The batter leaned against the first ball delivered by Merry, meeting it on the trade-mark with a sharp swing that sent it humming into the field for two sacks.
CHAPTER I.

BITTER MEDICINE.

The door of room number thirteen in the Longhorn Hotel, Bellbuckle, Texas, was kicked open with a bang, and four men filed in.

Four disgusted-looking men they were, as the slantwise rays of the setting sun, which sifted through the one dirty window of the room and fell upon them, plainly showed.

"Sit down," growled the fellow who had led them into that room, a slim, long-armed, hatchet-faced man. "I've only got two chairs, but one of you can squat on the bed."

This was "Plug" Coy, pitcher of the Bellbuckle baseball team, defeated that very afternoon by a nine made up, with the exception of the catcher, entirely of Frank Merriwell's old friends. Merry's fine work on the slab had been too much for the heavy-hitting Busters, as the locals were called.

Coy's companions were three of his fellow players—Ben Kane, left fielder; Bunco Murtel, catcher, and Juan Durango, third baseman.

Durango, a thin, vicious-looking little Mexican, accepted the invitation to sit on the bed. Producing paper and tobacco, he swiftly and deftly rolled a cigarette.

The other two took the chairs. Coy stood up and surveyed them sourly.

"Well, we're a fine bunch, aren't we?" he sneered. "We certainly ought to be proud of ourselves!"

"Oh, what's the use to rub it in?" muttered Murtel.

"We got our medicine, all right."

Kane's lips curled back from his ugly teeth in a snarl.

"Yes, we got our medicine," he grinned wolfishly. "I suppose we ought to talk about it and feel gay. I suppose we ought to be bubbling over with happiness to think that a has-been Yale College pitcher was able to pick up a bunch of back-numbers and make us look like lobsters. We're certainly a classy crowd."

Durango had no comment to make, but the look on his dusky face was quite enough to indicate the state of his mind. He was fully as sore as his companions.

"Spofford was to blame, the chump!" cried Coy viciously.

"Why, how do you make that out, Plug?" asked Murtel. "How are you going to throw it all on Brick's shoulders?"

"Why, he thought we had a cinch."

" Didn't you?"
“Well,” confessed the disgruntled pitcher slowly, “I’d own up that I didn’t have the remotest idea they could do it. Still, if Spofford hadn’t suggested giving them a few runs just to make it interesting I’d not let them have those four tallies in the first inning.”

“Oh, I don’t know about that,” returned Murtel. “We were all inclined to monkey, and they did start off by hitting you, Plug.”

“Because I let them,” flung back Coy.

“They hit you later in the game, too,” reminded Kane, producing and lighting a big black cigar.

“Oh, I didn’t try to strike ’em all out. What did you want me to do? Did you think I was going to wallop my wing off against an aggregation of that calibre? I expected some support.”

“You got it,” nodded Kane. “You can’t kick on your support. That wasn’t what lost the game.”

“Are you trying to shift it all onto me?” savagely demanded Coy. “I won’t stand for it. Why didn’t you fellows get together and pound out enough runs to win? Why did you let Merriwell make you look like a lot of schoolboys who knew nothing about batting? I never saw such bum stick work in my life.”

“Now, cut it—cut it, Coy,” advised Murtel. “I don’t recall that you did a tremendous amount of hitting. I think the score sheet will show that you didn’t get a clean single in the whole game. Some of us did better than that.”

“You don’t expect a man to hit in every game, do you? You know my record as a batter. I’m third on the list, with you following me.”

“Which doesn’t necessarily indicate that you’re a better man than I am with the club.”

“I’ve got a better batting percentage up to date, even though I didn’t get a hit to-day.”

“Oh, drop it!” said Kane. “I’m ahead of you both on the list, but that doesn’t necessarily mean that I’m a better batter. Brick put me second because I’m pretty sure on a sacrifice. Still, when it comes right down to the matter of score getting, Hopper is the only man who leads me. It was some of the tailenders who did the most hitting in this little go; but even at that, there wasn’t enough real bungling to blow about. That fellow Merriwell certainly can pitch. He’s the best man I’ve played against in two years.”

Perhaps you think he’s better than I am,” sulked Coy.

“You seemed determined to make comparisons, Plug. I didn’t say I thought him a better man than you. I never batted against you. All the same, he’s got a great record.”

“Aw! what sort of a record? He’s never played professional baseball, and you know what most college pitchers are when they get into the professional game. They have a lot to learn.”

“Some years ago,” said Kane, “Merriwell had a team of his own, which he put up against several of the big league nines, and the record will show that he got away with it. I’ve heard more than one old man say that this same Yale lad was as fast, and as clever, and as heady as any professional pitcher in the country. One trouble was that we all under-rated him a little. We didn’t believe it possible he could pick up a team of old players on short notice and take a fall out of us. We may as well confess the truth.”

“They had no license to beat us,” rasped Coy. “It has made me sorer than anything that’s happened in a dog’s age. Why, just think of it! Here he collects a bunch of men who haven’t played baseball for years, and with only the practice they could get together this forenoon they trounced us on our own field.”

“Tough!” nodded Kane. “We’re the joke of Bellbuckle to-night. It will drive me to drink.”

“I’m ashamed to show my head on the streets,” acknowledged Coy. “Yesterday we were the pets of the town. We were having things pretty much our own way. To-day—what are we?”

“Fun for the populace,” said Kane; “a byword and a jest. I’ll admit I had some fears that the Houston Tigers might take a fall out of us, but they’ve got a reputation. They’re called the fastest independent team in Texas. We could have stood it if they had downed us. We can’t expect to win every game. It’s losing to a bunch like this that hurts.”

“I was a fool to take this room,” said Coy. “Thirteen always was my unlucky number. But this is one of the best rooms in the old shebang. I didn’t suppose it would hoodoo me.”

“Oh, you’re superstitious,” sneered Kane. “The room didn’t have anything to do with it. The number on your door didn’t lose the game for us.”

“But I’ll get out of this room, just the same. I won’t stay here.”

“I feel like getting out of Bellbuckle,” acknowledged Murtel. “I hate to appear on the street and have every loafer around town give me the laugh.”

“Spofford is trying to arrange for another game with them,” said Coy. “I’d like to play them to-morrow.”

“After pitching to-day?”

“Oh, my arm is all right—it’s iron. I could pitch just as well to-morrow. I don’t intend to do such a
thing right along, but in this case I'd take special delight in getting against that crowd to-morrow and showing 'em up. I hope Spofford fixes it."

"Any one would never take them for a dangerous crowd," said Kane. "For instance, look at the big fat Dutchman who played right field. Why, he was a holy show in practice. He couldn't catch anything."

"And then," snarled Coy, "at the critical point of the game that same Dutchman chases after a hard fly, falls down, rolls over, bounces to his feet, and gets the ball with one paw. That was enough to give anybody heart disease."

"The other two outfielders were n. g.," asserted Murtel. "In centre they had a green Irishman who handled himself as if he had never been on a ball field before in his life. In left there was a long, lank, hayseed of a Yankee, who was even worse."

"Which is proof of the fact that a little good stiff hitting would have given us the game like a breeze," said Coy. "A team that can't hit can't expect to win. It's blamed discouraging to pitch for such a bunch."

"Well, if Brick can't fix it so we can redeem ourselves by getting against them again, I surely shall feel like hiking out of Bellbuckle," said Murtel.

"Then you may as well pack up," said the voice of Spofford himself.

He had opened the door as the catcher was speaking those words, and now he entered with a disgusted, woe-begone expression on his countenance.

"What's that?" cried Coy. "What do you mean? Couldn't you get another game? Wouldn't they play? Were they afraid?"

"Insult them!" cried Kane, springing to his feet. "Drive them into it! Post a challenge in front of this hotel."

Spofford shook his head dolefully.

"It wouldn't do any good," he said. "We'll none of us play any more baseball in Bellbuckle. Our backer has thrown us down. We're fired, the whole bunch."

"Straight goods," was the answer. "The old man is so sore that he's decided to drop us like hot cakes. He's madder than a rampaging steer. Says he's been swindled. Paid a lot of money to get together a team of fast players to advertise Bellbuckle, and now everybody is giving him the laugh. Declares we've made him and the town the josh of the whole El Paso country. The things he said to me were enough—and then some. Never had such a word trimming in my life."

"Aw! he'll get over it," said Murtel. "He's just riled for the present, that's all."

"Sure he will get over it," agreed Kane. "He must be a blamed hard loser."

"I don't wonder so much that he's sore," said the captain of the team. "I'm sore myself. We had no business to lose."

"Oh, but you wanted to give those poor devils a few runs at first to make it interesting," sneered Coy.

"I followed your special directions."

"You did," nodded Spofford, closing the door; "but I reckon you handed out more runs than you really intended to. You couldn't help it, Coy."

"Come off! Didn't I hold 'em down after that? They only reached the pan once after the first inning."

"That once was enough to give them the game," reminded the captain. "That was after we'd tied 'em, too."

"Oh, say," said Kane anxiously, "don't you think the old man will come off his perch? Don't you think he will cool down and change his mind? Why, he can't really mean to drop us all just because we lost that game to-day."

"He's dropped us. He's paid me off already, and told me to notify the rest of the team to come round and get what's due 'em. There you are!"

"Caramba!" rasped Durango once more. "I no like it. Good easy job. I like baseball much. Heap better than punching cows or wrangling horses. I jus' get good and settled here, and now I lose soft snap. I no like it."

"Well, the old-man's going to hear something from me," snarled Murtel. "I'll give him a piece of my mind. I'll tell him——"

"I wouldn't if I were in your place," advised Spofford. "You may get hurt. He's not the kind to fool with. They say he's quicker on the draw than Dumping Higgins, and you know how Higgins cooked that loud-mouthed man who lost a big roll on us to-day—shot both legs clean out from under him. You keep away from the old man, Bunco—until you're cool enough to take what cash is due you and say nothing."

CHAPTER II.

THE MAN BEHIND THE BED.

"Fired!" gasped Kane.
"Fired!" cried Coy.
"Fired!" echoed Murtel.
"Caramba!" exclaimed Durango, dropping the butt of his burned-out cigarette.

"What are you giving us?" snarled Kane, taking a step toward Spofford.
“Thunder! I’ll be pretty near down to hardpan,” muttered the catcher sullenly. “I bet on the game today, and I’ve scarcely got the price of a thirst-quencher left in my jeans. Say, this is a thundering mess, isn’t it? I tell you I won’t believe the old man really means it.”

“And I’ll tell you why I’m positive he does,” said Spofford. “He’s trying to arrange a game for the day after to-morrow.”

“Arrange a game?” palpitated Kane. “Why, you said——”

“A game between the Huston Tigers and Frank Merriwell’s team, to be played right here in Bellbuckle. He’s wired the manager of the Tigers already. I tell you, boys, we’re in the soup—we’re down and out.”

Durango fired off a few decidedly hot remarks in Spanish.

“Too blame bad,” he cried. “Long time I want to play baseball profesb. Now I get good chance and lose him too quick. Make me mad.”

“What’s the old fool going to do?” rasped Murtel. “Is he going to hire Merriwell’s team to fill our place? Is that his game?”

“I didn’t venture to ask him too many questions,” confessed Spofford, with a sorry grin. “I fully realized that it would be unhealthy to do so.”

“Didn’t you raise a remonstrance?” snapped Kane. “Did you let him hand you your discharge and fire the whole of us without even peeping? Didn’t you have nerve enough to chirp at all?”

“Oh, I started to chirp a little, but I got a cramp in my voice. If you’d seen the way the old man looked at me and heard his opinion of us as a baseball team, I don’t think you’d been strongly inclined to do a great deal of chinning. I’m going to look for another engagement. Billy Gibson, up in Pueblo, wanted me. I turned him down because I could get more money here.”

“How about our contracts?” cried Murtel suddenly. “By blazes, that old fool has got to stand by them contracts! He can’t fire us this fashion.”

“Did you ever notice just how your contracts read?” asked Spofford. “If you’ll take the trouble to look it over again, you’ll find that the old man fixed it so he had everything his own way. Any time he was dissatisfied with our playing he could fire us. Well, he’s plenty dissatisfied now, no question about that. You can’t do anything with him, Bunco.”

“Confound that fool Merriwell!” roared the exasperated catcher. “I’d like to break his neck! Why in blazes did he ever drift in here to make us all this trouble?”

“If we’d only known!” muttered Kane.

“If we’d only known,” growled Coy, “we’d taken the game, anyhow. We could have done it. We could have fixed things. It would have been easy to fix Soper, the umpire.”

“Didn’t suppose it was necessary, and so never took the trouble,” said Spofford. “There was another man who would have helped us win the game. He was in a position to do so, too.”

“Never was so raw in all my life,” declared Kane, pacing up and down the few feet of open floor. “Fellows, it’s a tough knock. Do you know what will happen? Why, this story will circulate. It will spread broadcast. Wherever we go they will be sure to know about it, and they will give us the ha-ha. I suppose that old fool thinks Merriwell can beat the Tigers.”

“If Merriwell had a good team behind him he could,” nodded Spofford.

“I’d like to take some of the conceit out of that fellow,” said Murtel: “Great Caesar! if he should happen to beat the Tigers——”

“But if the Tigers should put it all over the Merriwell bunch,” cut in Kane quickly, “we’d have a chance to do a little laughing.”

“Perhaps that would cause the old man to change his tune,” said Murtel.

Coy smashed his clenched right fist into his open palm.

“Boys,” he said, “we’ve got to fix it.”

“What do you mean?” asked Spofford.

“In order to save our faces we’ve got to fix this thing so Merriwell and his bunch get the drubbing of their lives if they do play the Tigers. Oh, I’d enjoy watching that game.”

“Well, so would I,” laughed Spofford. “It would give me great satisfaction.”

“We will fix it,” hissed Coy viciously.

“How you fix him?” questioned Durango eagerly.

“We’ll find a way,” declared Coy. “We’ll make it a sure thing. I suppose that Merriwell crowd owns the town now.”

“Well, I haven’t seen much of them since the game,” admitted Spofford. “About the only one in the crowd who has made himself promiscuously prominent was their mascot, that old Indian. He proceeded to tank up on fire-water and go whooping up and down the street. Somebody took charge of him and got him under cover. Dumpling Higgins was the man who
filled the Injun's skin with electrifying fluid. Higgins has got a beatu himself. He's buying for everybody over at the Sweet Violet saloon."

"I think mebbe I go over," said Durango.

"You keep away," advised Spofford. "Why, the bunch in that place would have you crazy in less than no time. They would guy you till you lost your head and tried to carve somebody up with that toad sticker you always carry. You're a fool to pack that knife, Durango. Some time you'll stick some prominent guy, and either get lynched or be sent to the jug. Booze is bad for you, anyhow, and you know it."

"I feel blame bad," sighed the Mexican. "I think mebbe next year I get onto bigger team. I think mebbe binely I get into league. This spoil good chance for me. When I try for nother job at baseball, everybody laugh and ask me 'bout Bellbuckle Busters."

"Oh, you're an ambitious critter," grinned Kane sneeringly. "You're anxious to climb, aren't you? I've played league baseball. There ain't so much in it after all. The snap we had here was better—good pay, not much to do, and petted by everybody in town."

"It's possible," said Spofford thoughtfully, "that the old man might change his mind if the Tigers should take a fall out of this Merriwell crowd. Say, what if they beat the Merriwell bunch and then we challenge them? Great idea. If that would happen and we could only beat them, we'd turn the laugh on the old man. Fellows, that's what we've got to do. If there's no other way of making it a sure thing, we can fix it up with Conger, the manager of the Tigers. It could be done on the q.t. Let's talk this thing over quietly and soberly."

He sat down on the bed beside Durango, and the five prepared to formulate a scheme for the restoration of their lost prestige and glory in Bellbuckle.

Suddenly Durango held up his hand.

"'Sh!'" he hissed. "You listen. I hear something."

They were silent, and, to their surprise, all distinctly heard a low, regular sound like the snoring of a sleeper.

"Where in blazes is it?" whispered Coy.

"It's in this room," declared Kane. "There's somebody besides ourselves in here."

In another moment he was looking over behind the bed, which stood off about a foot and a half from the wall.

"Here he is!" he cried, stooping and grabbing a man's feet. "Here's the critter, sound asleep behind your bed, Coy!"

With a surge and a pull he dragged the sleeper forth into the middle of the room; and, to their unspeakable amazement, the fire men found themselves looking down upon old Joe Crowfoot, the Indian.

CHAPTER III.

WAKING UP A WHIRLWIND.

They stared down at the old redskin, who continued to snore on as peacefully as if he had not been molested.

"Well, I'll be hanged!" muttered Murtel.

"How'd the old skate get in here?" cried Spofford.

"Wandered in, I suppose," said Coy savagely. "Probably he tried to sleep on my bed and rolled off behind it. Think of having anything like that on my bed!"

He poked the recumbent Indian with his foot, but the only result was a still louder snore.

"Kick him out!" snapped Kane. "Open the door and I'll throw him out."

"Here, wake up, you dog-eating son of a Piute!" cried Coy, giving Crowfoot a still more vigorous poke.

"Come out of it!"

"Wah! wah!" mumbled the old Indian. "Big chief Shangowah take heap many scalps. Ugh!"

Then he seemed to relapse, and the snoring continued.

"You don't suppose the old fool heard any of our conversation, do you?" asked Kane.

"Mebbe he hear," hissed Durango. "No can tell. Mebbe he play fox."

"Possum, I should call it," half laughed Spofford.

"If he's playing possum I'll bring him out of it!" rasped Coy, swinging his foot hard and giving Crowfoot a tremendous kick in the side.

"Ugh!" grunted Crowfoot once more. "Squaw keep still. No tickle-um big chief in ribs."

"I'll tickle you!" snarled Coy. "I'll teach you to sneak into my room to sleep off your jag!"

Then he kicked the Indian still more savagely.

"Wow! wow!" grumbled old Joe. "Heap big mosquito bite."

In spite of himself, Spofford burst into a roar of laughter.

"He calls that a mosquito bite, Coy."
“Wonder what he will call this?” said Coy, again swinging his foot and driving his toe into Crowfoot’s ribs.

The redskin gasped, grunted, opened his eyes and gazed hazily at the five men who surrounded him.


“Just open the door, Murtel,” cried Coy. “We’ll play a game with him; we’ll play football. I’ll notify Frank Merriwell to keep his dirty old Indian out of my room.”

Murtel opened the door.

“Lift him,” directed Coy. “Let me get a swinging lift at him. He won’t think it a mosquito bite.”

They seized the aged redskin and hoisted him, in spite of his feeble objections. Having dragged him to the door, they gave him a surge, and at the same time Coy delivered a kick which projected old Joe through the doorway. He fell outside with a crash and a half uttered yell that was like an attempted war whoop.

Frank Merriwell, on the way to his own room, saw the Indian thus savagely and unceremoniously ejected. With a bound he leaped over Crowfoot’s body and appeared in the open door, startling the angry men.

Merry’s eyes were flashing.

“What’s going on here?” he demanded. “What do you mean by treating that old man in such a brutal manner?”

“Hoity-toity!” exclaimed Kane. “It’s the high mogul himself! Why, he’s real angry. Look out, or he will slap somebody on the wrist.”

“What do we mean?” cried Coy. “I’ll tell you something, Mr. Merriwell. If your dirty old Indian sneaks into my room again he’ll get his neck broken. As he’s a friend of yours, you’d better take care of him and give him a place in which to sober up. Next time I catch him under my bed he won’t be handled so gently. Get that?”

Frank stepped into the room, facing Coy, with scarcely more than a yard separating them.

“Oh, yes, I get it,” he replied, “and if under any circumstances you ever put a hand on Joe Crowfoot again, you’ll be due to get the handsonnest trimming of your life. Get that?”

“Great Caesar!” shouted Kane. “There’s nerve for you, Coy. There’s insolence. Will you swallow it?”

“Not by a blamed sight!” snarled Coy. “Get out of this room, Merriwell, or we’ll kick you out, too!”

The expression of Frank’s face suddenly changed to a smile.

“No, please,” he invited. “I wish you would. It would give me great pleasure for you to try it.”

“Then you shall have all the pleasure you want,” cried Coy. “At him, fellows! Out with him!”

They responded to this summons by flinging themselves at Frank in a body. What followed, however, surprised them very much. Instead of seizing Merry and throwing him out, they were knocked right and left by the lightning-like blows of old Joe’s champion, who sailed into them like a veritable whirlwind.

Coy caught an upward swinging right-hander on the chin and was fairly lifted off his feet, striking the floor on the back of his neck.

Murtel got a left-handed bang in the eye, which caused him to see stars and set that optic to swelling in a manner which indicated it would be closed entirely in a very few moments.

An oath from Kane was cut short by a crack in the mouth that split his lip and hurled him staggering against the wall.

Durango, leaping in, received a terrific punch in the stomach, which dropped him to the floor in a sitting posture, where he doubled over, gasping for breath and holding both hands clasped over the point of anguish.

Spofford was a bit slower than the rest, but, seeing his companions spring at Frank, he attempted to get into it, and arrived within reach of Merry’s flying fists just in time to get a wallop that hurled me onto the edge of the bed, from which he slowly slipped to the floor.

“Why, say,” laughed Frank, looking around, “is this all there is to it? I thought you were going to make it interesting for me.”

Gasping, snarling, and shouting, they gathered themselves and came at him again.

Coy scrambled forward on his hands and knees, dazed, but reaching for Merry’s legs with the intention of throwing him.

Frank sidestepped and sent the man rolling over and over with an outthrust foot.

Murtel lunged in and received a second wallop that sent him flying on top of Coy.

Kane likewise came back for another dose, and received it with interest. He was greatly surprised when he found himself lying with his head under the bed, and for a moment he fancied the roof of the house had fallen upon him.

“Spofford struggled up and reeled forward with his
hands outstretched, clutching at Merry, who disdained to hit him again, but seized his wrist and gave him a snapping twist that actually pinwheeled him clean across the room, his heels smashing the lower part of the window.

Durango suddenly rose with something glinting bright in his hand.

"Caramba!" he snarled. "I fix him!"

But a grip of iron fastened on his wrists, and the bones of his arm seemed to snap with the twisting wrench that arm received. He gave a yell of pain, and the knife clanged to the floor. Then he was picked up bodily and hurled onto the bed.

"Children like you shouldn't be allowed to have such dangerous toys as these," said Merry, quickly picking up the knife and flinging it out through the open window.

They stared at him, dazed, amazed, marveling. What manner of man was this, who could handle five of them with such astounding ease? There he stood, smiling and cool, looking them over with an expression more of pity than of anger.

"He is devil!" cried Durango in anguish. "He has broke my arm!"

"If you've got a fractured wing," said Merry, "I'm sorry; but it was your own fault. I had to handle you a bit roughly when you foolishly pulled that piece of steel. I couldn't be gentle with you, the way I was with the others."

"Gentle!" mumbled Murtel. "Oh, blazes!"

"You—hic!—you need-um help, Strong Heart?" wheezed the voice of old Crowfoot, who now stood clinging to the edge of the door-casing, swaying backward and forward unsteadily. "You need-um help, old Joe he scalp few palefaces for you. Heap much fun for him. He like-um that job. Waugh!"

The old redskin actually dug up a wicked-looking knife and wet his lips with his tongue, as he gazed with glittering, longing eyes upon the men who had attacked Frank.

"Put it away—put it away, Joe," ordered Merry promptly. "We'll let the barber do their hair cutting."

"Too bad," mumbled Crowfoot. "Nice time to take four-five topknots. Shangowalt heap much disappointed."

"Gentlemen," said Merry, speaking to the five battered Busters, "I hope none of you will need the services of a doctor. But let me add that in case you try any of your tricks again, you'll not get off in such a lucky fashion. If you should happen to meet Mr. Crowfoot on some future occasion when he has been imbibing and is not in condition to take care of himself, I trust you will be kind and considerate toward him. Really, you might get me aroused if you were inconsiderate enough on any future occasion to lay violent hands on any one of my friends. If you'll think it over calmly, I'm sure you'll conclude that peace and good will toward men is the best policy. Come, Joseph, we'll retire and leave our friends to enjoy themselves."

He slipped an arm through Crowfoot's and led the old redskin away.

CHAPTER IV.

A CRAFTY OLD REDSKIN.

Murtel staggered to the door and kicked it shut. Then he turned and looked at his companions.

Durango was still whimpering on the bed. Coy sat on the floor with his back against the wall. Kane had lifted himself to his feet, but he was a sick-looking individual. Spofford apparently had escaped easier than any of the rest, although every whit of fight had been taken out of him.

"Well, I'll be blowed!" muttered Murtel.

"I was," said Kane; "I was blowed a couple of times."

"What sort of a man is he?" wondered Spofford.

"A fury—a perfect whirlwind," said Kane. Coy was speechless for the time being. Finally he seemed to get command of his voice.

"Are there five of us?" he cried. "Did we all go after him? There isn't a man living who can whip all five of us in a minute."

"Yes, there is," said Spofford. "He did it."

"I kill him—I swear I kill him!" moaned Durango, dragging himself to the edge of the bed and dropping his feet to the floor. "I think mebbe he break my arm. It hurt fierce."

"I thought he'd broken my head," confessed Kane.

"Oh, I'll get back at that man!"

"Don't you think I won't?" rasped Coy.

"You'll have to catch him when he's asleep," said Murtel. "I never saw such a fighter."

"And he laughed—he laughed!" sibilated Kane. "He didn't even turn a hair while he was doing it."

"Boys," said Coy, "I'll never be able to sleep until I get back at that son-of-a-gun."

"If you do anything to him," said Spofford, "you'll have to sneak up behind him and hit him with an axe. I've laughed at stories they told about Frank Merri-
well, the greatest athlete in the world, but hereafter
I'll be ready to believe anything I heard concerning
him.”

“It all happened on account of that thundering old
Injun!” exclaimed Kane. “If I catch him by his
lonesome I'm going to kick the everlasting stuffing
out of him.”

“I tell you I'll never sleep till I get square,” per-
sisted Coy. “From this time on I'll have just one
idea—that is, to settle with Merriwell.”

Battered and revengeful, they proceeded to put
their heads together and seek to concot a plot against
Frank.

The sounds of the fight had brought many of
Merry's friends rushing to the spot to learn what
was taking place. They found Frank helping old
Joe into his room. Crowfoot was thickly trying to
chant a war song in his own language.

“What's the matter, Frankie, me bhoy?” asked
Barney Mulloy.

“Yes, what in thutteration is all the racket about?”
cried Josh Crane. “I sorter thought there was some-
thing doin' arround here.”

“It sounded like a scrap,” said Bruce Browning,
as he appeared. “I wouldn't have exerted myself to
rush like this if I hadn't thought it possible you
might be in trouble.”

Crowfoot lurched round to face them.

“Waugh!” he exploded. “Strong Heart he lick-
um whole bunch. No give old Joe chance to scalp
anybody. Heap stingy. Hurt Shangowah's feel-
ings.”

“Come in, fellows,” invited Frank. “I'll tell you
about it.”

They followed him into the room, closing the door
behind them at his request.

Again Crowfoot burst into song, chanting in a wild
and doleful manner something which sounded like
this:

“No looka lo go hola,
No looka lo go hola,
No looka lo go hola,
Wana maka mo ma.”

“Wanamaker money,” chuckled Mulloy. “Begobs,
it's right ye are, Joseph, but Oi niver supposed ye
wur acquainted wid the gentleman.”

“Yah-who! Yah-who! Wah! wah! Wow! wow!” whooped the old savage, starting to dance, but
making a miscue somehow, with the result that he got
his feet tangled and fell with a crash into a corner be-

fore any one could save him.

“Let him rest there,” advised Merry. “This Bell-
buckle tanglefoot is evidently too much for the chief.”

“I say, Merry,” grinned Bruce, “here's one of your
friends you haven't been able to reform.”

“No,” admitted Merriwell, “I've never succeeded
in pulling Joseph onto the sprinkler. I'm afraid he's
past redemption.”

“You pass?” mumbled the old Indian, sitting with
his back against the wall and blinking his black
eyes. “Then I come in. I bet two dollar. I raise-
um you. You got sporting blood, now you show it.”

“By gum, he's got a peach!” said Crane. “He sat-
tainly is pickled for fair.”

“Old Joe him like pickle,” muttered Crowfoot.
“One time he eat four quart cucumber pickle. Heap
fine sour taste.”

Briefly Frank explained how he had seen Crow-
foot ejected from Coy's room and had remonstrated
with the Bellbuckle pitcher and his associates.

“They didn't seem to take kindly to my objections,”
said Frank, “and so they attempted to throw me out
in the same manner. I declined to permit it.”

“He knock-um stuffing out of whole bunch,” snick-
ered old Joe. “No give Crowfoot chance to help-um
him any.”

“I had to defend myself as best I could,” said
Frank. “There were five of them, but I managed to
get along very well.”

“Foive,” murmured Mulloy; “foive against yez,
Frankie? Oi didn't observe that you wur after wear-
ing any scars av battle.”

“He knock um this way, that way, t'other way,
every way,” said old Joe, flourishing his fists in
demonstration. “All over quick as you say Rob
Jackinson.”

“Five,” exclaimed Crane, gazing at Merry in ad-

imation; “five against one, and ye walloped the
crowd in less'n a minute! Well, I swan to man! By
the great jumpin' geewhileken gingoies, yeo sartainly
be a ripper!”

Merry laughed.

“I had one advantage,” he said. “They were over-
confident. On account of their numbers they were
cocksure. Besides that, there were so many of them
that they sort of interfered with one another. Feel-
ing certain they would have no trouble in throwing
me out, they went at it in a rather humping fash-
ion. I took advantage of that and settled the whole
business as quickly as possible. That's all there was
to it.”

“Oh, yes, that's all there was twit it,” nodded Crane.
“Tew hear yeou talk, anybody might s'pose 'twas easier to wallop five men to once than one man alone.”

“I observe that you still have a way of doing the unexpected, Merry,” smiled Browning lazily. “Well, I’m going back to my reading. I found a magazine that has a good story in it. This disturbance interrupted me at the most interesting point.”

“I guess I’ll go along tew,” said Crane.

“We’ll all go,” said Frank, observing that old Joe’s chin had fallen on his breast and he seemed to be sleeping. “Crowfoot is all right here. We can leave him to peaceful dreams.”

Mulloy, Crane, and Browning filed out one by one, and Frank was about to follow them when a soft, faint hiss reached his ears and he glanced at old Joe, being surprised to see the Indian had half lifted his head and opened one eye. With the index finger of his right hand, which lay limp and open upon his lap, the redskin made a signal.

“Go on, boys,” called Merry from the door. “I’ll come along directly.”

Then he closed the door.

“Lock-um it,” said Crowfoot.

Frank did so.

Then old Joe rose steadily to his feet. All signs of intoxication had vanished, even though the odor of liquor still hung about him.

“Crowfoot hear something in other room,” said Joe in a low tone. “He make little mistake when he go in there. He think mebbe he find your room, Strong Heart. No like-um light to shine in him eye when he want to sleep, so he crawl behind bed. He no git to sleep when four Buster player men come in. So they talk. They heap much sour. They heap ugly because Strong Heart beat-um them. Want to git even somehow. Bimeby pretty soon Buster captain man he come. He tell-um how they all get fired—no play baseball in Bellbuckle some more. Ugh! That make um chew rag some. That make um growl like dog with heap many flea. They say they put-um up little job on you, Strong Heart.

“Buster captain man he say somebody send for Tiger players so Tiger players play-um game with you two sums forward. By smoke! They chew-um rag till air get blue. They say they fix it so Tiger players eat-um you up. Mebbe they fix umpire. Anyhow, they put up job on you. Now you watch out. You keep eye open tight every minute. They no like-um you much since you bang-knock um. They no have great love for you. Old Joe he tell-um you so you no let-um that bunch get best of you.”

“I’m much obliged for the warning, you confounded old fraud,” laughed Merry. “Hanged if I didn’t think you were jagged. Once in a while you fool me, too, Crowfoot.”

“No get jagged on ten, twelve little drink,” declared Joe disdainfully.

“Ten or twelve,” murmured Merry; “ten or twelve drinks of the kind of stuff they ladle out in Bellbuckle, and all taken since the finish of the baseball game this afternoon! Why, that’s enough to trip an elephant.”

“Old Joe him got good tank. Sometime fire-water make-um him heap frisky; to-day fire-water make him little bit snoozy. Now he tell you to watch out, he sleep some. Sometime mebbe he cook-um Buster men who give him swift kick. Old Joe much old. He not much good to fight some more, but mebbe bimeby he give-um Buster men ripping good s’prise party. He no forget when somebody kick-um him. He take-um kick so they no get wise that he hear what they say. You savvy?”

“Yes, I savvy, you crafty old fox,” laughed Frank; “but while you’re about it settling with them for those kicks, just forget your ambition to take scalps, for such a procedure would certainly get you into a bad mess.”

“You no worry ‘bout that. Old Joe he not so much fool as he look. Some time he shoot off little hot air. Sometime he make talk he no mean, just for little fun. Now he sleep some.”

With which, disdaining the bed, he proceeded to stretch himself comfortably on the floor, grunting in satisfaction.

Merry left him there.

CHAPTER V.

TROUBLE IN THE KITCHEN.

“She war a bonny Orish lass,
Wid oyes av Hivvin’s blue;
She loved a gallant Orish lad,
Who loved swate Katte, too.”

Thus sang Margaret McCarty as she scrubbed the pots and pans in the kitchen of the Longhorn Hotel.

“Py chinchler!” whispered Hans Dummerwust to himself, listening at the door. “A fine voice has got dot curl. Yah. Her singing likes me. I believes she must peen a peach.”

Cautiously he opened the door and looked in. Mag-
gie's back was turned toward him. She was at least six feet tall, and as slim as a fence rail. Nevertheless, as she continued to sing Hans' eyes glowed with admiration.

"She iss elegance!" he murmured. "She peen vun uf der tall undt villowy kindt. Dot vas der sort vot suits me alretty."

Stepping inside, he closed the door and placed his back against it. Then he coughed.

"Sing Lo!" cried Maggie sharply.

"Vale, I don't care uf you sing low or sing high," said Hans, "choust as long as I couldnt hear you sing at all."

Miss McCarty had turned instantly at the sound of his voice, and was staring at him in surprise.

"Who are yez, and pwhat do ye want?" she asked.

"I vas a persons vot has seen enraptured py the sounds of an angel's voice," answered Hans. "I didt in come to let a drink uf vater get me."

"Wather?" said Maggie. "Is thot what ye are after, Oi dunno? Thin hilp yerself from the bucket on the binch yonder."

"Exception my thanks," bowed Hans, with all the gallantry he could command. "I vas not so dryness as I has seen since my soul has in drunk der music your song uf. By Chorch! you peen a lofly varbler."

Maggie was not impervious to such flattery. She smiled, and Hans' heart went pit-a-pat.

"Go away wid yez blarney," she laughed. "Ye don't mane it."

"Uf you will excuse me," said Hans, "I must insistence dot I do mean it. Yah. Py Chorch! you haf got, Emma Yeams, undt Mary Garten, undt all der rest uf dem crand operatic stars to der vall nailed. Der crand opera stage should be on yu."

"Och hone!" sighed Maggie. "I wance did have aspirations for the stage. Now be after seeing what Oi've come to!"

"It vas outrageousness!" said Hans, who had advanced and placed himself in a position to admire her by the light of a smoky kerosene lamp. "I vill communication vid my freundt, der manacher uf der Peef Trust Purlesque Company. I vill toldt him vot a songpird you vas. I vill get der stage on you."

"Indade, do yez mane it?" cried the cook.

"I didt," assured Hans.

"Oh, you lovely mon! Oi could hug yez!"

"Undt I would not objection to dot."

"It's a harrud loife Oi lade for an ambitious girl, so it is," sighed Maggie. "It's work day and noight. It's cook for a lot av min wid appetoites loike bears, and wash dishes, and scrub pots and pans, and niver a bit av let up or rist. The only fri'nd Oi have is Sing Lo, and it's too fri'ndly he'd loike to be."

"Who vas dot Lo Sing?"

"He's the chambermaid. He's a Chinee. It's shucked on me a bit he is, and Oi have me troubles kaping him away from the kitchen."

"Vale, uf dot Lo Sing disturbs you some more you toldt me about it," said Hans. "I vill on his neck get. Yah. I vill not let you peen annoyance py a Chinamans."

Behind Hans' back the door opened, and a soft-footed, almond-eyed Celestial slipped softly into the kitchen. The cook saw him.

"Here he is, now," she said. "What do yez want, Sing?"

"You need little help to washee dish?" murmured the Chinaman, as he came forward with his eyes fastened on Dummerwust. "Sing he helpee you."

"Oi don't need any hilp at all, at all."

"Undt dot vill settlement you," said Hans. "You couldn't make yourselfl scarceness. You couldn't gone away undt let your businesst attention to you."

"Sing Lo gotee workee allie done," assured the Celestial; "now he helpee cookee. You no havee any business in klitchen. You gitesse lout."

"Chiminy Grissmas! Vill I let a pig-tailed Chinamans at me talk like dot?" cried Hans. "You pet my life I won't! Out go at vunce, or I vill in more as zwiz dozen pieces took you!"

But Sing declined to go. Seeing this, Hans began to remove his coat.

"It iss businesst dot means me!" he announced. "Ven I say out go, you pet I mean him. Yah. Uf you didt not evaporation sudden I vill out put you!"

"Dutchy man touchee Sing Lo he gitesse hurt," retorted the Chinese.

"Hould on," interposed Maggie McCarty. "Oi'll have no belligerency here. Sing, ye are after bothering me around the kitchen. Ye are after interrupting me little tête-à-tête wid a fri'nd."

"Dot vas me," beamed Hans, throwing out his chest and patting it. "I vas an oldt friendt alretty
soon, undt you couldt put dot your pipe in undt smoke him.”

Sing looked sad and doubtful.

“He only come to Bellebuckly ylisterdavy,” he chattered. “You makee fliends with him velly fast.”

“Vot pusiness peen dot uf yours?” gurgled Hans.

“That’s pwhat Oi’d loike to know,” said Miss McCarty indignantly. “It’s too free ye’re after gettting around here, Sing. Now chase yoursift, or Oi’ll use the poker on yez.”

With which announcement she seized the stove poker and started for the Chinaman, who decided at this point that he had better retire. At the door, however, he paused to give Hans a look.


Then he dodged and closed the door with a slam, as Maggie hurled the poker.

“It peen disgracefulness,” said Hans. “It peen shameful dot you haf so much annoyance py him.”

“Ah, well,” said Maggie, returning to the sink. “the world is full av annoyances, so it is. It’s a harrud world for a poor lonely girl.”

“Now, I wish you would not like dot talk,” objected Hans. “It gits me a feelingness uf commiserations. I haf peen loneliness sometimes myself py. Yah. I half said, ‘Hans, veneer you meet up py a beautiful curl vot couldt sing like an anchels you will peen a chumps uf you did not engagement yourself to her.’ Vot kindt uf a diamond ring would you admiration der most?”

Miss McCarty nearly fainted.

“It’s a proposal, so it is!” she gasped. “It’s the first wan Oi’ve had since Moike Murphy asked me. The nixt day they blew Moike all to piece wid a blast in the quarry. Oi wur all broke up.”

“Vale, I expects Moike he peen broke up some, too. Py Chorch! a sefen-carat diamonl apout as pig as a valnut would look fine your handt on. I wondar vere I can pay him Pellpuckle in?”

“It’s no diamonds ye’ll foind in this town,” laughed Maggie; “and it’s not yit Oi’ve said Oi’d exept yez.”

“Nefer mind dot,” said Hans, wagging his hand.

“I vas irresistability. You couldt not refuse me. I vas der kindt vot carries der ladies right off derl feet py a rush. Yah.”

“What about thot engagement on the stage?”

“Forogt him, forgot him! I couldt not allowance my vife to let der stage go on. It vas not der kindt uf a life dot vas condencement to domesticities.”

“Is it fooling me ye are?” asked Maggie suspiciously. “First ye propose to get me a position on the stage, and thin ye propose something ilse.”

“Yah. I vas good at proposing. It vas settlement alrety. Now I vill seal der pargains py a kiss, I beliefe.”

Before the cook really divined his intention he had seized her in his arms and planted a resounding smack upon her cheek.

Maggie screamed.

And then Sing Lo, who had sneaked back, came at Hans like a whirlwind.

“You gittee lout!” he shouted, clawing at the surprised Dutchman with both hands. You kissee cookey? You stealee cookey from Sing Lo? Sing Lo makey you look like cyclone struckee you.”

In another moment the Celestial and Dutchman were at it. They knocked over the chairs and the kitchen table. Sing left the marks of his finger nails on Hans’ face, while Dummerwust beat the air in an ineffectual effort to punch his antagonist. It was a terrific encounter while it lasted.

Finally Hans got a grip on the Chinaman’s pigtail and jerked him flat upon his back. Then he sat down on Sing with such abandon that the Celestial was almost crushed.

“Vot I vill did to you now vill peen enough,” announced Dummerwust.

But Sing’s outstretched right hand had grasped one of the kitchen knives spilled from the overturned table. With this he made a jab that ripped open the sleeve of Dummerwust’s coat.

“Me cuttee you up! me cuttee you up!” he wheezed.

With a scream of alarm, Maggie seized Dummerwust by the collar and dragged him away.

Sing Lo scrambled up, knife in hand.
"Me chuttee him up!" he chattered, lunging again at Hans.
With a squawk, the Dutchman vaulted over the upset table.
"A knife has got him!" he cried. "It was not efeness!"

Sing pursued, and Hans took flight. Out of the back door he ran, calling wildly for help, with the Chinaman close at his heels.

CHAPTER VI
DUNNERTWUST'S DEFENSE.

The usual evening gathering of patrons were lined up at Rafferty’s bar in the Sweet Violet saloon. Rafferty, in his shirt sleeves, assisted by a colored boy, was waiting on his customers. The general topic of conversation was the baseball game between the Busters and Frank Merriwell’s team. Shorty Hix and Bender Brown were mercilessly joking Brick Spofford, who had entered the place shortly before in company with Kane, Coy, and Durango. Spofford was taking it as good-naturedly as he could.

His three companions had drawn aside one Tanglefoot Mike Regan, a man notorious in the Pecos country on account of his tremendous size, amazing strength, and periodical rampages. Whenever Regan broke loose on a tear and struck a town the inhabitants of the place took to their cyclone cellars, for at such times he came as near being the typical bad man as any one who might be found in these degenerate days.

Mike had never yet killed a man with gun or knife, but with his bare hands he had slain two individuals indiscreet enough to get in his path. One of these he had finished with a single blow of his massive, sledgehammer fist; the other man’s neck had been broken when Mike gave him a gentle hug.

Furthermore, this playful Russian had the reputation of crushing men’s hands in the grip of his paw merely for amusement, and it was no unusual thing for him to twist a man’s arm out of joint.

He was six feet four inches tall and weighed two hundred and sixty-nine pounds, every ounce of which seemed to be pure bone and muscle. He had a tremendous bull-like neck and a bullet head covered with a short, bristling crop of reddish hair. Wise persons steered clear of Mr. Regan when he started out to “have fun.” Regan had ridden seventy-five miles to witness the baseball game, but his horse had stepped into a gopher hole some twenty miles beyond Bellbuck, and therefore the giant arrived in town some time after the game was finished.

Durango knew Tanglefoot Mike. He introduced Kane and Coy.

“So you dead ones permitted a lot of tenderfeet to wallop you, did you?” sneered the big man, looking them over. “I sure am proud of you—I don’t think!”

“It was an accident,” declared Kane, tenderly touching his injured lip. “It never should have happened, and it wouldn’t if we hadn’t made the mistake of thinking them too easy.”

“We could beat them to-morrow and not half try,” asserted Coy.

“Talk is cheap,” said Regan. “Since arriving in Bellbuck I’ve heard you were a-plenty outclassed by the other feller who did the firing from the slab.”

Coy flushed.

“Oh, yes,” he growled, “I suppose they have got that idea around here. Perhaps they’ll change their minds before long.”

“Look here, Tangle,” said Durango, “we want you to help us some. We mighty sore. One time I give you little lift. You ’member that, don’t you?”

“Yes,” nodded the giant, “that was over in Rock Bottom. You lemme have your horse to chase down a couple of gents I wanted to see mighty bad. What’s the matter with you, Mex?”

“Here table in corner,” said Durango. “We sit down. We talk little; we no let everybody hear.”

“All right, if you’re buying,” nodded Regan.

“I’ll buy,” said Coy quickly, and he ordered the drinks.

“We mighty sore on feller who pitch for other team,” explained Durango. “He pretty good fighter. He come in Flash Coy’s room, find five of us there.
We jus’ kick old Injun out. He call Injun his friend. He pretty mad. We have fight. We go for him.”

“Five of yuh?” said Tanglefoot. “Well, I s’pose you slammed him down and stumped all over him?”

“No,” confessed the Mexican. “He fight like blazes. He knock us this way, that way. Then he git out.”

“Five of yuh!” repeated Regan incredulously. “And you let one man throw it into yuh and then git off?”

“He’s a perfect fiend of a fighter,” said Coy. “I never saw his equal. I hate to admit it, but I don’t believe the five of us could down him unless we took him by surprise.”

“Waugh!” snorted the giant. “You make me laugh!”

“They tell you right, Tangle,” said Durango. “He grab me by wrist, ‘most break my arm. I hear it snap. It ache me now.”

“You interest me sure a-plenty,” nodded Regan. “I’ve been hearing a heap about this gent in the last hour or so, and now I’m some anxious to meet up with him.”

“Durango told us you were here,” said Coy. “He made a proposition. We’ve pretty near gone bust on the game to-day, but I’ve got a yellow boy left, and it’s yours if you’ll get at this man Merriwell and give him one of your little arm twisters I’ve heard of. If you can put his wing out of commission so he won’t be able to pitch again for some time——”

“Now, hold on,” interposed Kane. “This is a delicate sort of a job, Mr. Regan. We don’t want the fellow’s arm broken. Understand? What we want is to have him lame so that he won’t be much of any good in a baseball game. If you could manage to give his wing a twist that would wrench it and make it lame without throwing it out of the socket or anything of that sort——”

“I sure am afraid I might forget myself and overdo it,” grinned Tanglefoot. “It certain don’t take much of a twist to put a gent’s arm on the blink.”

“Will you do it?” whispered Coy eagerly. “If we point him out to you will you do that little trick?”

“Wallop! Five of yuh, did he?” murmured Regan huskily. “I’d certain be ashamed to do things to a poor, ineffective tenderfoot; but if he’s such a holy terror as that, then there might be some excuse for me. Where’s that yaller boy?”

“Here,” said Coy, displaying a ten-dollar gold piece. “It’s about all I’ve got, but——”

“I’ll take it,” said the giant, reaching out and doing so. “I’ll buy a few drinks. I understand they’re arranging for another game between these yere greenhorn strangers and some other team. So if you point this Merriwell gent out to me in the morning, I’ll manage to kick up some kind of a bothering with him during the course of the day to-morrer.”

“Good!” hissed Durango.

“But don’t blame me,” said the big man, “if I accidently break the gent’s arm. I’ll try not ter do that, but I might somehow make a little slip.”

At this moment there were sounds of excited cries outside the saloon, and in at the doorway came a wild-eyed, panting person, who cried:

“Stop dot Chinamans! A knife hasst got him! He iss going to stick me py dot knife!”

It was Dummerwust, who scattered men right and left as he plunged through the crowd. Seeing the group around the table in the corner of the room, Hans made a flying leap, struck the table, slid across it, and rolled off at the far side, upsetting Coy.

Not far behind the Dutchman came Sing Lo, brandishing a knife.

“Lally go lolly chuha-hi!” cried the Celestial.

At any rate, that was what it sounded like to nearly every one. They got out of his way, shouting:

“He’s running amuck! Look out for the Chinee!”

Sing Lo made a flying head-foremost spring, which sent him sliding across the table over which Dummerwust had leaped. Glasses flew in every direction as the Chinaman disappeared at the far side of the table.

Puffing and floundering, Dummerwust crawled out from beneath that table while the vicious heathen was jabbing at his heels with the knife. Fortunately, that knife was not very sharp, for, had it been, Hans would have sustained some serious cuts about his ankles.

“Hellup!” squawked the fat fugitive. “Vill nopody
dood nuttings at all? Vy didt you not took dot Chinamans away from hiss knife? It iss murder, volt will do him a minute in!"

Tanglefoot Mike swore exasperatedly, and made a swinging kick at the Celestial as, on all fours, the latter crawled forth in pursuit of Hans. Sing Lo avoided the full force of that kick by rolling to one side and then jumping up.

Hans, apparently utterly exhausted, had managed to stagger to the bar, upon which, at the request of a fastidious customer, who had a pronounced distaste for Bellbuckle water and wanted something to “chase” his whisky, Rafferty had placed a siphon bottle of seltzer. The Dutchman grabbed at that bottle. Turning with it in his hands, he pointed the nozzle at Sing Lo’s face and opened it up when the Chinaman was about four feet distant.

The stream struck Sing fairly between the eyes and seemed to stagger him. Blinded and choking, he dropped the knife and dodged to get away.

Hans pursued him, and, realizing that he was disarmed, the Celestial promptly turned and took to his heels.

“Py Chiminy!” shouted the Dutchman exultantly. “Dot vas petter as a pistols.”

With a sweep of his hand, he flung the bottle after Sing, who was heading for the open door. The bottle struck the floor a foot or two behind the Chinaman. The compressed gas which it still contained caused it to explode with a report as loud as a gun.

Thinking he had been fired upon, Sing Lo fled forth into the night, shrieking in mortal terror.

CHAPTER VII.

A BAD MAN SUPPRESSED.

“Vale,” grinned Hans, flinging back the lapels of his coat and thrusting his thumbs into the armholes of his vest, “I beliefe dot didt settlement him. Yah! By Chiminy! he couldt not up stand against dot.”

The majority of the people in that saloon were laughing. Hans beamed on them proudly.

“Vas it not a crate head that hass got me?” he inquired. “Vas it not cleferness I peen to think uf dot tricks? I expectorated he vas apont to up catch me, undt I had to do somethings. Yah.”

“Well, now you walk up here to the bar and pay for that siphon,” growled Rafferty.


He produced a roll of money and carelessly flung a five-dollar bill on the bar.

“Chentlemen,” he said, “I vas Hans Dinnervust, der proprietors uf Dinnervust’s Tynamite Tirt Killer, the cratest soaps vot efer vashed you der vurld in. I observation dot some uf dis compaines vas in crate need uf such soaps. It vas notorious dot at least vun half uf der people in der room vas not vun half vashed alretty. Now, chentlemen, Dinnervust’s Tynamite Tirt Killer vill vash you mitout no more as der smallest amounts uf labor der part uf yoursellufs on.

“All dot you need to do iss to rub a little uf der soaps and vater on your faces undt rinse him off. Py Chiminy! you vill pe astonishment to seen der change it vill in you make. Py Chorche! some uf you vill not recognition yoursellufs. For instance, ve vill took dot pig red-headed elephants vot my finger is at pointing. Vidout exceptions, he is der tirtiest individuals I couldt seen anyveres aroundt me.

“Undt ven you considers how much uf him there vas to get tirtty, py Chorche! it iss vonderful there is so much tirt left to got on the rest uf you. I haf here in my pockets a few cakes uf dot vunderful soaps, vich I vill sell at der reduction price uf fifty cents to der cakes. Undt I would advice dot pig, overgrown, red-headed elephants mans to bought two cakes, at least, undt got himself clean vunce in his lifetimes.”

Needless to say, the big man referred to by Dunnerwust was Tanglefoot Mike, and now, with a roar of resentment, the giant advanced on Hans, pulling a pistol.

“Why, double dern your hide!” he roared. “No living critter ever talked that fashion to me before. Say your prayers, and say them sudden, for I’m sure going to give this yer town a chance to witness a funeral to-morrer!”

Hans stared at him in surprise.
"Vot vas der matteration py you?" he asked. "Vot vas it you got so excitement ofer? Perhaps you vas madt alrepty because I did not offer to sell you der whole uf der soaps vot I haf. Let me explanation dot I beliefe two cakes vill peen enough to get all der tirt off you in vun time. "Uf you vant any more, I vill endeavor to establishment an agency in Pellpuckle vere you can get sufficiency."

Apparently Hans did not realize his peril, but there were others who saw that Mike Regan was thoroughly aroused, and actually meant to shoot the Dutchman.

Regan himself was so wholly occupied with his dastardly purpose that he failed to observe a young man who had entered by the open door and who now came hastily and noiselessly up behind him. A hand shot past Regan's arm and grasped the pistol. The muzzle of the weapon was turned toward the ceiling as it spat forth fire and smoke and filled the room with the sound of a sharp report.

An instant later the young man who had seized the weapon turned with it in his hand, having twisted it out of Regan's fingers, and flung it with a backhanded snap through the open doorway.

With the roar of an enraged bull Tanglefoot Mike turned to face Frank Merriwell.

"Who in blazes——" he shouted.

Juan Durango slipped swiftly up behind the giant and whispered:

"He it is—Frank Merriwell—the man!"

"Ho! ho!" laughed Regan, surveying the cool individual who stood looking him straight in the eyes. "So you're the gay young blade what's been kicking up so much guff and excitement around these yere diggings! Waal, I'm sartinly pleased to meet yuh."

"I haf der opinions," said Dunnerwust, "dot der pleasure vas all yours. Enchoy yourselluf."

Back in the corner Kane seized Coy by the wrist. "I'm afraid Regan will kill him!" he whispered excitedly. "It won't benefit us any if he does that."

"Keep away," advised Coy. "We can't mix in there now. There's going to be plenty of doings in a jiffy."

Everybody else in the place felt that there would be "doings," and they moved as far back as possible, in order not to get in the way when Tanglefoot let himself lose and went into action.

"He will scatter the young gent all over the place," said one of the crowd.

Although Merriwell was somewhat over medium height and thoroughly well built in every way, he looked like a mere boy in comparison with the enraged giant who glowered down upon him. It was not strange that the crowd should fancy Tanglefoot Mike would be able to smash Frank with the greatest ease. Even Coy, Kane, and Durango had no idea that Merriwell could hold his own with the big man-killing bruiser in a hand-to-hand encounter.

There was a moment of hushed suspense. Then out shot Regan's huge hand, the fingers clutching at Merry.

Frank retreated, half turning until his side and shoulder were toward the giant.

Regan followed up hastily, lunging to get a hold.

Still retreating, Merriwell suddenly grasped the man's wrist, and snapped it over his shoulder with the palm of the hand upward. Then he gave that huge man the "flying mare." The spectators were thunder-struck to see Regan's huge body pivot through the air, his heels grazing the smoke-stained ceiling as Merry flung him bodily ten feet away.

There was a gasp—a shout.

"Did you see that?"

"Well, I sw'ar!"

"He threw Mike!"

"Throw him plumb over his head!"

"Chentlemen, let silence haff you," urged Hans Dunnerwust, coolly crossing one foot over the other and resting his elbow on the bar. "If you did not too much talk made undt you vould yourselves out uf der vay get, you vill observation something dot vill giff you a crate deal uf pleasures. Yah."

Although jarred by the fall, Regan scrambled up with amazing swiftness, letting out a string of fiery remarks which almost made the atmosphere smoke. His face was contorted with terrible rage, and he was a fear-compelling spectacle to look upon as he again charged at Frank.

"I'm going to take you apart right hyar!" he
snarled. "They'll have to gather up the pieces in a blanket when I'm done with yuh!"

As before, Frank retreated. This caused the giant to follow him up still more hastily, in doing which, Regan assisted in his own defeat. Again Merriwell caught him somehow, snapped him off his feet, swung him round sidewise, and gave him such a forcible fling that he slid fully eight feet along that dirty floor when his body struck.

"Holy smoke!" gasped a witness. "He tosses Tanglefoot around any old fashion. I opine I must be dreaming, for no slender young gent like that could fling pretty near three hundred pounds around promiscuous."

Regan, unhurt, was up in a twinkling and rushing again.

"Let me git my paws on yuh!" he panted. "That's all I want to do!"

Merriwell sidestepped. Again he caught the wrist of his antagonist, and this time he gave Regan's whole arm a swinging twist that produced a snapping sound and wrung an unavoidable gasp of pain from the lips of the huge ruffian. That arm fell limp by Mike's side when released.

Then Merriwell became the aggressor. He sprang forward, thrusting his left arm over Regan's right shoulder, drawing the huge man toward him. Frank's right arm was bent and held stiff beneath the giant's chin. As he drew with his left he pushed with his right, thrusting the ruffian's head backward and shutting off his wind.

In vain Regan endeavored to break away. He was held as helpless as if the jaws of a huge vise had closed upon him. He could not breathe, and soon his face grew crimson, then it turned purple, and his eyes began to bulge from his head.

"Look! look!" cried an astounded man. "I sw'ar, he's choking Tanglefoot stiff!"

A few moments more might have finished the bruise, but Frank was watching that purple face and those bulging eyes. Suddenly Merriwell relaxed the terrible pressure, grasping the limp bad man by the shoulders and again giving him a side swing which sent him scooting across the floor beneath a table.

"Come, Hans," said Frank, "this is no place for us."

"Chentlemen," said the young Dutchman, "the exhibitions was ofer alretty. Sometimes ven Mr. Merri well vas not too much occaponed he will demonstration gif uf der vay he would amuse himself mit seventeen pad men who didn't want to up do him all at vunce. Goot efening, eferypody. Ven Mr. Elephants awakes from der little naps vot iss taking him der pottom uf der tables under, vill some one into his ear visper dot he peen der tamest kindt uf a choke?"

CHAPTER VIII.

THE TIGERS ARRIVE.

The story spread. The whole town rang with it, and Frank became the marvel of Bellbuckle. No person in that place had ever dreamed that one man, single-handed, could disarm and master the dreaded ruffian who on more than one occasion had terrorized the town. Secretly there was more or less rejoicing for the citizens had feared Regan, and his bullying had been most obnoxious to them.

The story of Merry's encounter in the Longhorn Hotel with five disgruntled members of the discharged Busters likewise got into circulation.

The following morning Regan, looking grim and fierce, appeared at the Sweet Violet saloon with his right arm in a sling. He called for a drink, and was tossing it off at the bar when Juan Durango appeared at his elbow.

"I no mix in last night, Tangle," said the Mexican. "One time you tell me not to put nose in your business. I thought mebbe you no like it if I mix in last night."

"Well, you hit it right," sullenly growled Mike, wiping his mouth with the back of his hand. "When I meet up with any one man who's too much for me, I'll take my medicine and thank nobody to poke a nose into my business."

"He do it by slick tricks," said Durango. "He no so strong as you, Tangle. If you ever get your hands on him you kill him quick."

"Mebbe so," nodded the giant. "I sure wish some-
body would tell me how he done it. I don't know myself. I only know that when I lunged after him he somehow caught my arm and threw me over his head. Next time he give that same arm a twist that plumb turned it out of the shoulder socket. It's so lame I can't move it to-day, and the doc what pulled it back into place for me said I might not have any use of it for a week or ten days. Then he got me under the chin and shut my wind off. Never no human critter done such things to Mike Regan before."

"You pretty sore, Tangle," nodded the Mexican. "Come sit at table in corner. We talk little. I buy drinks."

They sat down at the table, and Durango paid for a round of drinks.

"I know you like to get even with Merriwell, Tangle," he said. "I no blame you. I have some feeling. He twist my arm, too. I thought he broke it, first. He's regular devil to fight. You laugh when we tell you last night he whip five of us."

"Yep," nodded Regan, "I admit I did shortle some, but I ain't so much inclined to laugh this morning."

"You hate him; so do I," hissed Durango. "This morning I hear old man who fire us yesterday get answer from Tigers' manager that they play here to-morrow forenoon. They play Merriwell's team. We out of it. You listen. We make up pot to bet on Tigers. Every Buster he put all his money in pot. We find plenty blame fool who want to bet."

"I reckon you kin," said Tanglefoot; "but mebbe you're the blame fools. It wouldn't s'prise me any now if this yere smooth-faced tenderfoot proved too much for the Tigers, just the same as he did for your old team."

"You listen," whispered the Mexican. "We fix it somehow. Tigers play to-morrow morning so they can get away on first train in afternoon. To-night something happen to Frank Merriwell. We fix him somehow. You help us?"

"What are you going to do?"

"Dunno yet. Mebbe we catch him foul and carry him off. Mebbe we keep him till after game is over. If we make bets, they have to play at time set for game whether they have pitcher or not."

"Woosh!" grunted Regan. "Seems to me that's a sort of game way to git even. No, Mex, I'll not mingle. When I git ready to fall on that thar gent Merriwell I'll do it all by my lonesome. I'd sure be plumb ashamed to think it necessary to have a whole bunch helping me down one lone galoot."

"Oh, all right," muttered Durango disappointedly. "You have your way, Tangle. Mebbe you come out to see them practice this forenoon? I hear they have little practice out at field. Tigers get here first thing this afternoon."

"Well, mebbe I'll come out to see the practice and mebbe I won't," answered Regan. "I don't care a whole lot about parading around in public with this wing in a hammock."

Shame kept him away from the field when the Merrys appeared between ten and eleven o'clock that forenoon. A large crowd of spectators came out, nevertheless, and particular notice was taken of the fact that the practice work of Merriwell's players was far superior to what it had been before the game on the previous day.

At the suggestion of Pierce Bloodgood, the local man who was doing the catching for Frank, Merry consented to throw his famous double shoot, and at least twenty eager spectators who stood in line to watch the curve of the ball afterward swore they had seen it bend both out and in, following a course which resembled the writhing movement of a snake.

Three times Frank threw that curve, but declined to do so further.

"It's not particularly easy on a man's arm," he laughed, "and I haven't been pitching any but I speak of lately, you know. With another game coming to-morrow forenoon I've got to use my projector all right."

At one-forty a train brought the Houston Tigers into town. A crowd swarmed to the station to see them get off, and it must have appeared as if the whole of Bellbuckle had assembled there.

The Tigers were a swarthy, husky, tough-looking set of fellows. With scarcely an exception, they resembled the lower class of professionals, who, un-
fortunately, often have the unbridled instincts of roughness. Of course there are professional ball players who are thoroughly fine fellows with gentlemanly instincts, but it often happens that independent salaried teams are made up from the off-scourings and discards of the league teams, and therefore it is not strange that there should be so many rowdies among them.

The Tigers seemed pleased by the curiosity they had aroused. They marched swaggeringly to the Longhorn Hotel, making some sarcastic, sneering comments about the town on the way.

At the hotel Plug Coy—sometimes called "Flash" Coy—hastened to find Bob Conger, the manager of the Tigers.

"Look here, old man," said Coy, drawing Conger aside, "I want to put you wise to the fact that you're not going to have a snap here to-morrow."

"Ho!" grinned Conger. "I hear you let a bunch of kids beat you."

"They are no kids, though some of them do look pretty young. You've heard of Frank Merriwell, haven't you?"

"Heard a lot of rot about the man. They say he was pretty good years ago—that is, pretty good for a college pitcher."

"He's pretty good now," declared Coy. "I hate to own it, but he's a good man. We had a team of batters. He held us down to seven hits, and several of those were scratches. With swift backing up he would have held us to two or three clean hits, and I doubt if we could have scored a run. We're pretty sore, for we've all been fired. Now, Conger, we've raised a purse, and we're going to bet every dollar on your team."

"That's where you're wise," nodded the manager of the Tigers, grinning. "You'll win. We'll take a fall out of that crowd."

"But don't—don't be too confident," urged Coy. "That was the trouble with us. Spofford says, 'Give them a few runs to encourage them. We can win any time we please.' I did it. Then they beat us by one score."

"Tough luck," chuckled Conger. "But just watch the game to-morrow, and you'll see us bury them beneath an avalanche of scores."

CHAPTER IX.

THE ONE WHO CAME.

That night in the Longhorn Hotel, the Sweet Violet Saloon, and various other places, there was a great deal of betting on the coming game.

Merriwell and his friends retired early to get a good night's sleep, but Bellbuckle saw fit to make things hum until long after midnight, and sleep was dispelled by all sorts of nerve disturbing noises. There was singing, shouting, whooping, yelling, and some time between one and two o'clock at least twenty shots were fired in the vicinity of the Longhorn.

For all of these night disturbances, Frank Merriwell was up at peep o' day, and, securing a good saddle horse, he set forth for a morning canter before breakfast.

Away into the hills beyond the town Merry rode. He did not follow any definite trail, and, after entering the hills, decided to return by another route. However, as he rode on and on the valley which he had entered failed to show him any method of turning either to the right or left. After he had proceeded many miles and the risen sun was beginning to permeate the air with heat that threatened to be uncomfortable, he decided to turn back and retrace his course.

"If I don't," he laughed, "I'm liable to be late for breakfast."

The entrance to the valley was rather narrow and almost choked by a dense thicket. He was again in the midst of this thicket, slowly traversing what seemed to be a natural path, when, of a sudden, something whistled through the air, dropped over his head and shoulders, caught his arms to his sides, and snapped him with terrific violence from the saddle.

He was stunned by the fall to the ground, and when he recovered three men were upon him. Already they had turned him on his face and twisted his arms behind him, where they were binding them securely. His feet likewise had been encircled by loops of heavy rope.
He made a feeble effort at resistance, but it was worse than useless. They had him foul.

He twisted his head round to look at them, and discovered that their faces were hidden by masks. Then one of the three whipped a blindfold over his eyes and tied it in place.

A horse was brought up. Frank was lifted and bound upon the back of the animal. Few words were spoken by his captors. When they did speak it was evident that they took great pains to disguise their voices.

Bound to that horse, Merry was carried a mile or more from the place of his capture. Finally the men halted and removed him from the horse. He was unceremoniously dragged into some sort of a building and dropped on a hard, bare dirt floor.

"Hyar he is," rumbled one of his captors. "It sure is a good place for him. He won't git away too soon."

"Here he will stay till arter the game is over, anyhow," said another.

The third did not speak.

"Waal, we'd better git back into town," said the first speaker. "We kin sorter split up and ride in from different directions, so's not to attract no attention or arouse no suspicions."

"So-long, Mr. Frank Merriwell," said the second speaker. "You may as well make yourself as pacified and comfortable as you kin. You're trussed up good and tight, and the door of this old shanty will be fastened on the outside. You may git kind of lonesome and hungry before any of your friends find yuh. Howsoever, I presume they'll be liable to come 'round and diskiver you afore you starves to death. Ho! ho!"

Laughing sardonically, the trio departed. Merry heard them close and fasten the door.

Frank had not spoken a word to them. Now he muttered:

"Well, this is a fancy mess! There's only one explanation. I'm to be kept away from Bellbuckle baseball field to-day. That's the scheme."

He began straining with all his might to free his hands, but after a time he found that he simply drew the cords tighter, so that the circulation of his blood was somewhat impeded.

"No use," he decided regretfully. "They did the job well."

"Lying on his back, he worked his head against the dirt floor until finally the hoodwink was rubbed from his eyes. As he had expected, he found himself in the single room of a small hut, which resembled a dugout in the side of a hill. The sloping roof and the front were built of timbers, but the remainder was cut in the solid ground. A small four-paned window, from which the glass had been nearly all broken, permitted the morning sunshine to stream in and fall upon the rear wall of earth.

"By this time they should be sitting down to breakfast in the Longhorn," he meditated. "Probably they will expect me to appear soon. It won't create any alarm at first because I am not on hand. By and by, however, they will begin to get uneasy. Then they will wonder what's keeping me away. Eventually they will be likely to attempt to find me. But there won't be much time for that. The game is to begin at ten o'clock. If I'm not there who will pitch? Arlington used to pitch, but the team will still be one man short. If they refuse to play without me the game will be forfeited to the Tigers, and every one who has bet on us will lose."

He lay there thinking, helpless and trying to be as much composed as possible. The time passed slowly, yet by the downward and sidelong creeping of the sunlight upon the rear wall of the dugout he knew the forenoon was advancing. Continually he hoped that he would be discovered and released. He placed his dependence mainly in old Joe Crowfoot, who had come to his rescue on so many previous occasions. If Joe knew he would follow the trail into the hills, and Frank was certain he would be found at last.

At last—but that might be too late. It would be too late unless Crowfoot hastened, for already the patch of sunlight was touching the hard-packed dirt floor. The hour for the game to begin could not be far away.

At times Merry's heart throbbed violently, and he
strained his ears to catch some encouraging sound. At other times he lay still, feeling that it was useless to rebel against fate.

"It must be ten o'clock now," he finally muttered.

Faint and far away he seemed to hear the thud of hoofs. His heart leaped as he listened and the sounds became more and more distinct.

"Some one is coming, sure!" he exclaimed. "There's more than one. I can hear the hoofbeats of two horses. They are coming this way. It's Crowfoot—it must be!"

Neater and nearer drew the galloping animals.

"He's bringing a horse for me," decided Merry. "It's simply marvelous how that old redskin always bobs up at the right moment."

Outside the door of the cabin the horses stopped. There was a delay of a few moments; and then a footstep sounded and a hand fell on the door.

Merry opened his lips ready to cry, "Hello, Joe!"

The door was flung open. The huge man who had opened it was forced to stoop in order to look into the dugout.

It was big Mike Regan!

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CHAPTER X.

SOMETHING UNEXPECTED.

Evidently the semi-gloom of the dugout blinded Mr. Regan, for he stood there blinking his eyes like an owl.

"Hello," he growled. "Be yuh here, young feller?"

"Sure thing!" answered Merry. "I'm here, all right."

"Well, I swar!" grimed the giant, as he stepped in and gazed down on Frank. "They sartin got you good and proper this time, didn't they?"

"I must admit that they did," replied Merry.

"The last time me and you met up you was a heap cocky. Observe this wing of mine? Notice that I'm carrying it trussed up? That's because you put it on the bum. You sure give it something of a twist, partner. It sorter reminded me of the dose I've handed out to other gents on one or two occasions."

"And now," said Frank, "I suppose you're ready and eager to get back at me. Well, you've got your chance. Sail in! I can't lift a finger. You can do anything you like with me. Being a thoroughly bad man, a holy terror, a person who fears no one, of course you'll take special delight in doing things to an enemy who is bound hand and foot and absolutely helpless."

"Now, hold on, young feller," growled Tanglefoot. Mike. "Don't you go fur to shoot your face off too promiscuous. You orter realize it's up to you to sing low and humble."

"By that you mean I ought to humiliate myself and show the white feather. You mean I ought to beg. Is that it? If you think you're going to make me do anything of the sort you're deceiving your- self."

"Look a' here, you arter see that I've got yuh foul. If I want to I can chop yuh up piecemeal. I kin do anything I please."

"Admitted," said Frank, "and I'm looking for you to do anything your natural brutal nature may dic- tate."

"Derned if I ever saw a gent as free and sassy with his tongue as you be. Now, if you was to treat me proper and sort of apologize for what you done last night, mebbe I'd let up a leettle and refrain from stomping you out of existence right hyar. Mebbe I'd only jest impress on yuh how foolish it was for you to buck up against Mike Regan the way yuh done. By diplomacy, young feller, you might even induce me to set you free so that you could get back to Bell- buckle in time to take part in that there game of baseball, which, I reckon, is begun a'reddy."

Frank laughed.

"I'm not silly enough to expect anything but bru- tality from a man like you," he retorted. "You have a record, and I presume you'll live up to it."

"I've got a record for meeting all comers fair and squar' and on equal terms," growled Regan. "That's the way I met you last night. By way of excuse for what happened, I will claim that I wasn't prepared to go up against anything quite so vigorous and lively as you proved to be. I sure have got to save my pride
as much as possible. You took me off guard. Nevertheless, I own up you had the goods. I dunno how you done it, but you sartain tossed me 'round careless and regardless. You set my head spinning a-plenty. Then you wound up the performance by nigh breaking my neck and shutting off my wind till I saw all kinds of beautiful colored fire and heard music, and bells, and guns a-plenty. When I woke up I was lying under the table, where, they say, you tossed me. Looking at you now, I sort of has doubts did it happen. It don't seem possible a youngster like you could wallop around a gent of my corporosity, even though said gent relaxed and let himself be walloped unresistingly. Howsoever, I'm a-carrying this yere damaged wing to prove that it really did happen."

"If I could induce you kindly to release me," smiled Frank, "I'd guarantee to remove any fleeting shadow of doubt from your mind."

"Now, look a' here, in any ordinary case I wouldn't hesitate at all, regardless of the fact that one arm is out of commission. In this instance it's a-plenty different. If I couldn't take keer of Mike last night with two good paws, I admit it's improbable I could do it now with only one. I didn't come here, to try any more of that."

"I hardly fancied you did," said Frank. "I know what you came here for. Go ahead. Why waste time in talking?"

"You're in a heap of a hurry, ain't yuh? Now, mebbe you don't know as much as you opine you do. Lemme tell you something. If you've reckoned any on your friends finding you and setting you free, you might as well forget it. With the exception of the old Injun, your bunch is busy playing baseball jest about now, and getting trimmed, too. The Injun is snoozing in the back room of the Sweet Violet Saloon, for they dropped a little dope into his drink and stowed him away jest to make sure he wouldn't cause no annoyance by fetching you 'round at the wrong time. That's dead straight, young feller, so you can see that you're in a pretty bad mess. You're up against a hard proposition."

"If you're not lying, I surely am up against it," agreed Frank.

"I'm giving it to yuh straight," declared Regan. "How do you judge I found out what you was?"

"I presume your accomplices told you. Perhaps you were one of the three men who yanked me off my horse and brought me here."

"Nay, nay, partner, not so. I got next to Juan Durango out at the ball field while they was chiming it over who should pitch in your place. He told me what had become of you, for he reckoned it would please me a heap to know. He told me you had been brought here to this old dugout and left tied and helpless. The greaser opined I'd stand 'round chucking over the little joke. When the game was started and Durango's attention was diverted somewhat, I wandered back into Bellbuckle, got my horse and borrowed another critter, and galloped out this yere way about as fast as I could come. Hyar I am. Thar are two horses outside the door. It's three or four miles to the ball field. If we start right away I reckon you orer get there by the time the game's half over, anyhow."

"If we start?" breathed Frank. "Look here, man, don't think you can have sport with me in such a fashion. Don't think you can fool me into believing you mean to set me free. I'm not going to give you the chance to laugh at me."

"Huh!" grunted Regan, producing a long keen-bladed knife. "We won't do any more talking whatever; we'll act some."

With a double slash of the keen blade he cut the cords which bound Frank's feet.

"If you'll roll over on your face some," he said, "I'll have your hands loose in a jiffy."

Amazed and wondering, Merry promptly rolled over upon his face. He was not sure Tanglefoot Mike would not drive that knife into his back; but at best he was helpless in the man's hands, and so he took the chance of feeling the steel between his shoulders.

Regan swiftly cut the ropes that held Merry's arms.

"Thar you are," he said. "I judge you'll be some stiff, but mebbe your blood will git to circulating by the time we jog back to the ball field."
Frank rose, casting aside the pieces of rope, and faced the giant, who was slipping his knife back into its sheath.

"If you'll excuse me, Regan," he said, "I won't waste any time talking just now. I can say what I have to say—at least what my lips find to say—after we're mounted and on the gallop."

"Sure," nodded Mike. "Come, now, and we'll hike some."

Thirty seconds later they were galloping toward Bellbuckle.

"I was fooled, Regan—badly fooled," said Frank. "I thought you were after my hide. It's plain I made a mistake in sizing you up."

"Lemme tell you something," returned the giant. "This yer is the first time I ever done anything of this sort. The more I thought it over the more I sort of admired the young gent who handed me those hot ones last evening. At first I was a-plenty wrathful, but that wore off, and by the time Durango whispered in my ear what had been done with you I was feeling a heap regretful over the fact that you weren't going to be on hand to pitch to-day. They say you're a lullapalooza. It was hard luck that kept me from seeing the game yesterday. Mebbe I'll have the pleasure of seeing you pitch a few innings to-day. As a last pointer, lemme say this: Drop that gent Bloodgood what's catching for yuh. To make the game dead sure, they've fixed him, and he'll throw you down if it comes to a pinch and he gets the chance."

"Are you sure?" asked Frank. "I suspected him in the first game, but finally decided that my suspicions were unjust."

"I'm giving it to you straight. Bloodgood will lose the game for you to-day if it comes to a pinch and the Tigers can't win any other way."

"Then on the bench he goes," cried Frank, "as soon as I reach the field."

CHAPTER XI.

IN THE FIFTH INNING.

It was the last of the fifth inning. The Houston Tigers were at bat, and Chester Arlington was pitching for Merriwell's team. The score was four to one in favor of the Tigers. Beyond question Arlington had been doing really splendid work in the box, but the wriggling of his teammates over Frank's disappearance had made it impossible for them to do their best. It was universally conceded that nothing save rare good fortune had prevented the Tigers from piling up a big score.

The one run obtained by the Merrys had been secured by Browning, who pounded the ball far over the outfield for a homer. Even then, disgusted because there was no one ahead of him on the sacks, the big fellow jogged around in such a lazy manner that he barely reached the plate ahead of the ball when it was returned.

Frank's teammates had vainly tried to postpone the game. Conger, the manager of the Tigers, would not listen, declaring that he must leave town with his team on the first afternoon train.

"'Tain't our fault that you're one man short, is it?" he demanded. "We're here to play this game. There's a lot of money stuck up on it, and if you fellows squeal we'll simply take the game by forfeit."

"Waugh!" growled Buck Badger. "We've sure got to play, boys; there ain't no way out of it. Maybe Frank will show up before long. Perhaps something's happened to his horse. I'm going into this yer game and do my level best, just the same as if he was here. That's whatever!"

But even though Badger had said he was going to play the same as if Merry were present, Frank's absence had an effect on him. He was sullen and angry. Arlington's position at short had been filled by O'Hara, pulled out from centre field. A local man by the name of Cuthbert was secured to take the Irish lad's place in the field.

Two men were out in the last of the fifth, and the head man of the Tiger's batting list was stepping out to face Chester when a fat cowman by the name of Dumpling Higgins gave a shrill, wild yell.

"Look! look!" shouted Higgins. "If my blinkers are right, here comes Frank Merriwell now!"

He pointed toward two horsemen who were ap-
proaching at a mad gallop. One of these horsemen was instantly recognized by Merry's friends as Frank himself.

The amazement of the crowd may be imagined when the other horseman was seen to be big Mike Regan.

Juan Durango seized Coy by the wrist and hissed in his ear:

"Por Dios! It's, Tangle! He bring Merriwell!"

"I told you you were a fool to make any talk to him," whispered Coy. "Did you mention my name? If you did—"

"No mention anybody's name," protested the Mexican; "just say we have Merriwell penned tight out there in hills so he no get into game to-day."

"Then you may be the only one called to account, but I advise you to make yourself scarce. Don't let Frank Merriwell get his eyes on you. If you do, he may handle you rougher than he handled Regan last night."

The crowd was yelling shrilly as Frank galloped up and sprang from his horse near the bench. The game had been delayed by his appearance. His friends rushed forward and gathered around him.

"Where have ye been, Frankie?" cried Mulloy.

"No time to chin now," said Frank. "How does the game stand?"

They told him.

"Last of the fifth, four to one against us, and two men out," he muttered. Then he turned to the catcher.

"Bloodgood," he said, "I want that suit you're wearing."

Pierce Bloodgood looked surprised.

"This suit?" he faltered. "Why, you don't mean — What are you going to do for a catcher?"

"I'll find one; don't worry," said Frank quietly.

"Take that suit off."

Although the field was not fenced, a foul board had been erected at the proper distance behind the home plate. Accompanied by Frank, Bloodgood retired behind that board and stripped off his uniform. Merry changed clothes with him in a few moments.

"I don't know what you mean by putting me out of the game this fashion," said Bloodgood; "but if you——"

"Give me those shoes," interrupted Frank, as he flung his riding boots toward the man. "There's no time for me to make explanations now. It's a desperate situation, and needs a desperate remedy. If you want to talk it over after the game, come to the Longhorn and we'll talk."

He laced up the shoes hastily, and was back on the field in a surprisingly brief space of time.

The manager of the Tigers had permitted the umpire to call time, realizing he would anger the crowd by refusing.

Frank motioned to Arlington, who met him in front of the plate.

"Chet," said Merry, "I'm going to put you under the bat."

"Me?"

"Yes."

"Why, what's the matter with Bloodgood?"

"I have reasons for preferring you as a backstop to-day. Oh, I know you haven't done any catching in a long time. All I ask of you is that you go in there and do your best. Now we'll get an understanding of our signals."

With their heads close together they hastily whispered over the signals, and then Merry waved his hand and directed his players to again take the field.

There was some murmuring as the spectators saw Arlington go behind the pan.

"This fellow is just as easy, Overling!" shouted a coacher near first. "All he has is his reputation, and we'll spoil that to-day. Biff it!"

The batter grinned, gripped his club, and leaned against the first ball delivered by Merriwell, meeting it on the trademark with a short, snappy swing that sent it humming into the field for two sacks.

CHAPTER XII.

THE TURN OF THE TIDE.

"Oh, wow! wow! wow!" barked the delighted coacher on the line near first, as he imitated the plunging movements of a bucking broncho. "What a snap!
What a cinch! Is this the great Vale wonder? Is this the famous Frank Merriwell? Back to the woods with him! Put him on the shelf! Stow him away! Can him! He’s a has-been! Why, the Tigers will claw him up! They won’t leave a shred of him!"

"Don’t you believe him!" squawked Hans Dunnerwust. "You wait a while until let der game see vot will happen."

"Get a translator! Get an interpreter!" cried the coacher. "How’d you ever get the idea you could play baseball before you learned to talk United States?"

"You gone away pack and sit up!" shouted Hans fiercely. "I pet United States could talk me chouste as well as pasepall could play you. Yah!"

Dillberry, the second batter, crouched at the plate in a threatening attitude, wiggling his club.

"Put one over and I’ll land it on top of that hill yonder," he cried.

Chester crouched and signalled.

Merry shook his head, and Chet gave another signal.

Then Frank whipped the ball over, and Dillberry fouled it.

"Strike one!" cried the umpire.

"Vale, vale, vale!" yelled Dunnerwust. "Dot pall didt not knock you so far, didt it?"

"All right, Dill, old boy," cried Overling. "Just tap it gently. I’ll score on your hit."

Merry drove Overling back to second twice, and then gave Dillberry a high one, which the batter let pass for a ball. The next one seemed to be high, also, but it dropped past Dillberry’s shoulders, and the umpire declared a second strike.

"Dot peen right!" cried Dunnerwust. "Choust stood still undt watch them go py. You will safe yourself a lot of troubles, undt it will pe all der sameness der end in."

Dillberry, however, did not propose to have another strike called on him, and therefore he tried to lace the ball out when Frank bent one over a corner.

To the batter’s disgust, the ball rose in a little pop fly and dropped in Merriwell’s hands, leaving Overling on third.

"Now git arther them, boys!" urged Dumpling Higgins, as Frank trotted to the bench with the other players coming in behind him. "Jest show them they ain’t got it all their own way."

Having taken Bloodgood’s place on the batting order, it was Frank’s turn to hit.

Sully, the pitcher of the Tigers, cocked his head on one side and surveyed Merry from head to heels. Then he proceeded to put over three crooked ones, which fooled Frank handsomely and caused him to strike out with such suddenness that his comrades and friends among the spectators were astonished and dismayed.

"Why, he’s pie!" grinned Sully.

Crane and O’Hara were likewise easy, and the Tigers came in to have another try at Frank.

Cartright, the second baseman, managed to poke a grounder through the infield.

Sully sacrificed Cartright to second.

Wormwood also got a scratch hit and landed Carright on third.

"It’s too easy, too easy!" sang the coacher. "Here’s where we pile up a dozen, at least."

Wormwood started for second on the first ball pitched by Merry.

Arlington threw to Badger, who was covering sack number two.

Cartright, seeing Chester throw, leaped off third and sprinted for the plate.

Frank made a most amazing leap into the air, shot up his right hand, and caught the ball. Dropping back to the ground, he smilingly trotted forward onto the third base line to meet Cartright. The astonished runner turned and lunged back for the base, but Frank tossed the ball to Mulloy, who put the man out.

"It’s tooaisy, tooaisy!" chuckled Barney.

Dumpling Higgins yelled like a wild Indian.

"That’s the way to fix ’em!" he shrieked.

Wormwood had reached second safely, but now two men were out, and the possibility of scoring did not look as pleasing as it had.

Merry did his best to strike Bixby out without attempting to use the double shoot. The centre fielder of the Tigers, however, had a good batting eye, and
he finally fell on the ball with a terrific swipe which sent it sailing away into right field.

Dunnerwust ran to get under the ball, and thrust up his hands to catch it. The ball seemed to bound from the Dutchman's paws, but, still running, Hans scooped it at it again and got it.

"How was dot for highness?" he yelled as soon as he could stop. "Who was it vot observationed dot pasepall couldt not play me?"

"They're lucky, Sul," called Conger, the manager; "but you've got 'em easy. Just hold them right where they are."

"Sure thing," nodded Sully confidently.

Then he walked into the box and struck out Cuthbert, Dunnerwust, and Mulloy with rapidity and ease.

Again, in the last of the seventh, Merry had to work hard to keep the Tigers from scoring. These men were batters, every one of them, down to the tail-ender on the list. Only by using his brains and resorting to every sort of stratagem to baffie them did Frank succeed in preventing them from scoring, for again they got a man round to third with only one out. Nevertheless, Merry finally forced Overling to pop, and then struck Dillberry out.

"But we've got to have some runs, boys," he said, as he came to bat. "This is the eighth inning. If we don't score now, the weak end of the list comes up in the ninth and our chances will be mighty slim. Chet, can't you start us off?"

"I can try," said Arlington grimly, as he stepped out to hit.

He did start them off with a clean, stinging single. A moment later he stole second.

Then Badger got a handsome little Texas leaguer over second base, but the rapid manner in which the centre fielder came in for the ball caused Mulloy, on the coaching line, to hold Arlington at third.

Big Bruce Browning strode out, anxious to drive in those two men on the sacks, at least. In fact, he was somewhat too anxious, and, as a result, Sully easily took him into camp. Bruce shook his head sadly as he fanned for the third time.

"But here's Merriwell!" squealed Dumpling Higgins. "Just watch him!"

"He cut a lot of ice last time, didn't he?" laughed Wormwood, the catcher. "Fan him again, Sul."

Sully remembered just how he had struck Frank out before, and he attempted to do it again. The very first ball he pitched, however, was met by Merriwell's bat and sent humming on a line far into the field. It was a clean two-sacker, on which Arlington and Badger scored.

One more run was needed to tie, but the batters who followed Frank were the weak hitters of the team.

"Hold 'em, Sul!" urged Wormwood anxiously. "The rest of these fellows are easy now. Fan 'em!"

Sully went after Joshua Crane in earnest, and he quickly had the Yankee 'going.' As Josh fanned for the third time and Wormwood laughingly "lobbed" the ball back to Sully, Frank went dashing up the line toward third.

There was a yell, and Sully, in his eagerness to get the ball, fumbled and muffed.

Frank did not even slide, for Mulloy laughingly fanned for him to take it easy.

"Oh, never mind, Sul," said Wormwood, as the pitcher shut his teeth in anger. "He's anchored right there. He'll never get any farther."

Merry leaped off third as Sully began the movement of his next delivery to O'Hara.

"Oh, no, you wouldn't—really, you wouldn't!" sneered Wormwood, whipping the ball down to the third baseman and forcing Frank to slide back feet foremost.

"Stop that!" snapped Sully. "What if you should throw wild? He can't get home. Let him alone."

The first ball pitched to Terry O'Hara had been declared a strike by the umpire. Sully next tried a coaker, but Terry refused to reach.

Apparently Frank again sought to draw a throw to third. Wormwood simply grinned at him and tossed the ball to Sully.

Then there was a yell. The crowd gasped. Everybody rose on tiptoes.

For Frank, instead of retreating to third, had shot down the line toward the plate, leaping into marvelous speed with the very first stride.

Again Sully reached eagerly for the ball. He
heard Wormwood yell for him to throw it, and vaguely saw the catcher spring onto the plate. Suddenly he was struck with a fear that he might muf
it, as he had before—and he did! He caught it up and threw, but Merrinwell slid and was safe.

Dumpling Higgins simply had fits; but, happening to stand near Mike Regan, Dumpling’s squawks were drowned in the thunderous roars of laughter which burst from the giant’s throat.

“Take to the woods, you Tigers!” bellowed Regan.

“You better climb a tree, every dern one of yuh! No wonder yuh wanted to git him out of the way. Why, he’s making yuh look like a bunch of monkeys.

And when the game’s over, he’ll have a little settlement with some other gents hereabouts, I opine.”

Sully was so upset that he proceeded to give O’Hara a pass to first.

Then he hit Cuthbert in the ribs.

But most amazing of all was what followed, for Dunnerwust, the big, lumbering Dutchman, banged the ball hard enough to score both O’Hara and Cuthbert.

“Vere iss dot vize fellows vot observationed dot pasepall didt not know how to play. me?” puffed Hans, as he stood proudly on second base. “So much talk iss not making him as vas a little vile ago, iss it?”

Mulloy made a bid for a hit, but his high fly was caught, and the Tigers came in to the bench fierce and desperate. They snarled and growled among themselves, and then trotted out with their bats, fierce to do things to Frank Merrinwell.

Frank and Chester had held a moment’s consultation in front of the pan, and now Merry let himself out another notch, for Chet was backstopping amazingly well. Three times in that inning and on as many different men Merry used the double shoot. He used it as a strike-out ball, and each time it fooled the batter. Cartwright, Sully, and Wormwood took their medicine bitterly enough.

In the crowd there were also a great many disgusted persons, even though the majority seemed delighted over the turn the game had taken. The Busters, however, were a sick-looking bunch.

“I don’t know how I’ll get out of Bellbuckle,” muttered Coy; “but I’m going to be on my way pretty soon.”

“You bet, me too,” whispered Durango. “I skip before ninth inning is finished. I skip when I see there is no chance. I lay low. I jump train when Tigers go this afternoon. I make somebody in that bunch stake me ticket for somewhere.”

They remained and saw Frank’s team come within an ace of adding another run to the six already secured. Nothing but a streak of luck prevented the Merrys from obtaining that tally; but they did not need it, for in the last of the ninth the Tigers once more went down like schoolboys before the splendid pitching of Frank Merrinwell. Only one of them reached first, and the game ended with the score six to four in Merrinwell’s favor.

That night only three of the original Busters were to be found in Bellbuckle, and they remained because their “loads” were too heavy to let them get away. In some manner or other the rest of the team got out on the train which bore the crestfallen and disgusted Tigers onward to fill their next engagement.

Thus Frank was deprived of an opportunity to settle up with Durango and his two comrades. But the outcome of the game had placed Merry in such good humor that he felt no regret over the loss of his chance to even the score.

The story Mr. Standish has written for the next issue is brimming with fun and adventure. Hans Dunnerwust manages, in this tale, to make himself the most laughable kind of a joke, and at the same time perform some service that proves he is far from being a fool. The title is, “Frank Merrinwell’s Six-in-Hand; or, The Trail to Pickpocket.” It is the sort of Western yarn that keeps jumping all the time. There are some shady chaps who give Merry a problem or two, and tax his resources of wit and bravery. Just this little hint is given to assure you that the story is one you’d better not miss. So make sure of getting No. 730—out next week—and be in with all the rest on an exceptionally good thing. Read the letter from your favorite author on the next page.
engaged to write a series of long stories for the Top Notch, and in the second issue of the magazine you will find a sequel to "Chif Sterling," entitled "Chif Sterling's Support."

"A Scandal of the Gridiron," by Robert Russell, is a complete college story of circumstantial evidence, and it certainly is a Jim Dandy. There is also one complete page of "Talks with Top Notch Fellows," by your humble servant, the editor.

When you read this, the second number of the Top Notch Magazine will be on the news stands. It is even better than the first issue, and it is our aim and intention to improve each succeeding number until we reach the high standard which we have set for ourselves. You will find this magazine, in cover design, make-up, style, and contents, a really high-grade publication, which may be unblushingly displayed on the library table side by side with any publication issued. You need not hesitate to offer it to your friends, your brothers and sisters, or your parents for inspection and perusal. There will be nothing cheap about it except its price. Buy a copy and judge for yourself.

If your news dealer has cleaned out his supply of the first issue, send in your orders to Street & Smith, Publishers, New York, so that you may begin your files with the opening number. You will want to save them, every one. A year from now—two years, five years, ten years, perhaps—you will take keen delight in bringing forth the old numbers and re-reading them.

And when you have sampled Top Notch, let us hear what you have to say about it. We are very interested to know what the boys readers of America think of our new magazine. Write us about it.

Your friend,

Burt L. Standish.

**TIME TO MOVE ON.**

A youth who, as early in life as he is a free man, decides to "work for himself," often lays the foundation of a fortune sooner than his comrade who is willing to occupy a more dependent position. One man, now a very rich cattleman of Texas, possessing lands which are more than sufficient in extent to make a German principality, owed his independent start in life to an uncomplimentary remark which his mistress made about him.

The man, who was a poor farmer's boy in Rhode Island before the Civil War, went to the Southwest to seek his fortune while he was still a callow youth. But although he was callow he was extremely long-legged, and this circumstance won him immediately the name of "Shanghai," by which he was almost exclusively known to his friends in that part of the world.

He himself now tells how, on his arrival in Texas, he went to work for a farmer who had several slaves. There was no one on the place except Shanghai and a negro named Pete who could ride a certain horse, and it often fell to Shanghai's lot to mount this frivoulous beast. But one day it happened that when Pete was on the horse, it threw him and then fell on him. This happened near the planter's house. The planter and his wife and several attendants ran out to the assistance of the negro, who appeared to be dead. As soon as she saw the slave lying senseless, the woman cried out:

"Oh, dear, how unfortunate! There's an eight-hundred-dollar negro killed! Now if it had only been Shanghai, it wouldn't have made any difference."

Shanghai was in hearing of this eminently economic remark, and he at once said to himself: "If I'm a Negro as much here as a negro slave, I guess I'll move on to some place where I can make myself worth it."

He "moved on" to the plains, engaged at first in a small way in the cattle business, later furnished cattle in great quantities to the Confederate army during the war, and eventually grew very rich.
WILLIAM WACK'S REVENGE.

THERE'S William in his Sunday clothes, and I'll be bound he's going out to see some girls," said old Mrs. Wacks, as her son, a youth of twenty summers, or somewhere thereabout, faded out of the front door, attired in a suit of clothes that would not have worn for two dollars and a half a day; "and he'll not be home until after midnight," she added with a sigh.

That was only half right. William Wacks started out, not to see "some girls," but to visit a young lady whom he loved with all the ardor of a brother for a sister—of some other fellow.

And he returned home long before midnight.

As William walked along with a light heart, and ditto pocket-book, gayly humming "Sweet Violets," and gracefully twirling a cane in his right hand, a dog wearing a head as big as a coal scuttle sprang at him savagely, and frightfully shattered his nerves and a portion of his wardrobe.

William was naturally amazed at the dog's familiarity and flagrant breach of etiquette. The dog may have known William by sight, but he had never had an introduction to him, and William was not on speaking terms with any of the brute's family, to the best of his knowledge and belief.

The dog seemed to possess no manners worthy of speaking of, and William was confident that the animal had never read that little work on etiquette called "Don't," especially the paragraph which advises, "Don't tear the cornerstone out of a young man's rainbow when he is a strange girl." William simply thought that the dog had no bringing up, and he yearned to bring him up—about four feet off the ground, with a rope around his neck.

These reflections surged through William's mind as he retracted his step. His eyes filled with tears, and his breathings of "oofs," and "ooften," they being purchased on "tick." The unmannerly dog accompanied William the distance of a block to prevent him from feeling lonesome, hence he reached home much earlier than if he had remained on his thoughts alone.

It never occurred to William that the colossal-headed dog heard him singing "Sweet Violets," and that, under the circumstances, to have any thought of him as a veritable animal had torn him into fragments, a coroner's jury would have rendered a verdict of not guilty on the ground of self-defense.

William Wacks did not go to see his girl that night. He sent her a note with a feckless and boy, stating that he was detained at home by circumstances over which he had no control. But "circumstances" was not the name of the dog. William, in his haste to tear himself away from the animal that was tearing away him, may have thought the dog said his name was circumstances, but it wasn't. It was Bismarck. Bismarck left the last syllable of his name on William, but William had too much "biz" on hand bidding the dog good-by to examine the severed appendage.

Familiarity breeds contempt, and Bismarck's ungracious and impolite attack on William filled him so full of contempt for the canine that the power of it slopped over, he filled him full of pain, but that was due to his own conduct. He nearly split his intellect trying to invent a scheme of revenge.

He knew he could get nine hundred thousand names to a petition to the legislature to have a law enacted to exterminate all the dogs in the State, for no one reads a petition when signing it; but a little reflection showed him that the plan was not feasible. He didn't know where to borrow the five hundred thousand dollars necessary to lobby the bill through.

A few days after his picnic with Bismarck he read in a scientific journal "five symptoms by which hydrophobia could be detected," and he was greatly enthused by this particular symptom:

"The dog's voice undergoes such a change that it is impossible not to be struck by it."

This symptom, the paper further stated, indicated "an advanced stage of the disease, and it is best to kill the animal at once."

Inconventionally William Wacks detected a change in Bismarck's voice, and next morning he went down where the dog resided. The change was striking as he neared the spot of his recent exciting engagement.

Bismarck was at home, and William sent in his card in the shape of a brick. Then he set up a cry of "mad dog," and took to the cellar, where he found William. He was then all of a tool thus set to their work, and the pace was quickened. To the surprise of everybody, the winner made the full distance in sixteen hours.

Each year the Tarahumaras hold a big race meet at the town of Sisouique, usually in the month of November. The race licenman who fired at the dog. Bismarck was chased two miles, and finally killed with a club.

William Wacks was revenged, but he was not satisfied. He yearned for more curs to conquer. All of a sudden, as it by some fluke of chance he remembered the charming little incident when one short time ago snatched a piece of his coat tails to incorporate into a crazy quilt or something. Inasmuch as the dog took the piece of cloth without saying "by your leave, sir," William became prejudiced against the cur. The tailor charged him twenty dollars for the coat, and it must be confessed that it was a little rough to have its narrative amputated before he had paid for it. Now he was struck by the change in that dog's voice. The hydrophobical symptom was there in all its dangerous hydrophobiness.

William provided himself with a revolver and went to inform the dog of his discovery.

Quarrelly the information proved fatal. It seemed to settle in a vital spot, and the dog just faded away and died without leaving any last words to hand down to posterity.

He shot the dog as dead as the chances of the presidential aspirant whose boom was prematurely doomed. And the dog's owner came out and wanted to know what he meant any way if he wanted his ear punched. William hastily scrutinized the amplitude of the owner of the dead dog, and concluded that he didn't want his ear punched.

"Your dog was mad!" said William Wacks.

"Most infernal idiot!" said the man, with considerable asperity.

"the dog was no more mad than you are."

William was constrained to mentally acknowledge the truth of the latter half of this accusation, but he merely replied: "Your dog manifested the most striking symptoms of hydrophobia known to science."

And then he showed the irate man the clipping from the sports journal, which he had read with him, and said he felt it was a duty he owed to the public to dispatch the animal at once.

The man read the "symptom" scheme, looked at the defunct dog, then at his slayer, muttered some profane history, made a fist that looked like a corrugated prize squash, and became so careless and reckless with it that it landed between William's eyes with the force of a steam hammer.

William saw the comet which astronomers say will be visible here in 1914, and it was accompanied by about two million young, half-grown comets—as near as William could judge. He couldn't count 'em, they danced about so. There might have been a dozen more than two million. William is inclined to the opinion that when this comet and its attendants become visible some years hence, without the aid of telescopes, both scientific and unscholarly people will be stung to death.

William has not lost confidence in the hydrophobic tester, but he will not experiment with it again until his eyes assume their normal color, and then he will exercise a little more care in the selection of subjects.

THE SWIFTEST RUNNERS.

In Mexico, in the little mountain town of Bocoyac, in the state of Chihuahua, there is a tribe of Indians who call themselves Tarahumaras. Their physical endurance and long-distance running are phenomenal. Their powers have been brought to light by the construction of an American railroad in the neighborhood.

Although pedestrians of other climes, and those inured to the science of long-distance running, can seldom stay more than ten miles, the Tarahumaras think nothing of jaunts of one hundred to two hundred miles, and these distances, too, at a gait that seems incredible.

The favorite course is from Bocoyac to the town of Miniac and return, a distance of one hundred and ten miles in all, and over a trail exceedingly rough in places.

The race not long bears up a purse of one hundred dollars to be awarded to the winner. Great interest was manifested in the race, for the sum offered is a considerable fortune to the members of the tribe. A council was immediately held by the chiefs, and two of the fastest runners were selected to contest for the prize.

When all was ready the runners set out from Bocoyac, first at a slow, then at a quicker pace, and when they reached the town of Bocoyac, the pace was quickened. To the surprise of everybody, the winner made the full distance in sixteen hours.

Each year the Tarahumaras hold a big race meet at the town of Sisouique, usually in the month of November. The race
TIP TOP WEEKLY.

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.

Carl Shaw, Three Mile Bay, N. Y.
Albert W. Fox, Lima, Ohio.
Clifford Malone, Quebec, Canada.
Fred Howe, Brockton, Mass.
Christian Anderson, Chicago, Ill.
Reginald Bailey, Baltimore, Md.
Frank Buckel, Jr., 233 Washington St., Hoboken, N. J.
A. M. Walker, Hebron, Neb.
John N. Wolfe, Kingsman, Kansas.
Arthur J. Leahey, Syracuse, New York.
Hector Hemond, Pembroke, Ont., Canada.

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.

FREE POST CARDS—They will be sent to you if you tell us: Why you like Tip Top; what it has done to help you; what you are doing to help others by getting them to take Tip Top every week. Do this, and you will receive by mail a set of six colored post cards with life like pictures of the principal characters in the Merrilell stories. Address your letters, "STREET & SMITH, 78-89 Seventh Avenue, New York City," and write in one corner of the envelope, "Tip Top Post Card Offer."

BELOW THE BELT.

Two school lads had gone out for an afternoon's carolling; one with his parents' permission, the other without it. The latter knew that on his return to school he would be punished by the schoolmaster, so his pal said: "Look here, Tom, I've thought of a plan to get you out of that whacking. Now, just you bend down and let me chalk something on the back of your trousers."

The schoolmaster was not long in calling the two scholars out, asking them to show their parents' written permission for absence. Tom, of course, could not.

"Then," said the teacher to the latter, "bend down for punishment."

The scholar at once did so, and the master took up his cane and raised the lad's jacket to give him a swish. However, true enough, the master, instead of administering the threatened stroke, broke out into a hearty laugh and told the young rogue to go back to his place. How could he, indeed, punish the lad when he read on his trousers the greeting: "Merry Christmas, Sir!"

ECOCH OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION.

There is a stone wall in a cemetery at Paris where many Communists were executed. "When I saw it," says a recent writer, "the wall still bore marks of shot, and fragments of the skin and hair of the victims that were matted to the wall. A lad who had been among the fiercest of the fighters was one of the condemned. While marching near his home and to the place of execution, he told the officer in command that he had a locket which he had just taken from the body of his dead father, and begged that he might bear it to his mother, promising to return and resume his place in the fated line.

The officer, touched by his tender age, gave the permission, hoping and believing he would not return, thus sparing him the necessity of executing a mere child. Before the line reached its destination, however, the lad came up with hasty steps, stood against the wall, and faced the soldiers. "The first volley tore out his brave little heart."
Interests Them in Athletic Sports.

I think "Tip Top" is the best publication for American boys. The characters in the Merriwell stories are splendid. They fill you with a desire to become interested in all athletic sports. I have succeeded in getting nine boys to read the weekly, and I am sure I can get more.

Albert W. Fox.
Lima, Ohio.

Turned an Enemy into a Friend.

I am sorry to say that I used to be an enemy of "Tip Top," but now I know better, and I am sure I am one of its best friends. It has made me feel like a man. I have a terrible temper, and I am trying hard, with the aid of "Tip Top," to keep it in control.

John L. Coffey.
Brooklyn, N. Y.

Got Sixteen to Read "Tip Top."

I have been a reader of "Tip Top" a long time. It has made me break up a lot of bad habits. I have got sixteen others to read "Tip Top."

Carl Shaw.
Three Mile Bay, N. Y.

Pledges Everlasting Loyalty.

I have been and always will be a loyal Tip Topper. It is impossible to do without your bully weekly. The boys of our neighborhood have formed a Tip Top club. We have a gymnasium, a baseball club, and a football club.

Harry Boys.
San Francisco, Calif.

Made Him a Good Ball Player.

When I first took to reading "Tip Top" I was a tobacco friend, both in chewing and smoking; but by following Frank Merriwell's advice I have quit both. About six years ago the boys of the west end formed a baseball club. I was a member, and was a pretty fair infielder, but couldn't last because of too much tobacco. At that time I was the poorest player, but now I am considered the best and quickest player on the nine. Last summer I earned the place of shortstop on the city team. We played twenty-eight games and lost four.

A. E. A. N.
Grafton, N. D.

Giving Up Their Rough Ways.

I used to go with a set of rough boys. After I began to read "Tip Top" I showed some to them. At first they made fun of me, but I asked them to read one. They did, and liked it so they began to stop smoking and read "Tip Top." At last they got so that they began to buy them every week. They have been helping them for quite a while now, and they are giving up their rough ways.

Edward Pilkington.

"IT" With a Capital I.

I have read your famous weekly ever since the first issue. It certainly is "IT" with a capital I. I think it ought to be published twice a week, because how can a fellow wait a whole week for his favorite? I think Mr. Standish ought to put a few more girls in the stories.

R. C. Figer.
Newport, Ky.

From a Boy in Quebec, Canada.

I have been reading "Tip Top Weekly" for about three months, and I have got five of my friends to read it. "Tip Top" has done a lot for me. I used to play tricks of all kinds, but not now.

Clifford Malone.
Quebec, Can.

Dropped Cigarettes, Took Up Sports.

Before I started reading "Tip Top" I was very fond of cigarettes and pool rooms. But since then I have kept away from these vices and have taken up sports. Many boys in this city read "Tip Top," and they tell me that they know it is the greatest weekly published. I wish that Mr. Standish would send Frank or Dick up into New Ontario, where he could have all the sport he could want. In several copies I read about French-Canadians, and I would like to hear about the real Canuck, not the French-Canadian.

Harvey S. Penfold.
Port Arthur, Ontario, Canada.

Throw Other Stories in the Shade.

The Merriwell stories throw all others in the shade. I have read every number of "Tip Top" for the last five years. Since I have been reading it I have induced my two brothers and a couple of other fellows to read it; I do not drink nor smoke. The only trouble "Tip Top" makes at home is that we all want to read it first.

Nathan Elman.
Mt. Kisco, N. Y.

Helped Greatly in Athletics.

I have been reading "Tip Top" for a long time, and I think it is the best weekly printed. It has helped me very much in my athletics. The boys that I have showed it to like it very much.

G. Herrington.
Clearfield, Pa.

The Most Interesting Stories.

To Burt L. Standish I wish to give the credit of writing the most interesting stories I have ever read. I have repeatedly told skeptics that "Tip Top" is the most uplifting and man-making story weekly I have ever heard of.

H. A. Rutter.
Newmanstown, Pa.

Shows How to Keep in Athletic Form.

I have been reading your weekly now for about five years. I play most all games, and like "Tip Top" because it deals with all kinds of sport, and if you read it carefully you can become much better in some kinds of games. It teaches one also how to keep in condition by doing the same as Frank Merriwell, Dick Merriwell, and others of the "Tip Top" group. I have got a number of boys around where I live to read it.

A. P. Pembroke Street, Victoria, British Columbia.

Thankful to His Friend.

I noticed in "Tip Top" No. 704 a letter from Thomas R. Watkins, of Nova Scotia, who lives in the same town as I do. I go with his brother Leonard, who was the boy who gave me my first copy of "Tip Top," and I am very thankful for it. I belonged to the club which T. R. Watkins mentioned. My father is publisher of the only paper in Springhill, and says your weekly is full of useful matter for the young.

Willie Cav.
Springhill, Nova Scotia.

Crowded With Loyal Tip Toppers.

I have a little library of my own, and this is crowded almost every night with loyal Tip Toppers. I read all the Medal Library books of Frank that I can get hold of. Frank should write more novels, and get every boy's heart, for he is on the square.

Petersburg, Pa.

Peter Klein.

Feels Like a Chum of Merry.

I have read "Tip Top" for about three years, and I feel as though I were a chum of Merry and all his friends. Once I thought I should like to smoke when I got older, but since reading your weekly, all thought of it has gone from my mind.

E. C. Bird.
Castle Rock, Wash.

Plenty of Reasons On Tap.

My first reason for liking "Tip Top" is that Dick Merriwell is a jolly fellow; second, he is a good fighter; third, he has no bad habits. He is really worth reading about. If you have any more reasons, call on me. I've got plenty on tap.

Vess Hood.

"Tip Top" His Best Seller.

I take this opportunity of showing my appreciation of "Tip Top Weekly." For nearly seven years I have sold it and read it, and during that time I have sold and read other weeklies, but for me the "Tip Top" is the best, reader and best seller.

Conrad, Iowa.

Herbert Alexander.

Clean, Good, Up to Date.

I have been reading the "Tip Top Weekly" for about six years. I like it because it is a clean, good, up-to-date weekly. I smoked before I read it, but have not smoked any in the last three years. I have got several boys to read it.

C. C. Vick.
Plaint City, Fla.
So many inquiries reach us from week to week concerning the various manuals on athletic development, which we publish, that we have decided to keep a list of them standing here. Any number can be had by mail by remitting 10 cents, and 3 cents postage, for each copy, to the publishers.

Frank Merrwell’s Book of Physical Development.
The Art of Boxing and Self-defense, by Prof. Donovan.
U. S. Army Physical Exercises, revised by Prof. Donovan.
Physical Health Culture, by Prof. Fourmen.

NO ANONYMOUS LETTERS ANSWERED.

Now and then a letter is received that bears no definite signature or address. You are reminded, one and all, that such a letter is never answered by Prof. Fourmen. He will do his best to answer any reasonable question, and do so gladly, but inquiries from anonymous writers will receive no attention.

Practice for a Would-be Pitcher.

Prof. Fourmen: What is a good way to practice pitching when one can’t get a chance to play in that position? It’s my ambition to be a great pitcher, but I think my weakness is lack of control.

Brooklyn, N. Y.

To obtain control of the ball, there is nothing like practice. Throwing at a dark spot on a fence is not the sort of practice that helps much. A batter is not a stationary target. Pitch to a catcher over a plate—pin or any other kind. Better still if you can get somebody to be batter while you remain pitcher all the time. But be sure to have a plate and a catcher behind it. The catcher should signal for a high or low ball, and you should practice putting it first straight over the plate, then to one side or the other. This is bound in time, to give you accuracy.

Wants to be a Wrestler.

Prof. Fourmen: I am 20 years of age; 5 feet 6 inches in height, weigh 150 pounds; chest, normal, 36 inches. I smoke a pipe sometimes, having quit cigarettes. How are my measurements? Could I become a wrestler?

Cleveland, Ohio.

You are built on the plan that makes for ability as a wrestler. I fear, though, that you have a tendency to stoutness that you should offset by reduction drills.

Must Practice to be Ball Player.

Prof. Fourmen: I would like to know how I can become a runner or baseball player. I am 16 years 2 months old; my height is 5 feet 8 inches; weight, 115 pounds; chest, normal, 32 inches.

Warsaw, N. Y.

Albert Pratt.

The way to become a ball player is to play ball. Practice alone can make you good at the game. You ought to make a runner, provided you are physically strong. Evidently your chest needs building up, and you should weigh more to be in the right trim.

Playing “Chew the String.”

Prof. Fourmen: Is there such a game as “chew the rag,” which is played with candy, and two boys chewing each end of a ribbon and getting nearer and nearer to the candy that is tied in the middle?

St. Louis, Mo.

Nicholas Blair.

Probably you refer to a rather old-time country game called “chew the string.” To play this, two sticks of candy are wrapped separately in tissue paper, and six yards of thread are tied to each. Two boys each take a string, and the candy is placed on the floor, six feet away. At a signal, the boys put the string in their mouths and chew it. The boy getting the candy to his mouth first is entitled to the other’s piece as well as his own.

Might Join the Don’t Worry Club.

Prof. Fourmen: My age is 15; height, 4 feet 10 inches; weight, 56 pounds; chest, normal, 22 inches. How can I increase my weight and height? I play basketball a good deal and was elected captain for 1909. I also play football, hockey, and baseball a great deal. I am weak in my arms, and I tried dumb-bell exercises. Is this a good thing?

Wilfred Barlow.

You do not state your weight. For one of your height and age it should not be more than 82 pounds. Provided your diet is right, consisting of plain, wholesome foods, you seem to be taking the proper course to increase your weight, as well as to keep yourself in good athletic trim. As it is, your waist measurement indicates a tendency to bechness at that point. Your chest is of the right measurement. Yes, dumb-bell exercise is good to strengthen your arms.

Overweight His Danger.

Prof. Fourmen: Age is 15 years; height, 5 feet 4 inches; weight, 110 pounds; chest, normal, 32 inches; waist, 30 inches. What are my strong and weak points?

Albert E. Olive.

Pittsburgh, Pa.

You are about five pounds overweight for one to be in good athletic trim; you are a trifle shy at the chest; at the waist you have four inches to spare. Look out for that corruption; get it down by exercise. Your danger is overweight, and your attention should be given this above all else if you would get yourself in the shape that is regarded best for an all-round athlete.

Care of the Pitching Arm.

Prof. Fourmen: I am a pretty good pitcher, but after every game I need a lot of care to get my pitching arm in shape again. I have never tried massage. Is that good?

George McElroy.

Years is not an exceptional case. Some of our most successful pitchers depend upon the club trainer to take their arm in charge after a hard game. The trainer gives it a thorough kneading. Massage, of course, is one of the best things in the world for any pitching arm. This is so, even when there is no indication of strain. It tones up all the muscles, makes the blood circulate freely, and prevents stiffness of the shoulder and arm muscles.

Stocky One Who is Overweight.

Prof. Fourmen: I am 20 years old; weight, 160 pounds; 5 feet tall; chest, 33 inches; waist, 28 inches. I can do the 100 yards in 10 and 5-5 seconds. Am training all the time, as I go to school and have a place to train in. Am considered a good football player.

R. S. Sperry.

Brunswick, Me.

Although you are of the stocky type, I am afraid you are carrying altogether too much weight for your age. Your record for a 100-yard sprint shows, however, that you are in pretty good shape. Your training should be to reduce your weight. Take on diet and exercise to this end.

Has Several Pounds to Spare.

Prof. Fourmen: My measurements are as follows: Height, 5 feet 6 inches; weight, 140 pounds; chest, normal, 36 inches; waist, 31 inches; age, 17 years. What exercises are good for strengthening my wrists and fingers?

E. R. N.

Hokitika, New Zealand.

You are in good shape, barring a tendency to overweight. You will have to get off about ten pounds to be at the right athletic standard for one of your age and height. You have at least three inches to spare at the waist. Dumb-bell exercises are good for strengthening the wrists and fingers; also rowing.
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