Neck and neck the two leaders flashed past the group of shouting spectators.
CHAPTER V.

THE SCHOOL.

Tom Dent conducted Willie West through the workshops of the manual-training school, where a great number of silent, industrious, interested lads were working earnestly and faithfully. In each room were two boys who seemed to be acting as overseers. There was also in each room a man instructor who seemed thoroughly conversant with every branch of work in his department and who had a faculty of imparting his knowledge and skill to the lads beneath him. Although conversation was not strictly forbidden, there was little of it, and what passed was carried on in low, subdued tones. The boys seemed too interested in their labors to give the newcomer more than a casual glance of curiosity.

The cabinet-making department seemed to interest West the most, and there he was inclined to linger longest, watching the young craftsmen skillfully handling their tools. It was with some difficulty that Dent succeeded in dragging him away.

"Come on," urged Tom. "You've got to see the whole plant, and you can't spend all your time in one place."

They descended a flight of stairs, Willie's ears being assailed by the ringing clang of many hammers, which suddenly grew louder as Dent flung open a door and they entered the blacksmith-shop.

West paused, shivering nervously as that banging and clanging of hammers beat upon his ear-drums. Before him were a score of boys in working-clothes with their sleeves rolled high, busying themselves to the last chap as if great results depended upon their efforts. Forges were gleaming and the hammers were smiting flying showers of sparks from red-hot pieces of iron. Some were employed at benches and lathes.

"This is where I work," said Dent, with a touch of pride. "I never did think I'd care much for any sort of real work, but it's fun being a blacksmith. I guess they won't put you into this department."

"I hope not," murmured West.

"See that big feller over there?" Dent pointed toward a huge, muscular chap with immense arms who was swinging a sledge as if he wished to put his whole soul into the blows he smote a gleaming piece of iron held upon an anvil by iron tongs that were grasped by another boy.

"Yes, I see him."

"That's Hunk Branch. He's a corker, he is. Ain't no feller in this school has any business with him, and I'm willing to bet he can wallop the best two chaps here without any great effort. His folks have got the dough. He knocked seventeen kinds of stuffing out of a man who tried to horsewhip him. Just beat the face off the man, and they tried to send him to limbo for it. I guess it cost his governor a handsome dollar to settle."

By this time Willie was beginning to think that his lot had been thrown with a band of young ruffians and criminals. He was not aware of the fact that Tom Dent's especial failing was his enjoyment in extravagant and sensational falsehoods. As a rule, Dent had little something on which to found his fabrications; but, with the slightest foundation, he could easily produce a tale of moral depravity and ruffianism that would make any stranger sit up and take notice.

On their way through the blacksmith-shop they passed close to the anvil at which Hunk Branch was laboring. Branch had lowered his sledge while his assistant once more heated the iron at the forge. He gave the two boys a look, and there was something of curious mockery in his face as he noted the appearance of the new arrival at the school.

"Hi, Dent!" he said, in a low tone. "What have you got there, a girl in disguise?"

"Sh!" whispered Dent behind his hand. "He don't look it, Hunk, but he's a prize-fighter. Killed his last man in a bout—struck him a poke over the heart that put that piece of machinery out of commission."

"Rats!" sneered Branch. "Go tell that to the gitties!"

West drew a deep breath of relief as they left the manual-training building and found themselves in the open air.

"What do you think of it?" asked Dent.

"I like the cabinet-shop, but I don't think I could bear to work in the blacksmith-shop."

"You'll work where they put you."

"But I—I thought they always give a fellow a chance to do the work he likes best?"

"You had a talk with Mr. Merriwell yet?"

"Father talked with him this morning."

"That won't count much. He'll have you up for a chin again. He'll find out what you're good for, if he can. Sometimes he shifts a fellow 'round through two or three different departments before he seems satisfied. That's the way he did with me. I didn't know what I wanted to do, and I s'pose he had to try me 'round to find out what I would do and what I was good for. Come ahead in here."

They entered another building, where West was
shown the splendid library and reading-room, in which a few boys were attentively engaged in perusing books or looking up special articles in magazines. In this room Dent spoke only in the most guarded whispers. Next they took a peep into a room where a class of boys studying text-books were seated at desks, and another class was interested in a mathematical demonstration upon a huge blackboard. The demonstration was being made by a member of the latter class, while the instructor looked on from his desk upon a raised platform.

"That's where fellers whose education has been neglected get posted up in the fundamentals," explained Dent. "If you ain't pretty well fixed with a good common-school education you'll have to plug good and hard right here. If you've got a fair education and got it good, you'll be given a chance in the advanced course in the next department, where they teach bookkeeping and banking and commercial law and such things. Oh, you've got to do some sort of studying while you're here, and you can't get out of it. A year's course here will get you pretty well fixed for business or a trade of some sort. Of course, you won't be finished all up, but you'll have a mighty good start so you can keep on if you want to."

The door of the next room was tightly closed, so that they were unable to peer in. Passing through a long corridor, they came to another door, which opened upon a lecture-room where Frank Merriwell himself was addressing a class of keenly interested lads, all of whom were taking notes of his remarks.

"What's he talking about?" questioned Willie wonderingly.

"It's hygiene this morning," whispered Dent, after listening a moment. "He talks about almost every old thing that has to do with good health and proper physical development. You see, not only do we have to do things here to build ourselves up physically, but we're supposed to know the reasons for everything we do and the laws which produce health and strength and physical perfection. I tell you he makes a feller understand it, too. After you've heard him talk a few times you begin to realize that you've been living like a fool and contrary to all the laws of nature.

"In most schools the scholars are permitted to slouch around and hump up any old way; but they ain't here, you bet. 'You've got to sit straight and walk straight and breathe right and do just the proper things to make you husky and strong. If you're caught slouching you get it good. Why, I was round-shouldered as the dickens when I came here three months ago. You see I've got my shoulders back some. Always carried my hands in my pockets, but if I'm caught at it 'round here I have to dance. I've heard Mr. Merriwell say that one of the curses of preparatory schools and colleges is the way fellers are permitted to slouch around and round up regardless. He even says that lots of college men think it proper and distinguished to be concaved in the middle and walk with a stoop and a slouch. He's a college man himself, you know, but you don't see any of that slouch style about him."

"I should say not!" breathed the new boy, his eyes fixed with admiration upon the straight, fine, manly figure of the principal of the school. "He's the best-looking man I ever saw."

"He's the best all-round man there is in the country," declared Tom enthusiastically. "They don't produce his equal once in a thousand years."

From this building they again sought the open air, where they paused for a moment just as the big bell of Farnham Hall clanged sharply.

"Now," said Dent, "we'll hustle to the gymnasium. That's the signal that sends everybody to the gym for his regular indoor development work. They'll be coming with a rush in a minute."

CHAPTER VI.

THE GYMNASIUM.

They came, whooping, frolicking, and laughing, but were entering the gym they formed in perfect order and marched into the building like a body of well-drilled cadets.

West had fancied he knew something of gymnasiums, but this one filled him with wonderment at its immense size and splendid equipment. On the main floor were to be seen the vaulting-horses, horizontal bars, striking-bags and disks, tumbling-mattresses and climbing-ladders, with swinging bars and flying rings suspended from the ceiling. Around the walls were the chest-weights with rowing attachments and the racks containing hosts of Indian clubs, dumb-bells, medicine-balls and so forth. Far above the head of any ordinary man a wooden running-track extended all the way around the room. The character of the apparatus which filled the main floor was such as would enable it to be quickly cleared away. Therefore, athletic indoor games of all sorts could be played upon that floor with little trouble at preparation.
At one end of the room was a door opening upon a locker room, where private apparatus could be kept by the boys. Near-by at the side of the room were some doors which opened upon the dressing-rooms, the baths and the swimming-pool.

 Barely had the new boy taken in all this when the floor swarmed with lads hastening forth from the dressing-rooms, where they had donned garments suitable for the work in which they were to engage. The biggest class of all cleared one end of the immense floor in a twinkling and ranged themselves in perfect order for a medicine-ball drill. Their instructor was a dark-faced, fine-looking young man, who seemed to have charge of the entire floor.

 "That's Mr. Hodge," explained Dent, pointing the man out to the new boy. "He's Mr. Merriwell's chief assistant. Mr. Browning, who used to have charge of the gymnasium work, has gone out West to take the branch of the school on Mr. Merriwell's ranch in Wyoming."

 "Why," breathed Willie, "is there a branch of the school out there?"

 "Yep; established one last fall."

 "That's queer," said West.

 "Oh, I dunno. You see the school here is getting mighty well filled up—almost overcrowded. Mr. Merriwell got an idea that it would be a good thing to have a big ranch out West, where he could send some of the scholars and give them a real touch of roughing it outdoors. You know he has a theory that the climate out there is beneficial to some chaps, especially those who have weak lungs. Look—see that slim feller just going into the tank-room?"

 "Yes."

 "That's Ross Fielding. He's captain at our table."

 "Captain at our table?"

 "Yep. Sits at the head of the table at meals and keeps order. His father is rich, but Ross is a good feller just the same. They thought he was going into consumption when they sent him here. Mr. Merriwell had him examined thoroughly, and found the bugs hadn't got into his lungs."

 "The bugs?"

 "Yep; germs, you know. One time everybody s'posed Ross would have to go out on the ranch; but he improved so fast here that Mr. Merriwell decided not to send him. He's one of our best swimmers and skaters."

 "I never dreamed this school was so big," muttered Willie. "It's wonderful! What did Ross Fielding do that made them send him here?"

 "What did he do?" echoed Dent, who had forgotten for a time to exaggerate after his usual manner. "Why, he had weak lungs, I told you."

 "Yes, but you said every fellow here had done something bad, and that's why—"

 "Oh, sure," chuckled Tom. "Lemme see, what did Fielding do? Oh, I remember now. He forged his father's name to a thousand-dollar check and spent the money for candy and ice-cream. You see, he's a perfect candy fiend—always has his pockets full of chocolate-drops and bonbons and molasses kisses and fudge and stuff like that."

 "But I can't see how he could spend a whole thousand dollars for candy," murmured the new boy blankly.

 "Oh, he bought the highest priced stuff. Paid ten dollars a pound for some of it."

 West inspected the now busily working roomful of clean, healthy, happy-appearing lads.

 "I can't believe they're all bad," he whispered to himself. "Some of them must be all right."

 Dent snickered, clapping his hand over his mouth and pretending to sneeze.

 "Oh, they're holy terrors," he averred. "You'll find it out, all right."

 "But the little chap—the one whose place you took—Stubby Rudd?"

 "Stubby? He's got a record."

 "I like his looks. I can't believe he would do anything wrong."

 "Oh, gee! Stubby cracked his father's safe and swiped the entire contents. His father's a storekeeper, you know, and he had a habit of locking up a lot of money in his own old-fashioned safe. Stubby kept watch and found out just when the old man had the most money in the safe. That night he got out of his bedroom window, entered the store by means of a key he had made to fit the back-door lock, filled the cracks of the safe door plumb full of dynamite, and blew the door right off the hinges. Slickest job you ever heard of. Why, a professional couldn't have done it better."

 Willie West looked discouraged and heartsick.

 "It's awful!" he muttered. "If my father had known about these things he'd never left me here."

 Dent longed to whoop with merriment, but repressed the desire by giving his tongue a savage bite.

 The medicine-ball drill seemed to interest West greatly, being somewhat spectacular in the precision and uniform accuracy maintained by those who engaged in it. At the chest-weights lads were laboring
joyfully and energetically. Others were chinning horizontal bars or performing surprising feats upon them. One fellow did the most amazing stunts upon the flying rings. Upon the ladders some chaps were cutting evolutions that caused the new boy’s eyes to bulge.

“Does every one go at the exercise he likes most?” he inquired.

“Not on your life! They have to follow the courses set down for them to pursue in order to strengthen their weakest points.”

“Who tells them what they must do?”

“Well, Doctor Schnitzle makes an examination and a report to Mr. Merriwell, who gives out the course to Mr. Hodge. You see Mr. Hodge has left the medicine-ball drill now. He’s going ‘round the room to make sure that everybody is doing his work properly. Here come the runners.”

Four or five lads in running-suits came out upon the raised track, around which they began to jog. The whole scene was one of energetic activity that impressed the newcomer at Farnham Hall with an unbounded sensation of awe.

“Are all the boys of the school here now?” he asked.

“Nay, nay,” answered Dent; “not quite half of them. You see, some of us fellers have other things to do, so we get a day off from gymnasium work once a week. The rest who can’t all get in here together are divided into two bodies. The first is at work now; the second class will follow.”

“And every fellow has to do gymnasium work whether he likes it or not?”

“I should guess yes! That’s what we’re here for principally. That was the original idea of this school. Mr. Merriwell has added to and developed that original idea until he now has a pretty fine combination. If he keeps on, this is going to be one of the biggest and most famous institutions in the United States, and that’s no dream.”

“But it never can be as big as the great preparatory schools at Exeter and Andover.”

“Can’t it! Now you’ve got another think coming, Bill. It will some day be bigger than both of them put together. Those schools fit fellers for college, but this school fits a feller for success in life and gives him a good, strong, healthy body to carry him along.”

“Do you like it here?”

“Say, I do that! Funny, too, for when I first came here I was the sorest groucher you ever saw. I thought I just hated the place.”

“Well, perhaps I’ll get so I can stand it after a while,” muttered West.

“You’ll have to, old chap; you might as well make up your mind to that,” laughed Tom Dent.

CHAPTER VII.

THE BULLY.

Dent escorted the new boy through the tank-room, where a lot of high-spirited lads were diving and splashing and swimming in the big tank.

“Here’s where we have water-polo games,” said Tom.

“Water-polo? I’ve never seen such a game.”

“Then you’ve missed lots of fun. You’ll see ‘em, all right. Do you swim?”

“Goodness, no! I’m afraid of the water.”

“Gee! won’t they soak it to you!”

“Can’t I get excused from swimming?”

“If you do you’ll be the first one that ever did hereabouts. No use to try it, Bill. Mr. Merriwell believes that every boy ought to know how to swim, and you’ll have to learn.”

“I can’t. There are some things I’m sure I never can do, and swimming is one of them.”

“Before you get out of Farnham Hall you’ll be surprised to find out how many things you’d do that you thought you never could do. Do you spar?”

“Oh, no.”

“Ever have the boxing-gloves on?”

“Only once. Some of the boys brought a set of gloves to school in Millrock, and they used to box at the noon hour. One time they made me put on the gloves with a big fellow who pounded me frightfully. Professor Foggart found it out, and he came near expelling the guilty parties. He wouldn’t let them have the boxing-gloves in the building any more after that.”

“Well, what kind of an old gazabo was Professor Foggart, anyhow?”

“The boys called him an old sissy.”

“That was right. You’ll have to take sparring lessons here, Bill.”

“Gracious! Does Mr. Merriwell believe that all boys should learn to fight?”

“Well, he says a feller ought to know how to fight if he gets cornered and can’t do anything else, and so he insists that every one of us learns to spar.”

“I never dreamed there could be such a school!” muttered Willie West.
From the tank-room they passed on into the locker-room, from which doors opened upon a huge dressing-room that was surrounded by smaller apartments of the same sort. West had caught a glimpse of still another room where a number of naked lads were indulging in shower-baths, and he wondered if he would be compelled to strip in the same manner and bathe publicly in that room.

In the main dressing-room were a number of half-dressed boys, who had finished their work in the gymnasium, taken a shower, and were putting on their school clothes. Among these was the huge chap by the name of Hunk Branch, whom Willie had seen in the blacksmith-shop.

Branch espied Dent and the new boy as they entered, and he signaled Tom, who led Willie forward.

"Introduce your friend, Dent," requested Branch, with a grin. "You told me he was a scrubber, didn't you?"

"Yep," was the prompt answer. "He's a holy terror, the champion of his class. Why, if he should go in for scrapping I'll bet he could take the belt away from Battling Nelson. Don't get fooled by his looks, for he's a deceiver. Bill, shake hands with Hunk Branch."

West had choked in an effort to contradict this statement, but before he could manage to stammer forth a single word Hunk Branch had seized his hand.

"Glad to know you, Bill," said the young blacksmith.

Then he gave Willie's fingers a squeeze that brought a cry of anguish from the lad's lips and made him dance with pain.

"Why, what's the matter with him?" chuckled Branch, holding fast to Willie's fingers and continuing to squeeze them until the boy fancied they would be crushed to pulp. "He seems nervous and excitable, Dent. What makes him make up such faces and utter such howls?"

A tall, slim lad stepped forth swiftly and seized Hunk by the shoulder.

"Quit it, Branch!" he ordered sharply. "You've got the strength of a bull, and you should have decency enough to repress your brutal inclinations to hurt somebody."

The speaker was Ross Fielding, the slender youth Dent had pointed out to Willie West a short time before.

Branch dropped the hand of the new boy and turned with a growl upon Fielding, his face growing purple with the rising tide of anger.

"What are you butting in for, Fielding?" he rasped in a low, fierce tone. "You're getting above your position, my fine fellow. Just because you happen to be captain of our company you think you can give off orders anywhere. You put on a lot of airs because your father's got money, but I want you to understand that my father has got just as much boodle as yours, and I'm just as good as you are. Further than that, if you meddle with my business again I'm going to punch your face for you. Got that?"

Fielding had not quailed a whit or betrayed the slightest token of alarm.

"Yes, I got that, Branch," he retorted quietly, "and, as you have made it so plain, I'll give you something to put in your pipe. You're one fellow in our entire company who is inclined to play the bully and brute. Hitherto I've stood for a lot of it, but hereafter I'll stand for nothing more. Just before this new boy came in here I heard you telling some cads about him, and you said you were going to make his life miserable for a while. You said you had taken a disliketo him on account of his sissy looks and ways. If you molest or hurt him in any way, shape, or manner, you'll answer to me."

"Oh, is that so? Well, I'm ready to answer to you now. If you want to fight——"

"Better not talk about fighting here," interrupted Dent quickly. "If they get onto it——"

"You know I'm not a scrubber, Branch," said Fielding; "but you can't frighten me with fighting talk, and you'll find I mean business. I've said all I have to say."

With which he disdainfully turned his back on the huge chap and walked away.

Willie West shuddered at the vicious, revengeful look in the eyes of Hunk Branch as that boy glared after Fielding.

CHAPTER VIII.

AN ORDEAL FOR THE NEW RECRUIT.

At midday Willie West had to face a terrible humiliation. He was conducted to the rooms of Doctor Schnitzle, the queer little German physician of the school, who inspected each new pupil and made out a report from which Frank Merriwell decided the course of physical exercises that should be followed. The doctor had a silent young man assistant in his office.
Schnitzle was a wheezy, roly-poly little German, and he embarrassed West by pausing, as the boy stopped in front of the table at which he was writing, and staring at him slantwise over the rim of his spectacles, which were perched so dangerously upon the end of his nose that they seemed ready to slip off.

"Goot morning, my poy," said the doctor. "How you vas? I hope you see me vell?"

"Ye-ye-yes, sir, I can see you very well," stammered Willie.

"Your name vas Vest, iss it not?"

"My name is West, sir."

"Dot's vot I saidt already—William Vest. How much didt you weigh?"

"Huh-huh-how much do I what?" stuttered Willie.

"How much didt you weigh?" cried the doctor, with such emphasis that the new boy shivered.

"I—really, I don't think—that I understand you, sir," faltered West. "I didn't quite—quite catch that—last word."

"Veigh, veigh, VEIGH!" shouted Schnitzle, rapping the table with his clenched hand and getting very red in the face. "Vot vas it uf you the matteration, anyhow?"

Willie retreated a step, gasping and ready to bolt from the room.

Evidently the doctor's assistant perceived the new boy's disposition to flee, for, silent-footed, he slipped along behind West and turned the key in the lock of the door.

Willie heard the bolt shoot in the lock and jerked his head round to see what it meant. He was filled with redoubled fears as he perceived the assistant removing the key and slipping it into his pocket. Now he knew he was a captive in that room with the singular, fierce-looking little German doctor and his silent, soft-footed assistant.

This doctor was the man who had "cut" Tom Dent's throat! Dent had told him that he was doomed to endure mysterious and fearful punishments and tortures, and the new boy felt that the time of his torment had come at last.

"Aroond at me look now!" commanded Schnitzle.

"Your attentions on me keep, vill you, yes? My querwestion you didt answear not. Vot iss it you weigh?"

But Willie was now in such a panic that he could not have answered the question had he understood.

"I—I dunno," he gasped.

"Vot iss your ache?" next demanded the doctor.

"My H?" murmured West. "What H? I have no H."

Schnitzle was in anything but a pleasant humor that morning, having passed through several irritating experiences. The new boy's failure to understand gradually infuriated the little German, who, more than once, had been tormented by the pretension of mischievous, joking youngsters that they did not understand him. As yet he could not believe that West really did not understand, but he felt certain this boy had been instructed by others since arriving at the school to make sport of him in his own office.

"Vas it a fool you are?" demanded Schnitzle, with infinite scorn, "or vos it a fool you would uf me make now? How many feet vas it in your stockings you standt?"

"Why—why, I've only two feet in my stockings."

"Oh, py chiminy, dot iss de limit already now!" snarled the little German. "You make uf me great sport, ain't it? You hav'py me von grand choke, eh? You put a choke on me, yes? You choke me, no?"

"Oh, no, no, I wouldn't choke you!" hurriedly declared Willie.

"Den vy didt you dodd it? Mr. Merrivell I vill toldt dot you didt choke me."

"But it won't be true! You have no right to tell him such a fib about me! I haven't touched you at all. I never choked anybody in all my life!"

Although the doctor's assistant remained silent and in the background, the expression on his face continuing solemn and stony, there was a twinkle about his eyes which seemed to indicate that he, at least, enjoyed the "choke."

In order to calm his nerves, the little doctor jumped up from the desk, ran his stubby fingers through his sandy hair, clawed at his whiskers, and pranced across the room and back in a way that would have produced shouts of laughter from an audience had he gone through such a performance on a vaudeville stage.

By this time, however, Willie West was beginning to fear that the physician at Frank's school was a madman. And this, added to a conviction that the scholars were all ruffians and criminals, produced by the exaggerations and yarns of Tom Dent, made him desperate almost to the joint of shrieking for help.

Having bounced down in his chair once more, a movement which caused his spectacles to quiver and vibrate as they hung tenaciously to the end of his nose, Schnitzle drew a long breath and with a fiery eye once more surveyed the new boy. By this time West was in such a state of terror that he trembled in every
limb and his knees threatened to give way beneath him. The expression on his face was so distinctly a look of genuine fright that Schnitzle began to think it too real to be feigned.

"Vot vas it py you der matteration?" the doctor once more demanded, seeking to repress his own feelings and doing his best to speak calmly. "I vant you to answer vot it iss next I ask you. I vant to know who it vas dot toldt you here to come undt hav fun py me. I vant you to gif me der name dot poy uf, so him I can to Mr. Merrivell report."

"Honestly—honestly and truly—no one told me to do anything," declared Willie, on the verge of tears. "That is, no one told me to do anything except to come here for examination. Will I have to have my throat cut, too?"

Schnitzle gasped.

"Py Chorch!" he muttered. "I pleifice me somepody hasseen hafing fun py you, yaw? So hellup me crachious, dot vas it? You vant not to believe everythings dese poy say. All my life in I nefer see yet so many liars undt rascals."

In this manner the physician was unconsciously confirming West's already settled belief that his father had unwittingly abandoned him in a school that was filled to overflowing with the most desperate characters.

"I was told that I would—catch it," he explained. "I was told that every new boy who come here got an awful going over. I—I'm not very strong. If you hurt me my folks will find it out some time, and they'll make a lot of trouble."

"Dot peen de limits!" breathed the doctor. "Dose pad poy has haf scared almost to death already. I did not it understood at first. Don't you uf me peen afraid, my poy; I vill not you hurt. You perception dot dere vas a misunderstanding between us, yes? At first I der idea got dot you haf sport py me. It peen all right, Villiam Vest, let me you assure. Vot to you iss didt this room in vill not you cause vun pit uf pain. I vos trying to find out how oldt you vas."

"Oh!" exclaimed Willie, relieved. "I'm most seventeen. I'll be seventeen in February, the ninth of the month."

"Vell, now, dot vas goot, dot vas goot," smiled Doctor Schnitzle, rubbing his hands and seizing a fountain pen, with which he made a note. "Progress was making us now, all righted, all righted. Nefer mindt about your weight undt your height. I vill hav Prown weigh you mitout your clothes and took your height your pare feet in. Behindt dot screen you may stoodt undt your clothes remove."

"Wh-what?" cried Willie in fresh alarm. "Must I undress?"

"Yaw!" laughed the doctor. "Dot vas nutning at all. You vill hav to off took your clothes to gif me a chance to find oudt vere your veak points peen undt to let Prown measure you and weigh you. Chouse go behindt undt don't mindt us."

By this time he was beaming in such a jolly, good-natured way that Willie did not shrink from him when he bounced up from his chair and came forward. The boy was conducted to the screen and gently pushed behind it, with instructions to make haste in removing his clothes.

"Some trunks you vill findt dot you may put on," said Schnitzle. "Ven you in swimming vent you didt not mindt doodding it pefore other poy's with only chouster trunks on."

"But I—I never went in swimming with other boys," came Willie's faltering declaration from behind the screen.

"My goatness crashious I vot a lot uf fun hass missed you!" cried Schnitzle, turning to his desk and resuming work amid his papers. "Ready for you I vill peen chous as soon as you couldt out come."

For nearly ten minutes Schnitzle's pen scratched and spluttered over the papers. Finally the doctor stopped and called:

"Are you readdy yet, Villiam?"

"Nun-no," was the faint answer.

"Up hurry," urged the doctor.

Three more minutes passed, and then the physician once more put the question.

Again the boy behind the screen answered that he was not ready.

"Vot is vas dot detentions you?" asked the German in perplexity. "It took your clothes a long time to undress you."

Finally Schnitzle rose and tiptoed softly to the screen, behind which he peered, discovering West standing there, half-undressed, in an attitude of helplessness and despair.

"Vy don't you completion the removal of your clothes?" asked the doctor. "Vy don't you on put dose trunks and out come?"

"There's no trunks here," said Willie. "If there was I wouldn't know how to put them on."
A light dawned on Schnitzle, who burst into a shout of laughter which caused his sides to shake.

"Vos it a pabbage trunk you was looking for?" he cried. "My poy, lot peen de name of dot little garment dot iss put on ven you swimming in go. It vas hanging up a hook on rightd there behind your pack."

Falteringly Willie took the swimming-trunks from the hook and held them up for inspection.

"You needt not pe afraidt to on put dose trunks," assured Schnitzle. "Der time iss passing vid rapidness. Vunce more I must ask to up hurry."

Shivering at the prospect of the ordeal before him, West continued to remove his clothes to the last stitch, after which he pulled the swimming-trunks on and drew up and tied the lacing which held them in place. But when this work was completed he remained behind the sheltering screen, feeling that it was impossible for him to present himself before the doctor and his assistant in such a plight.

Eventually, Schnitzle was compelled to coax the lad forth, which he succeeded in doing with many blandishments.

Standing on the rug near the doctor's desk, Willie shivered, his eyes downcast, his face suffused by a blush.

Doctor Schnitzle went about the work of taking the boy's measurements with an air of so much indifference to Willie's condition that it was not long before the lad began to feel relieved. From Willie's neck to his ankles the doctor applied the tape, stating each measurement in a sharp, snappy tone, his words being repeated by the assistant, who was jotting down those measurements upon a sheet of paper. This part of the ordeal proved much easier to undergo than the boy had supposed. He took fresh alarm, however, when Schnitzle produced a queer-looking apparatus with which he listened to the action of Willie's heart and lungs.

"You was nervous now," said the doctor, "undt it makes your heart go like der dickens, but it peats with perfect regulation. Your lungs peen all rightd, exception dey development need. Your throat into I vill look now."

Brown, the assistant, ran a window-shade high to admit the light, and Schnitzle looked into the boy's throat.

"Goot," nodded the doctor. "Dose tonsils uf yours peen all rightd."

"Then—then you won't have to—to do any cutting, doctor?"

"Not a pit. Haf you peen sick a great deal, William?"

"No, I don't think so; really, I'm seldom ill."

"Vot haf you didt for exercises?"

"Why, I've taken the regular courses in the high school and at boarding-school. I had to do all the exercises required in mathematics and—"

"I mean not dot. Vot sort of gymnastics haf you didt? Vot sort uf goot pody-puilding sport haff peen interested in you?"

"Oh, I've never taken any gymnastics, and I couldn't take part in sports and games."

"Vy not?"

"Because—because I never learned how, and my mother wouldn't let me go in for such rough things."

"Oh, yawl!" rasped the doctor. "Dot peen de vay with some fool vimmin. Ven a poy's mother him tells he must not games play pecause they vas so rough, she vas damache doing her own son, yes! Instead uf him helping to become a goot, strong man, she vas him making a poor, veak goot-for-nothing. Efery poy dot could do so should take part in gymnastics undt outdoor games. Dey shouldt run undt chump undt pox undt wrestle undt play pase pall and football."

"Oh, football is awful rough and brutal. Lots of fellows get injured and killed playing it."

"Yawl, it vas very roughness," agreed Schnitzle, "undt no poy who iss not properly trained and prepared should part take in it. If you vas to play football now, iss a hundred-to-one shot you would get damached pad—mepppe you would pe killed. Uf here at dese school you stay ven year, mepppe you will development undt training get vat will made you able to football play. Nefer yet hass any poy at dese school peen hurt pad in dot game. Vy it vas? Choust pecause Mr. Merrivell vill not let any poy into it go who iss not de finest undt most perfect condition in. You
He flung himself down upon a chair and sat there, pondering a number of desperate plans of escape, when the sound of running feet in the corridor came to his ears and his door was flung open with a bang by Stubby Rudd.

"Hi, there!" cried Stubby. "What the dickens are you doing, Bill, fasting? I supposed Dent would look out for you and see that you marched to the dining-hall with the rest of the fellers; but after we all got there I discovered your place at the table was vacant. Come on."

"I don't want anything to eat," said Willie.

"Oh, rats! You ought to be hungry."

"I'm not."

"Well, you'll have to come just the same."

"I don't see why I should when I don't want to eat."

"Unless a feller is sick or excused he's got to appear at table regular. You don't have to eat after you get there, but you've got to get there. If you haven't any appetite to-day, you will have by the time you've been here a little while. You ought to see us fellers eat! Come on, I say."

In vain West protested. At last, when Rudd threatened to drag him to the dining-hall by main force, he yielded, shrinking from the jolly-looking, sandy-haired chap who, according to Tom Dent, had robbed his own father's safe.

The huge dining-hall in which the boys were seated at long tables, with the captain of each table at the head, presented a spectacle that again overcame the new boy with a sensation of something immense and overwhelming in which he was a most insignificant part.

Ross Fielding was the lad at the head of the table to which Stubby Rudd escorted Willie. The moment the new arrival reached his place Fielding tapped on the table and spoke to the lads assembled around it.

"Boys," he said, rising to his feet, "we have a new member. His name is William West."

Then, to the unspeakable embarrassment of Willie, every lad rose and saluted him with a bow, while they spoke in chorus, saying:

"How do you do, Mr. West."

As they calmly sat down Willie collapsed upon his
chair, his face burning, his tongue unable to utter a single syllable. Thereafter his eyes were fastened upon his plate and the food before him. He heard those boys conversing in low, restrained tones, without any of the rough boisterousness that he had fancied might be expected from such a gathering of desperate characters. They all seemed good-natured, and appeared to be enjoying the meal very much.

Stubby Rudd was seated at West’s elbow, and he made sure that Willie got his proper share of the food, which, although plain, was hearty and wholesome and relishable.

“I can’t believe that he’s a thief,” thought the new boy, as Stubby continued to look after him. “It doesn’t seem possible all these fellows can be so bad.”

“How about the ice, Stubby?” asked a boy on the opposite side of the table. “All ready for the hockey-match?”

“Sure,” answered the little chap. “Say, there wasn’t much snow on the ice, anyhow—just a little, and you should have seen us fellers clean it off. It was fun getting that snow off with scrapers and brooms; and we’ve got half the pond cleaned in fine shape.”

“Mr. Merriwell thought we might have to flood the ice for a new freezing,” said another boy.

“Oh, that was when it began to snow last night,” said Stubby. “He reckoned on a bigger snowfall than we had. If we’d had to flood it there wouldn’t be any skating to-day.”

Then Willie heard the voice of Hunk Branch, who laughingly boasted that his team would defeat the opposing team with ease. The sound of that fellow’s voice gave West an unpleasant sensation and filled him with sudden regret over the knowledge that Branch sat at that table.

“Don’t you be so sure, Hunk,” said Fielding. “You thought you were going to win that last game.”

“We lost it by only one point,” said Branch, “and you fellows got that through a fluke.”

“Oh, shush!” exclaimed Rudd. “That’s a poor excuse. We won on our merits, and you know it, Hunky.”

“Who’s talking to you?” growled Branch. “You attend to your new friend at your elbow.”

“Who do you mean?”

“Him.”

A corn roll, shot with accuracy by the hand of Hunk Branch, struck West in the face.

Fielding saw this act and spoke up promptly.

“Branch,” he said, “you’ll play no hockey this afternoon.”

“Why not?” demanded Hunk.

“You know why. You know what you did just now.”

“Oh,” sneered Hunk, “so you’re going to put me off the team, are you? You’re going to make sure that you’ll win again, are you?”

“That will do,” said Fielding. “I’m here to maintain order at this table, and I propose to do it. If you make any further back talk you won’t play hockey again for a week.”

“Sh!” hissed somebody. “Here comes Mr. Merriwell.”

CHAPTER X.

WINNING A BOY’S CONFIDENCE.

The approach of the master of the school checked any further disturbance that might have taken place at that table. It is doubtful if Branch, knowing that he could not escape punishment for his insolence, would have ventured to make further back talk to the lad at the head of the table; but if his anger was sufficient to override his good judgment it was quickly suppressed on the appearance of Frank Merriwell.

Frank had a way of visiting the various departments of his school at any unexpected moment, and he usually appeared unannounced, so that, in a great measure, he kept track of the way things were conducted at the institution without depending wholly upon the reports of his assistant teachers and instructors.

One thing the boys had learned by experience, and this was that Merry had no use for a tattletale or a spy. It was the duty of his assistants to keep track of things and post him on all matters that he should know, and he could usually discover a method of obtaining such information as he desired without encouraging any boy to tell on his fellows.
The "trusties" of prisons and reformatories are, almost without exception, cowardly, treacherous creatures, seeking to better their own condition by betraying their unfortunate comrades. In nearly every instance the boy who runs to his teacher and tattles all the misdeeds of his schoolmates is likewise cowardly and treacherous, and is either looking for revenge for some fancied wrong or seeking to curry favor in the master's eyes by his miserable, sneaking action.

The very fact that those boys at Farnham Hall knew Frank Merriwell had no use for informers was sufficient to put the great majority of them upon their honor to behave and obey school regulations while no one was present to note and report their possible wrong-doing. Of course, there were numerous exceptions, and among these Hunk Branch, the big, coarse-grained, brutal, bullying son of wealthy parents, was the most prominent. Hunk was one of those perverted fellows who took delight in inflicting pain upon weak and defenseless creatures, either human beings or dumb animals. For this reason he was heartily detested by a great many of those boys, who, however, fearing his brutalities, sought to hide their real feelings toward him.

Hunk was jealous of Ross Fielding, who had been chosen captain of that company and who sat in the place of honor at the head of the table. The bully believed that he himself was far better qualified for the position, and he had long contemplated rebellion against the authority of Fielding. The action of the captain in interfering with him in the dressing-room of the gymnasium had brought his resentment to a point of bursting into open rebellion.

Outside of the buildings and beyond the parade-ground of the school Fielding had no more authority over Branch than any other boy, and already Hunk had resolved to force the issue under circumstances and at a place where they would stand on equal terms.

Frank Merriwell's eyes seemed to take in everything that was transpiring in that room. His face was grave, yet not stern or forbidding. To Willie West's surprise and increased confusion, Merry stopped by his seat and placed a hand on his shoulder.

"West," said Frank, "when dinner is over I wish you would come to my private office."

The new boy attempted to say that he would, but his words were an unintelligent series of choking sounds, which struck Stubby Rudd as highly ludicrous and caused the little chap to bite his tongue to suppress a snicker.

Merriwell passed on slowly and disappeared from the room.

West fully expected the wrangle between Branch and Fielding would be resumed the moment the master was gone, but nothing of the kind occurred. True, Hunk shot the captain one or two vicious, threatening glances, but Fielding either did not see or ignored them.

When the boys had finished eating, the clear, silvery stroke of a bell rang through the room. At this those lads rose from the table, placed their chairs in proper position, and stood in long, straight, regular lines behind those chairs.

Willie sought to imitate the example of his companions.

Again the bell rang sweet and clear.

As one boy, they turned and faced toward the main entrance to the room, the huge, double doors of which now swung silently open.

Again the bell sounded.

The captain of the first table stepped briskly toward the door, followed by his company, the lads falling in behind him in a long, double line and keeping perfect step.

As the last of that company passed through the door, beyond which the leaders had turned sharply at a command and disappeared from view, the next company began to move and fall in behind them without a break.

In this manner the great dining-hall was emptied without the slightest bustle or confusion.

As soon as the company broke ranks outside, West hastened toward Frank Merriwell's private office. Ascending the stairs, he faltered at the door of the first room, in which Merry's stenographer was busying herself with flying fingers upon the keyboard of her typewriter. She gave him a glance and spoke without pausing in her work.
“Mr. Merriwell is waiting for you in his office.”
“Come in, West,” invited Merry, as the boy once more faltered in the doorway that led to that private room. “Please close the door behind you.”

Willie did so, and was invited to take a chair close by Frank’s desk.

“Now,” said the master of the school, smiling on him in a pleasant, reassuring manner, “you and I will have a little chat together. I presume Rudd showed you around and gave you a chance to see what sort of an institution we have here?”

“Nun-no, sir.”
Merry’s eyebrows lifted the least bit.

“No?” he murmured. “How is that? Rudd was instructed to do so.”

“Ye-yes, sir; but he had to see about getting the ice ready for skating, and he—he turned me over to Tom Dent.”

Just the faintest shadow of a frown appeared on Merriwell’s brow.

“I’ll have to find out how that happened,” he said. “It’s not right that a boy should be given conflicting duties to perform. Then Dent acted as your escort?”

“Yes, sir.”

“He conducted you through the buildings and the various departments, did he?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Well, then you have seen that we are pretty busy here at Farnham Hall. There’s nothing better for a good, healthy boy than to keep busy. Idleness produces discontent and affords an opportunity for the concocting of a great deal of mischief. A normal boy demands activity; he must busy himself at some employment, either physical or mental. Most boys dislike anything that is labeled work, and yet for mature persons a great deal of their most enjoyable play would be regarded as work. The way to make work acceptable to any one is to take pains that it shall be agreeable and pleasant. This is true not only with boys, but with persons of both sexes and all ages. In order for any one to be successful in life he must follow an occupation in which he takes both pleasure and pride, and he must follow it conscientiously and faithfully.

“The reason why there are so many failures in this world, as I told your father, is that such a great number of persons are unfortunate in choosing, or being thrown into, a life occupation. It is no easy task among so many boys as I have here to find out precisely the thing for which each one is adapted, and to arouse his interest in that sort of work, sport, or study. In making this choice I need the help of every boy. He must talk to me frankly and without fear of his likes and dislikes, his pleasures and his distastes. Sometimes it is very hard to induce a boy to do this, and usually what makes it hard is the fact that all his life his inclinations have been repressed and scoffed at by others, who fancied they knew what was best for him. I’ll guarantee, West, that you had such an experience. Now tell me honestly and frankly if I’m not right.”

“Well, I—I dunno,” hesitated Willie. “I’m sure, sir, my mother wanted to do what was best for me; but you see—you see she’s a woman, and she can’t always understand—”

“That’s just it,” nodded Merry. “Most boys reach an age at which no woman can thoroughly understand them, and the great misfortune is that, in thousands of cases, their fathers make no effort to understand them. Now, if you were going to take up any sort of work you saw performed in the manual-training department what would it be? Perhaps you didn’t see anything that really appealed to you, but tell me what you fancy you would enjoy most.”

“I—I was most interested in—in the cabinet-making department.”

“Good,” smiled Frank.

“But I’m afraid, sir, that I never could do that work, for I’ve never had any experience at it.”

“Not one boy out of a hundred in the manual-training department has had any experience at the work he takes up. They all have to begin green and untrained. Your father showed me a bit of your whittling, West. I have it here.”

Frank took out the piece of wood on which Willie had carved with his jack-knife the pattern of an oak-leaf. The boy flushed as he saw that bit of work displayed before his eyes. Many times he had been scolded and derided for his “whittling.”
“Oh, I—l just did that for amusement; I did it for something to take up my mind.”

“And you enjoyed it. Now, I want to tell you something, my boy, and that is that I have examined this bit of rough carving and found it wonderfully true to nature. Not only have you produced the leaf in its proper form and shape, but you have sought to trace the little lines and veins to be seen in an oak-leaf. This shows that you must have studied such a leaf closely and you have a keen observation and a mind retentive of form. Did you ever see any fine wood-carving, West?”

“Only one piece, sir.”

“What was that?”

“It was the mantel of a fireplace in the home of the professor at Grafton. It was the most beautiful thing I ever saw. I couldn’t keep my eyes off it.”

“Can you describe it to me?”

Thus encouraged, West entered into a minute and elaborate description of the carved mantelpiece which has filled him with such keen interest and admiration. In his great enthusiasm, he quite forgot his usual timidity, lost his self-consciousness and spoke without faltering or effort. Frank Merriwell listened as if keenly interested in every word that came from the boy’s lips.

Suddenly West stopped short, aware with a feeling of consternation that he had been talking without reserve to this man who was the master of Farnham Hall.

“That was indeed a fine piece of work!” exclaimed Frank, with all the enthusiasm that the boy seemed to feel himself. “I wish I might see it. West, wood-carving is an art—a high art. The person who has ability and talent to perfect himself in that art is fortunate indeed. I believe I have discovered your natural bent, and I shall do my best to give you a chance to develop and improve this talent of yours. You shall have a set of wood-carving tools and patterns. If necessary, I will see that you receive instructions from one qualified to teach you.”

Willie West felt a sudden glow and thrill running through his entire body. It seemed most surprising and marvelous that he should be encouraged in this thing which his own parents and many others had heretofore regarded as mere whim and folly.

In that moment all dread or fear of this kindly, sympathetic, discerning man vanished, never to return.

CHAPTER XI.

A NEW OUTLOOK.

“To-morrow morning,” said Merriwell, “you will be given an examination in the usual course of studies. I am sure you will demonstrate proper fitness in all these; but there are some special lines you might take up if you wish, such as bookkeeping and banking. If you have no taste for these things, there are courses of reading which may be followed. I shall wish you to do something while you are here to improve your mind as well as your body, for I am convinced that the two should be trained at one and the same time, and it is a great folly to give special attention to one while wholly neglecting the other.”

Frank did not bring the interview to an end there, but, having won the confidence of the lad, he pursued what seemed to be a random and unpointed conversation in which he gradually drew Willie out in regard to himself and his habits. This time was not wasted by Merriwell, who was seeking to penetrate the closed chambers of the lad’s heart that he might decide upon the right course to pursue in handling him. That West was nervous and timid and wholly lacking in self-confidence was all too apparent. This nervousness must be overcome; this timidity must be subdued; this lack of confidence must be remedied.

“To a large extent, West,” said Merry, “life is a battle. Some would-be philosophers have denied this trite old saying, but it is true, nevertheless. To succeed in this battle a man must be qualified, and he must fight—but he should fight fair and square and aboveboard. Have you never felt this inclination to fight your way to some goal?”

“I don’t know about that, Mr. Merriwell. My mother always told me that it was low and brutal to fight. She has a dreadful horror of it since father came so near killing a man.”
"How did that happen?"

"Oh, my father has a dreadful temper, although he holds it in check nearly always. Sometimes it gets the best of him. Once one of his laborers attacked him with a hammer and tried to beat in his head. Father dodged the blow, which struck him glancingly and staggered him. All his terrible anger burst out in an instant, and he went at that man bare-handed, took the hammer away from him, threw him down and would have killed him had not some other workmen interfered. As it was the man was laid up for a long time, and they thought he was going to die."

"Um," murmured Frank, nodding his head a bit. "Your father says that you take after your mother, West."

"In most things I do, sir, but I know that sometimes I get crazed with rage just like my father. When I'm that way I scarcely know what I do. I'm all the time on my guard against it now."

"That's proper, for the person who fights blindly and without method usually injures himself more than any one else."

"Do the boys fight here at this school, Mr. Merrickwell?"

Frank laughed.

"Well, not to my knowledge," he replied, "although I can't say that no personal encounters occur between them. They are taught to spar and wrestle, but at the same time they are impressed with the theory that such qualifications should be used by a man only in time of need or in self-defense, never in unnecessary aggression."

"But—but some of these boys must be awful—awful bad. I don't understand it at all."

"How is that? I have an idea that my boys are anything but bad or vicious."

"But they have done such terrible things. They've actually committed crimes."

Merry looked surprised.

"They have?"

"Why, didn't you know about it?"

"No."

"That's strange. Tom Dent told me. He told me that Stubby Rudd blew open his father's safe, that Ross Fielding forged a check, and that Hunk Branch nearly killed a man who tried to horsewhip him. He told me every boy here had a record. Why, he even said that he himself had committed arson."

"And all these terrible deeds, West, are pure figments of Dent's vivid imagination."

Willie gasped.

"You—you don't mean to say that—that he lied to me?"

"I'm afraid he did," nodded Frank smileingly. "That's Dent's worst failing. I hope to cure him of it some time. To my knowledge, Rudd never cracked a safe, Fielding has never committed forgery, and I hope Branch has never tried to beat any one up."

"Gracious!" palpitated the new boy. "I really thought it was all true, and still I couldn't quite believe it of those fellows. Rudd seems so jolly, and Fielding is such a nice chap."

"Don't let Tom Dent fool you with any more of his extravagant yarns, West. You may go row. The rest of the day is yours to enjoy as you choose. This afternoon there will be a hockey-match and skating-races at the pond. You had better enjoy them. If you skate, a pair of skates will be provided for you."

The boy left that room in a state of mind wholly different from that in which he had entered it. No longer was he filled with dread and aversion for his schoolfellows. No longer was he desirous of taking flight from Farnham Hall. Already he was possessed by the belief that at this school he would learn things never taught him before, and within him sprang into life an eagerness and yearning to begin without delay.

CHAPTER XII.

AWAKENED AMBITION.

Put Cooper saw Willie leaving the building.

"Here, West!" he cried. "I want to see you."

The new boy stopped and looked around inquiringly.

"Come on," said Cooper, "I've got a suit that's just right for you. You're to take it to your room."

Willie followed him into a wardrobe-room, where he
was given a uniform like those worn by the boys at the school.

"When shall I put it on?" he asked.

"Any time you please," answered Cooper; "the sooner the better. You'll have to wear it to-morrow, anyhow."

Hurrying to his room, Willie locked the door and made eager haste to change his clothes for the new uniform. When he had donned it, he tried to get a look at himself in the small, square mirror, which, however, was most unsatisfactory. Nevertheless, he could see that the suit fitted him very well, and somehow he felt that he looked more manly and independent in it. It gave him the sensation of being at last a real student at Farnham Hall, and he was confident that this was something in which he would soon grow to take great pride.

From his window he watched a company of boys going through a drill upon the parade-ground, and he wondered if he himself could ever become so proficient in such evolutions.

When this drill was over there seemed a relaxing of the rigidity and discipline at the school. He beheld squads of boys with their skates hurrying past and away toward the pond, laughing and shouting as they went.

"I don't know much about skating," he muttered; "but I'd like to try it. Mother was always afraid that I'd break through the ice and be drowned. I caught it once when she found I'd borrowed a pair of skates and tried it without her knowledge."

While he was hesitating, the sound of voices in the corridor reached his ears, followed by the tramp of feet and the rat-tat of his door-knob as some one tried to open the door.

Bang! bang! bang—somebody hammered at that door.

"Hi, there, West, open up!"

It was the voice of Stubby Rudd, and Willie hastened to spring the lock.

Rudd was followed by Fielding and Dent, all of them carrying skates. Fielding had an extra pair.

"Come on, you mole," urged Stubby, "you're coming out to the pond with us."

"I've got a pair of skates for you," said Fielding.

"Oh, my!" grinned Dent; "doesn't he look fine in his new togs! You would never think by the looks of him that he had swiped the contents of the Sabbath-school contribution-box."

"You've got that wrong, Dent," said Willie, seized by a sudden whimsical inclination. "It was the purse of my Sabbath-school teacher that I stole."

"Hey?" cried Rudd.

"What's that?" exclaimed Fielding.

"Gee! tell us!" urged Dent.

"All right," said Willie. "As long as the rest of you fellows and everybody else in this school has done such things, I don't mind. You see, my teacher was a slender, delicate old lady who was kind and gentle and not very strong. One dark night I waylaid her in an alley and hit her over the head with a twenty-pound bar of iron. That fixed her, all right, and I got away with her purse in a hurry."

"Wow!" shouted Dent. "Is that true?"

"As true as any of the things you've been telling me about Rudd and Fielding and the rest of the fellows here," replied Willie. "You said Rudd cracked his father's safe, Fielding forged a check, and——"

But Stubby had whirled on Dent and was backing him against the wall. Fielding joined Rudd, and both of them seemed on the point of giving Tom a thumping, which filled West with sudden consternation and regret over his exposure.

"Look here, Tom Dent," snarled the little chap, "that's the twentieth lie you've told about me, and it's the limit! You've had me commit every crime conceivable."

"That's right," said Fielding, "and I'm a fellow sufferer."

"If you ever tell another story like that about me," said Rudd, "I'm going to give you a handsome pair of black eyes!"

"And if he can't do it," said Fielding, "I'll guarantee to finish the job to the king's taste."

"You've got to let up on it!" rasped Stubby. "It may seem like a fine joke to you, but it gives people who swallow your lies a mighty bad impression of me."
"Never told any such a thing in my life!" gurgled Dent. "West made it all up out of whole cloth. Didn't you hear him tell that whopper about himself?"

"Come off!" said Rudd. "We're on to your curves. We know your tricks. No use to squiggle."

"Not a bit," agreed Fielding.

"But I'm—I'm sure he only meant it for fun, 'put in the new boy appealingly. "Don't hurt him."

"Aw, slush!" scoffed Rudd. "He has too much fun at the expense of other fellers. Don't you be so afraid of hurting somebody, Bill. If you are, you'll find lots of people more than willing to hurt you. Just make up your mind that you'll give as good as they send, and do your prettiest at it. That's the way to make 'em stand off and respect you."

"You've had fair warning, Tom," said Fielding, still holding fast to Dent's collar. "A joke is a joke, and I think I can take one as well as anybody; but persistent lies of the sort you tell are bound to do injury. I should hate to feel it my duty to thrash you."

"Perhaps you won't feel like thrashing anybody by the time Hunk Branch gets through with you," muttered Dent. "You'd better not thump me. I'll bet you'll have your hands full before the afternoon is over."

Fielding shrugged his shoulders.

"If every other fellow in this school is going to let Branch bully him, I'm not," he said. "He's a big, strong bull, but that makes no difference to me."

"We've got to hustle, fellers," said Rudd. "Come ahead, West; no hanging back."

"But I can't skate. I can't even stand on skates."

"You've got to learn if you stay here. Somebody will help you. What you want to do is to sail right into things. Quit hanging back and saying you can't, for you'll find that you've got to and that you can."

West was with them when they left the building and struck across the snowy fields by the well-beaten path that led to the pond.

Coming over a rise and catching sight of the pond, the new boy's heart gave a thump. The spectacle was a lively and delightful one for any normal boy. Fully half the pond had been swept clean of the light fall of snow, and over the glassy surface of the ice gay skaters were darting hither and thither, shouting, racing, chasing, hockey-pucks and thoroughly enjoying the finest of all winter sports.

There was a race between half a dozen of the Farmham Hall lads. Neck and neck the two leaders flashed past the group of shouting spectators. Their speed as they fled along made Willie gasp with surprise and admiration.

Hastily the new arrivals proceeded to adjust their skates and make them fast. Rudd gave Willie West some attention and assistance, finally helping him to rise to his feet, where he stood helpless and awkward, feeling the skates sliding, sliding, sliding, his legs spreading, and being sure that he was on the verge of a terrible catastrophe.

Down he went with a thump, but in a twinkling he was caught up by Rudd and Put Cooper. Between them he was whirled out toward the middle of the ice and once more abandoned.

"Don't be afraid, don't be afraid," said Stubby. "Never mind if you do fall. Look out not to bump your head, that's all."

Willie tried to keep his feet together, and in doing this he began to stroke awkwardly and feebly, lurching forward and backward, his arms outspread, and presenting a spectacle that brought shouts of laughter from many of the spectators.

"You're doing fine, fine," declared Rudd. "Don't quit. Keep it up. That's the stuff! You're getting your balance now. First thing you know you'll be skating."

Whisk! Willie's feet shot out from beneath him and down he came again. This time he did not wait for them to lift him, but got upon his hands and knees and attempted to rise. His skates shot out backward and he sprawled upon his stomach.

"Don't quit!" implored Rudd. "Stick to it! I'll bet on you! Every fellow has to do them stunts when he's learning. Don't you care if they do laugh."

No one had ever before encouraged Willie in such an effort, and now, feeling a sudden rage within him because he had made such a spectacle of himself, he registered a mental vow that he would rise and stand up or die in the effort.
Four or five times he rose and fell, but finally he accomplished the feat of standing, and then, cheered by Stubby Rudd, he listened to the little chap’s instructions and sought to skate. He succeeded, too, even better than he had any reason to suppose he could.

His perseverance and determination won the applause of others beside Rudd, and soon he found that he was no longer an object of universal attention and merriment. He worked hard, and his efforts brought forth the perspiration, in spite of the crisp, clear, cold atmosphere.

Wishing to get out of the thick of the skaters and off to one side where he would be in no one’s way, Willie gradually worked his way to the far end of the pond, where there were some thick woods upon the shore. His small success filled him with elation and a feeling of triumph.

“T’ll learn to skate; I’ll learn to do all the things that other boys do,” he whispered to himself. “I can, and I will!”

CHAPTER XIII.

THE FIGHT.

Away over there by the far shore he was finally tempted to rest ere seeking to recross the pond. He had observed some boys who skated past at a distance, headed toward that shore, and, as he sat upon a stone at the edge of the ice, Stubby Rudd came tearing toward him, stopped short with a scraping sound of runners, dropped on his knees, and hastily began to remove his skates.

“Where did they go, West?” he asked.

“Who?” said Willie.

“Fielding, Branch, and the others.”

“I don’t know. What’s the matter?”

“There’s a fight on.”

“A fight?”

“Yes. Fielding and Branch are going to have it out. The hockey-game is held up till they settle it. There are their tracks over there. They're somewhere up here in the woods.”

By this time Stubby had his skates off, and, with them in his mittened hands, he scrambled from the ice and followed at a run the tracks which led into the silent woods.

Willie West sat there filled with a strange feeling of horror, mingled with a longing to stop that fight somehow.

“Fielding got into trouble with Branch on my account,” he muttered. “If he hadn’t interfered with Hunk in the dressing-room——”

By this time he was frantically fumbling at his own skates in the endeavor to remove them from his feet. He got them both off after a while, dropped them right there upon the ice and started after Rudd, who had vanished in the woods.

Up to this point he scarcely seemed aware of what he was doing. Hitherto he would have kept away from a fist-fight, filled with fear by the mere knowledge that such an encounter was taking place. But now the belief that he was responsible for this affair led him to make all possible haste to reach the scene of battle. He did not know what he would do when he arrived there, but he was determined to do something to stop it.

Panting and floundering, he tore through the thickets, where the bushes whipped him across the face, following those tracks on and on until at length he came to the far side of the woods, where he beheld a spectacle that caused his heart to leap chokingly into his throat.

Nearly a dozen boys were watching two lads, with coats, vests, and collars removed, fighting furiously with their fists. One of the two was already groggy, yet he stood up gamely to the punishment which the other continued to administer with malicious delight.

Hunk Branch, although he had not the fistic science of Fielding, was master of the situation, having fought the slenderer youth to a standstill.

“Stop! stop!” screamed Willie, as he dashed forward.

Then he saw Branch catch Fielding a swinging blow on the jaw. That blow stretched Fielding at full length upon the snow, and he lay there, finished.

“Oh, you brute—you brute!” panted Willie.

He did not see the barbed-wire fence in his path. The boys had broken down the upper strands of that
fence so that they could step over it, and these dangling wires tripped Willie and sent him headlong upon his face.

"I guess that settles Mr. Fielding," said Branch, with a triumphant laugh. "Give me my coat and vest, Dent."

Willie scrambled up and went forward until he saw Rudd and others working over Fielding to revive him. The face of the defeated lad was bruised and cut and bleeding. The spectacle made Willie West sick at heart, but at the same time it filled him with unspeakable indignation and fury.

The victor, with two or three of his seeming admirers, had turned back toward the pond. Branch was putting on his coat and vest as he moved away.

With a scream, Willie West dashed after him.

"You cur! you brute! you miserable fellow!" shouted Willie, his face almost as white as snow, while his eyes gleamed wildly.

Branch paused on the point of stepping over the barbed-wire fence and turned to face the boy who was leaping at him.

"Get out, you little puppy!" he roared. "If you put a hand on me I'll——"

He had time to say no more, for West leaped at him, striking with both fists.

Hunk was staggered and took a step backward to maintain his balance. His feet were caught and became entangled in the barbed wire, which caused him to fall heavily, prone upon his back.

In another instant Willie West leaped pantherishly upon the fallen fellow, pinning him down. Unable to extricate his feet, Branch was rendered helpless to a large extent, although he tried to ward off the furious blows which West rained upon his face.

Tom Dent attempted to seize Willie's collar and pull him off, but Stubby Rudd thrust Dent to one side, crying:

"Keep your hands off! Don't you interfere, or you'll get yours!"

If Branch had any sympathetic friends in that crowd, no one save Dent made a move to assist him. Like a fury the new boy rained his blows upon the face of the fallen chap. It was not long before Hunk's

nose was bleeding, his lips cut, his eyes battered, and he began to roar lustily for help.

"Take him off! take him off!" he shouted. "I'll kill him when I get up!"

"You'll never get up!" panted Willie. "You've killed Fielding, and I'm going to finish you!"

"By Jove!" spluttered Jim Dover, "he would do it if he could, too. Why, I never saw such a little wildcat. He's a perfect fury."

It was too much for Hunk Branch. Before long he began to blubber and beg.

"Quit! quit!" he entreated. "Stop it and I'll never touch you again! I promise—I promise on my word! Oh, quit!"

Ross Fielding had revived, and now he grasped West and lifted him from the whipped and cowed boy.

"That's enough, Bill, old boy," he said. "He's squealed, and he's given a pledge. If he breaks his word, I reckon there are plenty of fellows here who will make him dance for it. I'm all right. He caught me on the jaw and put me out for a minute, but I won't look half as bad as he will to-morrow. He'll wear your marks for a long time."

"Oh, oh, Fielding, I thought he had killed you!" half-sobbed West. "What have I done? What have I done?"

"You've done a first-class job," laughed Ross. "You're all right, Bill, old man. You're no coward, and the fellow who picks you out for one is going to get fooled. You're a dandy, you are!"

THE END.

**The Next Number (667) Will Contain**

Frank Merriwell's Diplomacy

**OR,**

**SUBDUING A BULLY.**

EATEN BY A TREE.

By PETER PARR.

Many years ago I turned my restless steps toward Central Africa, and made the journey from where the Senegal emptied itself into the Atlantic, to the Nile, skirting the Great Desert, and reaching Nubia on my way to the eastern coast.

I had with me then three native attendants—two of them brothers; the third, Otoma, a young savage from the gaboon uplands, a mere lad in his teens; and one day, leaving my mule with the two men, who were pitching my tent for the night, I went on with my gun, the boy accompanying me, toward a fern forest which I saw in the distance.

As I approached it I found the forest was cut into two by a wide glade; and, seeing a small herd of the common antelope—an excellent beast in the pot—browsing along the shaded side, I crept after them.

Though ignorant of their real danger, the herd was suspicious, and, slowly trotting along before me, entered me for a mile or more along the verge of the fern growths.

Turning a corner, I suddenly became aware of a solitary tree growing in the middle of the glade—one tree alone.

It struck me at once that I had never seen a tree exactly like it before, but, being intent upon venison for my supper, I looked at it only long enough to satisfy my first surprise at seeing a single plant of such rich growth flourishing luxuriantly in a spot where only the harsh fern-canes seemed to thrive.

The deer, meanwhile, were midway between me and the tree, and looking at them I saw they were going to cross the glade.

Exactly opposite them was an opening in the forest, in which I should certainly have lost my supper; so I fired into the middle of the family as they were filing before me.

I hit a young fawn, and the rest of the herd, wheeling around in their terror, made off in the direction of the tree, leaving the fawn struggling on the ground.

Otoma, the boy, ran forward at my order to secure it, but the little creature, seeing him coming, attempted to follow its comrades, and at a fair pace held on its course. The herd had meantime reached the tree, but suddenly, instead of passing under it, swerved in their career, and swept around it at some yards distance.

Was I mad, or did the tree really try to catch the deer?

On a sudden I saw, or thought I saw, the tree violently agitated, and while the ferns all around were standing motionless in the still evening air, its boughs were swayed by some sudden impulse toward the herd, and swept almost to the ground. I drew my hand across my eyes, closed them for a moment, and looked again.

The tree was as motionless as myself!

Toward it, and now close to it, the boy was running in excited pursuit of the fawn. He stretched out his hands to catch the animal. It bounded from his eager grasp. Again he reached forward, and again it escaped him. There was another rush forward, and the next instant boy and deer were beneath the tree.

And now there was no mistaking what I saw.

The tree was convulsed with motion.

It leaned forward, swept its thick-foliaged boughs to the ground, and enveloped from my sight the pursuer and the pursued; I was within a hundred yards, and the cry of Otoma from the midst of the tree came to me in all the clearness of its agony.

There was then one stifled scream, and, except for the agitation of the leaves where they had closed upon the boy, there was not a sign of life.

I called out "Otoma!"

No answer came.

I tried to call out again, but my utterance was like that of some wild beast smitten at once with sudden terror and its death-wound.

I stood there, changed from all semblance of a human being. Not all the terrors of earth together could have made me take my eye from the awful plant, or my foot off the ground.

I must have stood thus for at least an hour, for the shadows had crept out from the forest half-across the glade before that hideous paroxysm of fear left me.

My first impulse then was to creep stealthily away, lest the tree should perceive me, but my returning reason bade me approach it.

The boy might have fallen into the lair of some beast of prey, or it might be the terrible life in the tree was that of some great serpent among its branches.

Preparing to defend myself, I approached the silent tree, the harsh grass crisping beneath my feet with a strange loudness, the cicadas in the forest shrilling till the air seemed throbbing around me with waves of sound. The terrible truth was soon before me in all its awful novelty.

The vegetable first discovered my presence in about fifty yards distance. I then became aware of a stealthy motion among the thick-tipped leaves, reminding me of some wild beast slowly gathering itself up from a long sleep, a vast coil of snakes in restless motion. When I came within twenty yards of it, the tree was quivering through every branch, muttering for blood, and, helpless with rooted feet, yearning with every branch toward me.

Each separate leaf was agitated and hungry. Like hands they fumbled together, their fleshy palms curling upon themselves and again unfolding, closing on each other and falling apart again—thick, helpless, fingerless hands—rather lips or tongues than hands—dimpled closely with little cuplike hollows.

I approached nearer and nearer, step by step, till I saw that these soft horrors were all of them in motion, opening and closing incessantly.

I was now within ten yards of the farthest reaching bough. Every part of it was hysterical with excitement. The agitation of its members was awful—sickening, yet fascinating.

In an ecstasy of eagerness for the food so near them, the leaves turned upon each other. Two, meeting, would suck each other face to face, with a force that compressed their joint thickness to a half, thinning the two leaves into one; and at last, faint with the violence of the paroxysm, would separate, falling apart as leeches gorged drop off the limbs.

A sticky dew glistened in the dimples, welled over, and trickled down the leaf. The sound of it dripping from leaf to leaf made it, seem as if the tree were muttering to itself. The beautiful golden fruit, as they swung here and there, were clutched now by one leaf, and now by another, held for a moment close enfolds from the sight, and then as suddenly released.

I watched the terrible struggle till my starting eyes, strained by intense attention, refused their office, and I can hardly say what I saw.

But the tree before me seemed to have become a live beast. Above me, I felt conscious, was a great limb, and each of its thousand clammy hands reached downward toward me, fumbling.

It strained, shivered, rocked, and heaved. It flung itself about in despair.

The boughs, tautened to madness with the presence of flesh, were tossed to this side and to that, in the agony of a frantic desire.
The leaves were wrung together as the hands of one driven to madness by sudden misery. I felt the vile dew spurring from the tense veins fall upon me. My clothes began to give out a strange odor.

Was I bewildered by terror? Had my senses abandoned me in my need?

I knew at least—but the tree seemed to me to be alive! Slowly, ever over toward me, it seemed to be pulling up its roots from the softened ground, and to be moving! A mountainous monster, with myriad lips, mumbling together for my life, was upon me!

Like one who desperately defends himself from imminent death, I made an effort for life and fired my gun at the approaching horror.

To my dazed senses the sound seemed far off, but the shock of the recoil partially recalled me to myself, and, starting back, I reloaded.

The shot had torn their way into the soft body of the great thing. The trunk, as it received the wound, shuddered, and the whole tree was struck with a sudden quiver. A fruit fell down—slipping from the leaves, now rigid with swollen veins, as from carven foliage.

Then I saw a large arm slowly droop, and without a sound it was severed from the juice-fattened hole and sank down softly, noiselessly, through the glinting leaves.

I fired again, and another vile fragment was powerless—dead!

At each discharge the terrible vegetable yielded a life. Piecemeal I attacked it, killing here a leaf and there a branch.

With the last touch of the slaughter till, when my ammunition was exhausted, the giant was left a wreck—as if some hurricane had torn through it.

On the ground lay heaped together the fragments, struggling, writhing, sprouting, and falling. Over them drooped in dying languor a few stricken boughs, while upright in the midst stood, dripping at every joint, the glinting trunk.

My continued firing had brought up one of my men on my mark. He fired not—so he told me—come near me, thinking me mad.

I had now drawn my hunting-knife, and with this was cutting the leaves. But each leaf was instinct with a horrid life; and more than once I felt my hand entangled for a moment and seized as if by sharp lips.

Ignorant of the presence of my companion, I made a rush forward over the fallen foliage, and, with a last paroxysm of frenzy, drove my knife up to the handle into the soft bole, and, slipping on the fast congealing sap, fell exhausted and unconscious among the still panting leaves.

My companion carried me back to the camp, and, after vainly searching for Otona, awaited my return to consciousness.

Two or three hours elapsed before I could speak, and several days before I could approach the terrible thing.

My men would not go near it.

It was quite dead; for, as we came up, a great-billed bird, with gaudy plumage, that had been securely feeding on the decaying fruit, flew up from the wreck.

We removed the rotting foliage, and there among the dead leaves, still limp with juice, and piled around the roots, we found the ghastly relics of many former meals, and—its last nourishment—the corpse of little Otona. To have removed the leaves would have taken too long, so we buried the body as it was, with a hundred vampire leaves still clinging to it.

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**RED SEA HAD RED FOG.**

Plowing through the most uncanny of all fogs, a sand fog, the freighter *Oceano*, Captain H. Monro, arrived in Boston harbor recently from Shanghai and Eastern ports, says the Boston Transcript. When the *Oceano* entered the Red Sea it was immediately apparent why that body of water had been given its name. Now from the time of its rising to its setting was blood-red, when it was visible; the sky was red; with a thin mist like a dense fog, sometimes allowing an observation of a mile, and again shutting in close. The water was red, and after a few days of steaming through this atmosphere the officers noticed that the decks, stanchions, funnels, ventilators, even the inner walls of their cabins, were covered with a thin layer of this fine red dust.

They brushed it; they brushed it off their clothes; they even ate it in their food. To an Eastern navigator the explanation was simple. In the Gulf of Aden the *Oceano* had received some hard treatment at the hands of the southwest monsoons, the same winds which had made the disturbance in the desert. The red sand, or, to be more exact, the red dust, smoke from the desert sand-storms, had swept out across the Red Sea in a thick fog through which the *Oceano* steamed practically all the way to Suez.

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**TRAINING FOR A RUNNING MATCH.**

When training for a running contest, the athlete must, in the first place, look to his stomach and see that it is in good condition. If he commences to exercise violently after a period of comparative rest he is almost sure to upset digestive organs, and to guard against this there should take a mild cathartic. He should begin easily, and work up day by day as his strength and agility increase. Neither should he wear clothing that will produce profuse sweating, that method of reducing flesh having been proved to be decidedly harmful. He should eat plenty of wholesome food, but never indulge in pastry or tobacco in any shape. Having got into good condition, he should decide what distance he proposes to race, and turn his whole attention to it, never striving to become a long and short-distance runner at one and the same time. Two or three trials of speed at 40 or 50-yard distances should be made every day, after getting in fair condition, slowing up gradually each time. Then finish up the day with a run of 150 to 200 yards at three-quarter speed, and so on, day by day, until the stipulated distance is covered at full speed.

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**HORSE SPECTACLES.**

Although it may seem almost ludicrous to think of horses wearing spectacles, it is nevertheless a fact that they do sometimes wear them.

The object of the spectacles is to promote high-stepping. They are made of stiff leather, entirely enclosing the eyes of the horse, and the glasses used are deep concave, and large in size. The ground seems to the horse to be raised, and he steps high, thinking he is going up-hill or has to step over some obstacle.

This system of spectacle-wearing is adopted while the horse is young, and its effect on his step and action is said to be remarkable. It has been discovered that the cause of a horse's shying is, as a rule, short sight, and it is now suggested that the sight of all horses should be tested, like that of children.

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**CHINESE ATHLETICS.**

The Chinese have always had athletic exercises of a sort, in which they have rather prided themselves, though none ever seem to have taken such a hold on the nation as ours have on us during the last century or so. They have plenty of stories of strong men capable of wielding extraordinary weapons, of bending wondrous bows, or of lifting heavy weights, etc.

Even within the last few years feats of archery were done before an officer could get his commission in the army, and in almost any village there is a bamboo with a pierced stone at either end to test the strength of the rising generation in lifting. But there was nothing of regular athletic training, except a few wrestlers, perhaps, before foreigners came.
TIP TOP�LY WEEKLY.

NEW YORK, January 16, 1909.

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TIP TOP ROLL OF HONOR.

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

Donald Hendricks, Indiana.
Walter A. House, Pennsylvania.
L. G. Tackaberry, Toronto, Canada.
W. D. Tilton, New Jersey.
Herman G. Noss, Jr., Pittsburg, Pa.
M. A. Scott, Newark, N. J.
Elmer Schaefer, California.
Lieu. Henry S. Hatton, Ind.
Joe Humbard, Tennessee.

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 sure and address your letters "Editor Tip Top Weekly Post Card Offer.""

There are a great many benefits which I have derived from "Tip Top." First of all, I have learned the great lesson of honesty, shown so plainly by Dick and Mercy and their hosts of friends. I have also found out the great lesson and benefit derived by total abstinence from tobacco, liquor, and other in-urious things. Truth is another great lesson of the "Tip Top." But the climax is reached when we learn to be broad-minded like the writer of the "Tip Top," who shows this plainly by mingling all kinds of characters, religions, and races together in his famous stories, and showing the good and bad qualities of each in such a way that he is admired and beloved by every

one. Burt L. has done more good in his Merriwells than all the performers put together. When I began to read the "Tip Top" I was laughed at, but many of those who laughed are now devouring the pages of the "Tip Tops" and Medals with great eagerness and can hardly wait till the next comes out. That is the only fault of the "Tip Top." It is not published often enough. One for each meal would not be too many. I am 16 years old and am a senior at Central High School. I remain yours truly,

Cleveland, Ohio.

If you or any one else can mention another writer of boys' stories who has won half the regard that is felt for the author of the Merriwells by the young people of the States and Canada, we would be glad to hear it.

I started to read "Tip Tops" about six months ago, and I think they are grand. I have read all the back numbers I could find, but I am not satisfied and want to get the very first numbers, but as I live in Canada I do not know if you will take Canadian money; if you do, will you please tell me how to send half a dollar. Give my love to Dick, Frank, and Brad. I think I will close by giving three cheers for Burt L. Standish and Street & Smith. Yours,

A CANADIAN BOY.

Hanover, Canada.

You can send stamps. All the earlier issues of "Tip Top" are out of print in their original form; but we have joined three and four numbers together, making a complete story, and they are to be had at a very small sum for each in the Medal Library, as you will see in the "ad" upon the last page of our cover.

Well, I just can't wait any longer. "Nothing beats a trial but a failure." I am not a boy, but I will tell you what I have done for dear old "Tip Top." I have read from "Frank Merriwell's School-days" to "Frank Merriwell's Honor," in the Medal Library and nearly two hundred "Tip Tops." I have loaned a good many of mine. I have read some in my time, but I think Burt L. Standish ought to have the list of American writers today. I have a boy and girl about grown, but I can't get the boy interested in them as much as the girl. Indeed, words fail me; I could never tell you how much I enjoy reading them. The Medal Library books are not bad here. This place is the limit. Last year I lived in Baltimore, Md., where I read the whole library, and I shall continue to read "Tip Top" as long as I can see to read. Wishing a long life to Burt L. and Street & Smith, I am a "Merriwell" lover,

LEXINGTON, VA.

MRS. E. K. SPIZER.

We consider this a compliment indeed, and only wish that boy could be aroused to the great good he would get in reading these interesting human stories.

I am sorry to say that I have not read the great magazine called "Tip Top Weekly" much more than a year, but during that time I have got over eight persons to read it, and they think it is the best reading there is; and, as far as I am concerned, I know it is the best ever published. I get it every week, and my mother will not allow me to read any other five-cent weekly.

Of the girls I like Inza, Elsie, June, Doris, Claudia, and Mabel D.

Of the boys, Frank, Dick, Bart, Bruce, Jack Diamond, Bouncer, Rob, Tommy, Jones, and, best of all, Bradley Buckhart, the unbranded maverick of the Pecos.

I would like to see Braid and June chum up together when the right time comes; also Dick and Doris, and Rob Claxton and Mabel. I remain,

A STRONG ADMIRER OF BRAD BUCKHART.

CABINDE, Mich.

Thank you.

(A letter from Ohio.)

As I have been a lover of "Tip Top" I undertake to write to show how much I have appreciated these stories.

I have read all of the last three years' numbers, some of them belonging to my cousin, for he is a regular Tip Topper.

The first time I ever read a "Tip Top" was over at my cousin's house; I never knew they were so fine till then. Nearly every one of my boy friends reads them and are after
me all the time to let them take back numbers. I certainly can say that I have made many Tip Toppers.

I think these stories help boys both morally and mentally.

"Tip Top" is certainly the king of all weeklies. I have read many of the ten-cent books of Frank Merriwell and like them very much.

My sister read a "Tip Top" one night and has read them ever since.

I hope this letter will be published soon.

I would like to know what happened to Cap'n Wiley, the wind-jammer.

Three cheers for Mrt. Burt L. Standish and Street & Smith, publishers. Yours truly, FRANK MORTON.

Cap'n Wiley was killed in a railroad accident. The news was brought to the Merriwells, and they have found no reason to doubt the accuracy of the report up to the present. We thank you for the deep interest shown in pushing the circulation of our little weekly magazine.

(A letter from Indiana.)

I have read your glorious weekly for eight years, and I think it is just grand. I have read most of the Medal Libraries and all of the back "Tip Tops." I loan my "Tip Tops" to any boy who asks for them, and I think the owners of these books have made many new readers. There are about fifty readers in this town that I know of. I like Frank best, and then comes Dick, Bart, wild and woolly Brad, Tommy Tucker, Dale Sparkler, old and young Joe Crowfoot, big lazy Bruce Browning, Tubbs, and, last but not least, Chester Arlington. I am glad that he is now Dick's friend. Of the girls I like Inza, Elsie, Winnie Lee, June, and Doris. Well, I have already taken up too much valuable space, so I will close with three cheers and a tiger for "Tip Top," Burt L., and Street & Smith. Very respectfully, DONALD HINDEICKS.

You are doing very well, and we feel that it is only right and proper to place your name on our Honor Roll.

(A letter from New York.)

As I am a constant reader of "Tip Top," the "king of all weeklies," I take the liberty to write to the Applause column. I can truly say that the "Tip Top" stories and the Medal Library books of Frank Merriwell are the best that I ever read. I started to read the five-cent numbers of weeklies about five years ago, but when I bought my first "Tip Top"—No. 97—"Dick Merriwell's Distress"—and read it, I never bought a different weekly again, and have been reading the "king of weeklies" since. I like all of Frank's and Dick's friends. And really I admire some of their open enemies, as it makes the stories interesting. I am trying my best to get the young boys and girls to read them, and I think I am prospering fairly well. In this letter I also order forty-one Medal Library books of Frank and Dick, as I wish to read them to know Frank's early life, and they are so interesting!

I think Mr. Standish one of the best writers in this country for good clean reading. I will close now, or I shall take too much space in the Applause, for I know other boys and girls wish their letters published also. Your faithful reader,

H. W. SCHRAEDER.

Which proves beyond all question that this correspondent knows a good thing when he sees it, and we can easily guess that he has profited in every way possible from this peculiar type of moral stories.

I have read your magazine three years. I like "Tip Top" because it is full of good clean reading and is an ideal paper for the American youth. It has caused me to quit the use of tobacco, and it has given me an interest in physical锻炼. And I now consider of great importance. I am an admirer of Frank and Dick Merriwell and their friends, and expect great things of the future. I wish to read the "Tip Top" Weekly." I remain a true friend to the "Tip Top" and Burt L.

Yours truly, HERBERT MACTAR.

You will have to wait some time before your brother Frank gets into the harness at Fardale; but he is growing rapidly, and gives good promise of keeping up the reputation of the Merriwells.

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QUESTIONs AND ANSwERS.

EDITED BY PROP. FOURMEN.

NOTICE—So many inquiries reach us each week concerning the various manuals on athletic development, which we publish, that we have decided to keep a list of them at the head of this department. Your name and address can be had by mail by remitting 10 cents, and 3 cents postage, for each copy, to the publishers.

FRANK MERRIWELL'S BOOK OF PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT.

THE ART OF BOXING AND SELF-DEFENSE, by Prof. Donavan.

U. S. ARMY PHYSICAL EXERCISES, revised by Prof. Donavan.

PHYSICAL HEALTH CULTURE, by Prop. Fourmen.

Prop. Fourmen: Twice within the last three years I have sent you my measurements, and you pronounced them both times as being very good, with the exception of my weight. Kindly give your frank opinion of the following, telling how to take on weight, as I have tried different methods and all of no avail.

Age, 15 years; height, in bare feet, 5 feet 2 inches; weight, in gym. clothes, 66 pounds; chest, normal, 34 1/4 inches; expanded, 38 inches; neck, 12 1/2 inches; biceps, 9 1/2 inches; forearm, 9 inches; waist, 26 inches; thighs, 12 1/2 inches; calves, 12 inches.

I wrote you about five months ago, and waited patiently for the above to appear in the pages of "Tip Top," but it was never printed. Trust that the above will escape the surplus basket.

Yours truly, JOSEPH OATES.

Cincinnati, Ohio.

Why, you are only 4 pounds under weight. Keep along the lines you are doing now. Chest is 54 inches above the average. I think you are doing excellently, Joseph.

Prop. Fourmen: Having read the "Tip Top" for about four years, and never having written before, I would like to know how the following measurements are: Neck, 15 inches; biceps, normal, 11 1/2 inches; flexed, 13 inches; forearm, 12 inches; wrist, 7 inches; chest, contracted, 36 inches; expanded, 49 inches; thigh, 24 inches; waist, 34 inches; calf, 15 inches; weight, 175 pounds; age, 18 years; height, 5 feet 10 inches. Hoping this will not find the waste-basket, I remain, A SINGLET-WEAVER.

Raymond, Wash.

Your weight should be 155 pounds; chest, normal, 39 inches; waist, 25 inches. Your surplus weight shows in the excess of inches about your middle. You should try and reduce this.

Prop. Fourmen: I am 16 years old, weigh 108 pounds, and 5 feet 2 inches tall. What should my other measurements be? Do you think the Whitely exerciser is good for building up all the muscles? I recently bought "Frank Merriwell's Book of Physical Development," and would advise all "Tip Top" readers to get one, as it has helped me very much. Can you suggest a few exercises to cure knock-knees? Hoping this does not receive the fate of my other letters, I remain,

New York City, N. Y. A LOYAL TIp Topper.

You are 8 pounds overweight. Chest should measure 31 inches, normal; waist, 25 inches; hips, 32 inches; thighs, 18 inches, and calves, 14 inches. It is very good to use an exerciser in its place—better still to do your exercising in the open air. The finest cure for knock-knees is horseback exercise. You never in your life saw a knock-kneed cowboy or cavalryman. They rather incline the other way.

(Letter from New York.)

Prop. Fourmen: Being constant readers of the "Tip Top," we take the liberty of asking a question or two. Concerning the exercises, Exercise no. 5, "Up the Hill," it was given to us, but we don't know how to begin this exercise. How high does the hill have to be?

Harold Mahoney: Height, 5 feet 6 inches; weight, 132 pounds; mule, 10 1/2 inches; calf, 12 1/2 inches; thigh, 48 inches; waist, 10 inches; chest, normal, 34 1/4 inches; neck, normal, 13 1/2 inches; forearm, right, 10 1/2 inches; left, 10 1/2 inches; biceps, right, normal, 10 inches; expanded, 11 1/2 inches; left, normal, 10 inches; expanded, 11 1/2 inches; wrist, left, 62 inches; right, 62 inches.
George Hurst: Height, 5 feet 7½ inches; weight, 150 pounds; ankle, 10½ inches; calf, 14½ inches; thigh, 20½ inches; waist, 32½ inches; chest, normal, 34½ inches; expanded, 38½ inches; neck, normal, 13¼ inches; expanded, 14 inches; right, 10½ inches; left, 10½ inches; biceps, right, 10½ inches; expanded, 11½ inches; left, 10½ inches; expanded, 10½ inches; wrist, right, 6½ inches; left, 6½ inches.

How do our measurements compare with others? Are our muscles developed enough? If not, please tell us what we do to develop them. George is a clerk in a grocery and Harold is a driver on a grocery wagon. Harold is 16 years old; forms a 3,000 pounds; George is 15 years old and weighs 101 pounds. My chest, normal, is 28½ inches; expanded, 31 inches; shoulders, 15½ inches; neck, 13½ inches; biceps, normal, 8½ inches; expanded, 9 inches; forearm, 9 inches; wrist, 6½ inches; hip, 13½ inches; thigh, 18½ inches; calf, 13 inches; and ankle, 9 inches. 1. How are my measurements? 2. What are my defects? 3. How can I overcome them? 4. As I am 15 years old, what should I do to keep in good condition? 5. Which of the four manuals would you advise me to get? Thanking you in advance, I remain, your true friend.

K. A.

La Grange, Ohio.

Your weight is a little above the average, but chest should measure 35 inches, normal. High jump record, with a weight of 100 pounds, was 6 feet 6½ inches; running high jump, 6 feet 5½ inches. Rub your knee frequently with a strengthening lotion. I could not tell what line of athletics you are best suited for—how to go in for that which interests you most, as you are apt to do better when pleased with your work. The owner of a weak heart has various signs of its possession besides a florid face. Don’t worry about it unnecessarily, but consult your family physician.

(A letter from Kentucky.)

Prof. Fourmum: Having a few numbers of the “Tip Top Weekly,” being interested in your department, I take the liberty to ask you a few questions about my measurements. Age, 17 years; months, 8 months; weight, 50 pounds; height, 5 feet 3 inches; neck, 11½ inches; chest, normal, 26 inches; expanded, 30½ inches; waist, 27 inches; thigh, normal, 9 inches; expanded, 11½ inches; ankle, 8½ inches; wrist, 5¼ inches; forearm, 7½ inches. Please let me have your opinion of my measurements. How is my weight? I do not use tobacco in any form. I have not had much practice at baseball or any other sport. I can run fairly well, but in a long race my wind gives out. I am anxious to become stronger. Hoping to see this in print soon, I remain an admirer of Dick Merritt, IRA SUTHERLAND.

You should weigh 155 pounds, and measure 32 inches about the chest instead of 28. Get a manual and begin to set yourself a daily stunt. Your decision to develop your strength is to be commended.

Prof. Fourmum: As I have been reading “Tip Top” for four years, I take the liberty to ask you a few questions about my physique. The following are my measurements: Height, 5 feet; age, 13 years; weight, stripped, 80 pounds; chest, normal, 28½ inches; expanded, 30 inches; waist, 23 inches; neck, 12 inches; shoulder, normal, 9 inches; expanded, 11 inches; left bicep, normal, 8 inches; expanded, 9 inches; right bicep, the same; either wrist, 6½ inches; either calf, 12 inches; left thigh, 15½ inches; right thigh, 16 inches; hips, measurements not taken. Do my measurements compare favorably with other boys of my age? How is my weight? If I am short of the average in anything, please tell me what exercises I must take to bring myself up. Upon arising, I take a cold-water sponge-off around my chest, before and behind, and then immediately I dress. If not, what should I do in the mornings? What books can I get on boxing? Thanking you in advance, I remain, very sincerely,

X. Y. Z.

Fayetteville, Ark.

You are 10 pounds overweight, chest almost correct. General exercises, bringing all muscles into play, would be the best for you. Your morning exercise should be reversed. We publish Professor Donovan’s “The Art of Boxing and Self-defense.” Price, 14 cents by mail.

Prof. Fourmum: Being a reader of the “Tip Top Weekly,” I ask a few questions in regard to my measurements. I am 13 years old, 5 feet 2 inches in height, and weigh 101 pounds. My chest, normal, is 28½ inches; expanded, 31 inches; shoulders, 15½ inches; neck, 13½ inches; biceps, normal, 8½ inches; expanded, 9 inches; forearm, 9 inches; wrist, 6½ inches; hip, 13½ inches; thigh, 18½ inches; calf, 13 inches; and ankle, 9 inches. 1. How are my measurements? 2. What are my defects? 3. How can I overcome them? 4. As I am 15 years old, what should I do to keep in good condition? 5. Which of the four manuals would you advise me to get? Thanking you in advance, I remain a true friend.

HARRY CARLSON.

Brooklyn, N. Y.

1. Weight good; chest should be 31 inches, normal.
2. You need to pay particular attention to increasing your lung capacity.
3. Deep breathing alone will help wonderfully, but in a gymnasium you have other opportunities to build up your chest.
4. The instructor of the gym would be better able to advise you, knowing you personally.
5. Any one of them you will find useful.

Prof. Fourmum: Being a firm reader of “Tip Top” for two years, I take the liberty to ask you a few questions. I am 15 years old. I am very small for my age, being only 4½ feet in height. Chest, normal, 25 inches; expanded, 26½ inches; waist, 24½ inches; wrist, 5 inches; ankle, 6½ inches; weight, 69 pounds. I do not smoke or drink coffee and very little tea. I eat a great deal of meat, vegetables, and fruit. Is this good for me? I am called "Shorty" by my friends, a name which I dislike very much. What exercises would you advise me to take in order to grow taller? Are my measurements good for my age? Hoping to see your letter in print soon, I remain,

Cape Girardeau, Mo.

TIPOFF TIP TOP.

Your measurements are all right. Evidently you are intended by nature to occupy but a limited amount of space, physically, in the world; but you have the privilege of doing the best possible with what you have. A healthy small man is just as valuable an asset in the general dispensation of earth's affairs as a big one of 300 pounds.

Prof. Fourmum: I am a reader of the “Tip Top” and I want you to know if you will answer questions, I am a long-distance swimmer for the Y. M. C. A., at Paterson, and I hold the championship of my class. I started to smoke last New year's, and I find it has shortened my wind, and I am lacking one-eighth of a mile on my last year's record, of which I am ashamed. I want to beat my old record by 4 miles, and I want to know if you will answer my questions and tell me how I can do it. Can you tell me any kind of exercise which I can take to make me get rid of smoking? Is it possible to make drinking of warm water good for the stomach, as I drink it frequently? Does it make you weak to swim a such a long distance? Hoping to hear from you, yours truly.

A. V. C.

Paterson, N. J.

You simply have got to stop using tobacco. Surely it cannot have gotten such a hold upon you in one short year. Only will-power can do it. You do not say why you drink the warm water. Ordinarily it would not do harm. You would naturally be exhausted after winning a long swimming-match.
THE TIP TOP WEEKLY

ISSUED EVERY FRIDAY HANDBOX COLORED COVERS

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

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We know that there are thousands of boys who are very much interested in the early adventures of Frank Merriwell and who want to read everything that was written about him. We desire to inform these boys that numbers 1 to 360 are entirely out of print in the TIP TOP WEEKLY, but they can be secured in the numbers of the MEDAL LIBRARY given below.

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Published About July 21st

*Published About August 11th

476—Frank Merriwell’s Winners

Published About September 1st

479—Dick Merriwell’s Dash

Published About September 22d

482—Dick Merriwell’s Ability

Published About October 13th

485—Dick Merriwell’s Trap

Published About November 3d

488—Dick Merriwell’s Defense

Published About November 24th

491—Dick Merriwell’s Model

Published About December 15th

494—Dick Merriwell’s Mystery

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