merriwell’s Great Scheme.
344—Frank Merriwell on the Boulevards.
348—Frank Merriwell’s Duel.
352—Frank Merriwell’s Double Shot.
356—Frank Merriwell’s Baseball Victories.
360—Frank Merriwell’s Confidence.
364—Frank Merriwell’s Auto.
368—Frank Merriwell’s Fun.
372—Frank Merriwell’s Generosity.
376—Frank Merriwell’s Tricks.
380—Frank Merriwell’s Temptation.
384—Frank Merriwell on Top.
388—Frank Merriwell’s Luck.
392—Frank Merriwell’s Mascot.
396—Frank Merriwell’s Reward.
399—Frank Merriwell’s Phantom.
403—Frank Merriwell’s Faith.
407—Frank Merriwell’s Victories.
411—Frank Merriwell’s True Nerve.
415—Frank Merriwell in Kentucky.
419—Frank Merriwell’s Power.
423—Frank Merriwell’s Shrewdness.
427—Frank Merriwell’s Set-back.
431—Frank Merriwell’s Search.
435—Frank Merriwell’s Club.
439—Frank Merriwell’s Trust.
443—Frank Merriwell’s False Friend.
447—Frank Merriwell’s Strong Arm.
451—Frank Merriwell as Coach.
455—Frank Merriwell’s Brother.
459—Frank Merriwell’s Marvel.
463—Frank Merriwell’s Support.
467—Dick Merriwell at Farmland.
471—Dick Merriwell’s Glory.
475—Dick Merriwell’s Promise.
479—Dick Merriwell’s Rescue.
483—Dick Merriwell’s Narrow Escape.
487—Dick Merriwell’s Rocket.
491—Dick Merriwell’s Revenge.
495—Dick Merriwell’s Rose.
499—Dick Merriwell’s Delivery.
503—Dick Merriwell’s Wonders.
507—Frank Merriwell’s Honor.
511—Dick Merriwell’s Diamond.
515—Dick Merriwell’s Winners.
519—Dick Merriwell’s Dash.
523—Dick Merriwell’s Ability.
527—Dick Merriwell’s Trap.
531—Dick Merriwell’s Defense.
535—Dick Merriwell’s Model.
539—Dick Merriwell’s Mystery.
543—Frank Merriwell’s Backers.
547—Dick Merriwell’s Backstop.
551—Dick Merriwell’s Western Mission.
555—Dick Merriwell’s Rescue.
559—Frank Merriwell’s Encounter.
563—Dick Merriwell’s Marked Money.
567—Dick Merriwell’s Nomads.
571—Dick Merriwell on the Gridiron.
575—Dick Merriwell’s Disguise.

Published About July 13th.
524—Dick Merriwell’s Test.
528—Dick Merriwell’s Trump Card.
532—Dick Merriwell’s Strategy.
536—Frank Merriwell’s Triumph.

STREET & SMITH, Publishers, NEW YORK CITY