While the bull was thus partly blinded, Merriwell seized and dragged the helpless boy aside. The tremendous crowd cheered wildly as they beheld this fearless act of the young American.
FRANK MERRIWELL, THE ALWAYS READY;

OR,

THE MYSTERY OF MIGUEL TORO.

By BURT L. STANDISH.

CHAPTER I.

RECKLESS RIDERS.

"Look out!"

Shouts, cries, rattling of loose stones, and a wild clattering of hoofs announced the headlong, breakneck approach of two horsemen—small, wiry, dark men—who came tearing madly down the narrow mountain trail.

On one side of the trail was a precipice, at the bottom of which, hundreds of feet below, lay a great gorge. On the other side the mountain rose steep and rocky and grim.

Over this dangerous and narrow road four travelers had been slowly and cautiously proceeding. There was barely room for two persons to pass in safety, and now these reckless riders came dashing upon the party of four like men fleeing from destruction.

The quartette of travelers was made up of Frank Merriwell and his faithful friends, old Joe Crowfoot, Terry O'Hara, and Joshua Crane.

They were bound for the Bolivian city of Corrales, said to be an amazingly thriving and prosperous place, although located in a wild country fully one hundred miles from the nearest railroad. Frank had explained to his associates that he expected to meet an old friend and college mate in Corrales.

It was Merry who cried "look out!" to his mates as the reckless riders appeared. At the same instant, always ready for anything, he prepared to meet the emergency.

"Great jumpin' geewhiz!" spluttered Joshua Crane, who, a long, lank Yankee, had the pronounced nasal tone of a down-easter and a dialect that corresponded. "Git redy for a smash up, everybody! There's sartainly goin' to be a 'tarnal mixed up mess in a jiffy!"

"Tara's harp!" palpitated O'Hara, the Irish youth. "P'what ails the spalapans? Have they gone crazy entoirely, Oi dunno?"

Old Joe Crowfoot wasted neither time nor breath in words, but imitated Frank Merriwell's example and leaped to the ground, springing forward to meet the strangers.

Merry, full in the middle of the narrow road, pulled a pair of pistols, and shouted clearly and distinctly in Spanish:

"Stop—stop, or I'll shoot your horses under you!"

This he meant to do as a last resort to prevent the
inevitable mix-up and calamity which must follow in case the strangers dashed headlong upon them.

Those two small, dark men heard Frank's words, saw his pistols, and understood. Instantly they did their best to check and restrain the animals, which they had been prodding and goading into madness only a moment before.

One of the horses set its feet and came sliding down the road, tearing up a tiny cloud of dust and setting a small avalanche into motion. Fortunately, the ground was solid enough to prevent a landslide of any importance. The other man fought to imitate the example of his companion, and the cruel bit he used quickly brought flecks of bloody foam to the mouth of his horse.

Ten feet from Merriwell the leader succeeded in stopping. The horse of the other man struck against the animal in advance and was checked.

"Just in time," said Frank calmly and grimly. "If I hadn't felt sure you would succeed, I would have dropped your horses thirty feet farther away."

"Ugh!" grunted old Joe Crowfoot, who likewise had produced a pistol. "Heap much fools! Why no shootum anyhow. Strong Heart? Old Joe he waste no bullet on horse."

Which meant that, had Frank commenced firing at the horses, Crowfoot would have chosen the riders for his targets.

"Begobs, it's a bloodthirsty mood Sir Joseph is in the day!" muttered Terry O'Hara. "The aould bhoys hasn't lifted a scalp for so long that his fingers do be itching to entwine themselves in the raven locks av some careless gint that nades scalping."

"The diinged old critter certainly does git sorter ugly and sulky sometimes," nodded Crane. "There ain't nobody kin seem to handle him except Frank. With Frank he's just as docile and peaceable as aour cosset lambs uster be on the old farm to hurn."

The strangers were jabbering away excitedly, both talking at the same time, which made it almost impossible to understand a word they said.

"Let up on that chatter!" commanded Frank. "Shut up, both of you—shut up, I say!"

He enforced obedience with a threatening movement of the pistols.

Squawking in terror, the strangers begged him not to shoot and then became silent.

"Now," said Merry sharply, pointing at one of them, "you may speak. What's your name?"

"Pietro, señor. I am an honest man. I am——"

"That will do; that's enough. What's the other one's name?"

"It's Recedo, señor," answered the other fellow. "We have done nothing——"

"Stop it!" again interrupted Merry. "Answer my questions. What do you mean by dashing down this dangerous road in such a mad manner?"

"The—the horses, señor—our mounts—they became frightened and unmanageable."

"Don't lie, Pietro," said Frank scornfully. "You stopped your horses when you knew you had to do it. I want the truth. You must have seen us coming up the road. You made the dash for some reason of your own. Did you expect to drive us over the precipice, or were you trying to ride past where we could check you?"

"Oh, señor, I am an honest man!" protested Pietro. "I swear by the saints we did not know you were here."

"Señor, we would not speak an untruth for the world," asserted Recedo. "I, too, declare by all things above and below that we did not see——"

"Heap much lie!" growled old Joe Crowfoot.

"Stop your false swearing!" exclaimed Merriwell, in disgust. "What's that? I hear a cry—a faint cry for help."

"Oh, it is the unfortunate señor!" gasped Pietro. "Oh, it is frightful, such a misfortune, such a death!"

"There's certainly somebody hollerin'," gurgled Josh Crane.

"Speak the truth and speak quickly!" ordered Frank, in a manner that was absolutely terrifying to Pietro and Recedo. "Who is it calling, and what has happened to him?"

"It is the Señor Augusto Leopoldina," replied Pietro. "We attempted to convey him by the short road over these mountains to Corrales, for he did employ us so to do. Yonder, above, his horse—he's horse it became frightened, unmanageable. Oh, it is terrible!"

"Quick!" shot forth Merry. "What happened? Tell us!"

"The señor's horse," said Recedo, "began rearing and plunging. I think it was a serpent on the road that frightened the animal. The señor could not control the creature, and it plunged headlong over the precipice, carrying him to death."

"Gee whiz!" exploded Crane. "Corded to the way he's piping up he ain't dead yet, Frank."

"Cowards!" was the word Merry hurled at the two small dark men. "You have deserted him! Follow, my friends—follow swiftly. Bring my horse."

"That will do; that's enough. What's the other one's name?"

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"Cowards!" was the word Merry hurled at the two small dark men. "You have deserted him! Follow, my friends—follow swiftly. Bring my horse."
He dashed past Pietro and Recedo, and went bounding up the road.

Old Joe Crowfoot followed on foot, leaving his horse, as well as Frank's, to the care of Crane and O'Hara.

Seeing this, Pietro spoke hastily in a low tone to his comrade.

"It is now our opportunity!" he breathed. "Only two are before us."

Recedo answered with a hissing word, and suddenly the two desperate scoundrels urged their mounts onward once more.

Fortunately, there was room for them to pass the two horses left free and loose by Merriwell and Crowfoot.

"Let the blamed critters go, Terry!" cried Josh, as he reined his own horse close to the face of the rocky precipice. "Mebbe they'll break their 'tamal necks, anyhaow."

O'Hara longed to check the fleeing men, but he was likewise intensely curious to learn just what had happened to their late companion, and therefore, rather than be delayed, he let them go brushing past at that breakneck pace.

"Go on, ye thaves av the world!" he yelled. "There's a bit av a bend down yonder, and maybe ye will take a jump av a few hundred feet into the bottom av the little ditch to the right av yez."

"Come on, Terry," urged Josh, "let's git up there and find out what's doin'."

Securing the horses of their friends, they hurried as fast as possible up the road, while the fleeing men passed from sight below.

CHAPTER II.

THE RESCUE.

Bounding with all possible speed up the road, Frank listened for a repetition of those cries. They came again as he reached a point where the road narrowed and curved round some outjutting rocks.

At the edge of the road, upon the brink of the precipice, he saw something that gave his heart a sickening sensation. There the loose ground had been torn and a bit of it broken away, as if some huge body had slipped over while vainly trying to avoid taking the frightful plunge.

In a moment Frank was looking downward over the precipice. He had dropped on his hands and knees to do this, and as he leaned far out he felt the hand of old Joe Crowfoot gripping the collar of his shirt to support him and prevent any possibility of a fall.

Below Frank the precipice fell away at a sharp incline, along the face of which a few scrubby bushes and vines were clinging. Down through those bushes and vines a path had been cut by some sliding object. Twenty-five or thirty feet below the level of the road the face of the precipice suddenly dropped straight downward, and there, within a yard or two of that precipitous drop, was a dust-covered, white-faced man clinging for dear life. His left hand grasped some bushes, while the fingers of his right had been thrust into a little crack in the face of a ledge.

Instantly Frank knew something of what had happened. The man's horse had raked that path down the sloping incline. At this moment the poor creature was lying dead far down in the depths of the gorge.

Apparently, as the horse slid over the brink from the road its rider had flung himself from the saddle in an effort to save his own life. He also had slid down to the point where he now hung, clawing at the ground, grasping at bushes that gave way in his hands, and doing everything possible to check his descent. At last his hand had seized some bushes which held long enough for him to fasten the other hand in that rift in the ledge.

And there he dangled, panting, exhausted, sick with the horror of his position, his feet projecting beyond the point where the precipice fell away at a perpendicular.

"Hold fast!" cried Merry, lifting his voice. "Hang on, my friend, and we'll try to save you!"

The miserable man turned his pale face upward, and Frank never forgot the look of terror and appeal in the eyes which gazed at him from below.

"For the love of Heaven hasten, señor!" panted the unfortunate. "The roots of the bush are giving way! My strength is almost exhausted. Help me quickly; or I perish!"

"Where's your horse, Crowfoot? Where's the rope you always carry?" asked Frank.

"Left horse," answered old Joe. "Tell 'um other fellers to bring him."

"Great mercies! We cannot do anything without that rope! Unless we get busy instantly that man must drop."

"Here come other fellers, here come horses," said Crowfoot.

Josh and Terry appeared urging the horses to scramble up the road as fast as possible.

Frank was on his feet in a twinkling. To the side
of Crowfoot’s horse he dashed, seizing and releasing the Indian’s coiled lariat which hung from the saddle horn.

With the rope in his hands he ran back, shouting for Crane and O’Hara to lose not a jiffy in giving a hand.

On the inner side of the road Merry’s eyes discovered an upward projecting bit of rock to which the rope might be attached. He flung the noose over that point, and in a twinkling was again looking down at the imperiled man.

“Here’s a rope!” cried Frank. “If you can get hold of it we’ll pull you up.”

He tossed the coil from him, in order that it might fall without delay within reach of that man. It spun out and dropped two feet or more to the man’s right.

“Get hold of it!” directed Frank. “We’ll bring you up here if you can hang on.”

“Geewhiliken jingoost!” spluttered Crane, looking downward. “That feller certainly is in an all-fired scrape.”

“That’s what he is,” agreed O’Hara. “Oi’d not loike to change places wid the gentleman.”

The man seemed to make an attempt to reach for the rope, but in order to do so he had to withdraw his fingers from the crevice in the rocks, as it was necessary to use that hand. The moment he did this the bush began to tear loose from the roots, and, with a gasp, he once more fastened his hold upon the ledge.

“It’s impossible, my friends—impossible!” he called faintly. “I cannot get the rope. Even if I could, I doubt if I should be able to cling to it while you lifted me.”

“Get hold of this rope,” directed Frank, speaking to his comrades. “One of you make sure it doesn’t slip from the rock yonder. I’m going down there.”

“Thutteration!” gurgled Crane. “I wouldn’t try that trick for two dollars and seventy-five cents.”

Even as Josh spoke Merry, having knelt at the edge of the incline, swung himself over and started to descend. In doing this he set loose some earth and rocks, which rattled and rained about the ears of the clinging man.

“Got to be careful,” breathed Frank to himself. “If I’m not, I’ll set enough of this loose stuff in motion to carry him over the precipice.”

As it was, several stones, some as large as coconuts, had rolled and bounded past the unfortunate man below, and a smother of dust filled his eyes and nostrils.

The necessity of taking precautions compelled Merry to descend much more slowly than he otherwise would have done. He could hear the man gasping and groaning faintly.

“Hold fast!” he cried encouragingly. “I’m coming! I’ll reach you in a moment.”

“My strength—my strength is failing, sefior. I must fall! I can’t—maintain my hold—any longer!”

“Yes, you can,” declared Frank. “Only a few seconds. You must, and you can. Let me get within reach of you and I’ll save you.”

“Hang on, mister!” piped Crane excitedly. “Frank Merriwell is goin’ to be right with ye in a jiffy, and if he ever gits a holt on ye yeon’ll be all right.”

O’Hara was shaking like a leaf, although, watching that the noose did not slip from the rocky point, he could not observe Frank’s progress.

Old Joe Crowfoot was the only one who seemed absolutely calm and unconcerned. Noting this, Crane snarled resentfully:

“Hang an Injun, anyhow! Never nothin’ seems to disturb the critters. Ain’t you got no feelin’s, Shangywar?”


“What’s doing down below, Josh?” asked Terry.

“If ye don’t be after telling me quick O’i’ll punch yez the first chance Oi have.”

“If you ever done that I’d take yeon over my checkered apron and make a few applications of palm oil to a certain part of your person where it would do the most good.” flung back the Yankee. “Frank’s almost down there. If the feller kin hang on a little bit longer he’ll git him.”

Indeed, Merry was almost within reach of the man, whose face was now set with such an expression of agony as only one may feel when he realizes, in the full tide of health, that death is reaching for him with its clammy hands. No longer did he have breath to utter a single word. His fingers were slowly relaxing their hold upon the rocky ledge, and the bush was torn free save by its main root.

Frank crept lower and lower. Taking a turn of the rope round one leg and one arm, he reached out with his free hand and fastened a grip upon the man’s woolen shirt at the back of the neck. As he did this the bush gave way and the stranger’s fingers slipped from the rock.

The strain of their double weight came full upon the rope, but Merriwell had obtained a firm hold, and
he held the man dangling with his body half over the brink.

"Pull away!" shouted Frank. "Pull us up till I call for you to stop."

Crowfoot, Crane, and O'Hara obeyed at once. Slowly they dragged the two men up the face of the incline.

"Hold!" cried Merriwell.

"Hold on, Terry! Dog rabbit it, why don't you stop!" cried Josh, as the excited Irish lad continued to pull. "Jest hang fast right where you be."

Frank had seen a point where he could obtain a foothold, and, having accomplished this, he was able to drag the stranger up beside him.

"Get your feet into that crack," said Merry.

But the stranger did not respond. He lay limp and unconscious beside the young American, and Merriwell realized that the neck of the man's shirt had shut off his wind and choked him into a condition of absolute and utter helplessness.

This made it necessary for Frank to perform an almost Herculean task. His own strength was being tested, and he knew it would not do to waste time. Therefore he again shouted for his friends to pull away.

They were almost too enthusiastic in their efforts. Still Merriwell kept his grip upon the stranger, and finally his head and shoulders were lifted above the level of the road.

Old Joe bent and fastened both hands upon Frank, and a moment later, aided by Crane, he had dragged Merry back to safety and was lifting the unconscious stranger.

CHAPTER III

THE MAN FROM SPAIN.

Terry O'Hara danced and whooped for joy.

"Tara's harp!" he cried. "Who evver saw the loike av it!"

"Crowfoot, your flask," said Frank, as he tore open the unconscious man's shirt at the throat. "Crane, O'Hara, fan him."

Directed by Merry, they set about trying to restore the rescued man to consciousness. As soon as the stranger showed some signs of reviving, Frank carefully poured a few drops of the liquor between his parted lips.

"Fire-water heap good stuff sometime," grunted Crowfoot; "sometime heap bad. Much fine for snake bite."

"Yep," agreed Joshua Crane. "I once heard of an old deacon in the church who was a strict teetotaller that kept some pet snakes to bite him about so often so that he'd have a good excuse for gittin' sauced with fire-water."

The stranger choked and moaned. His eyelids fluttered and finally lifted.

"No help!" he gasped in Spanish. "I am fallin! I am lost!"

"You are safe, señor," said Merry. "You cannot fall now."

The man did not seem to realize.

"The bush—the bush is breakin!" he panted in horror. "My strength—is gone! My fingers are slipping—slipping—"

"Let them slip," laughed Frank, as the man clawed frantically on the ground with both hands. "You can't fall. We have lifted you to the road, and you're safe."

Still, in a sort of delirium, the unfortunate wretch continued to struggle.

"Pietro, Recedo, you cowards—you curs!" he panted. "You have betrayed me!"

"Them's the two gents that made at us in such a mighty hurry," muttered Josh Crane. "I cal'late them critters done this poor feller a dirty turn."

"That's whut they did," growled Terry O'Hara. "We niver ought to have let them get away at all, at all."

"Ugh!" grunted Crowfoot. "Heap big mistake Joe no shoot um."

Frank grasped the man wrists and held them as gently as he could, leaning forward to speak in a soft, soothing tone.

"Be quiet, my friend. There is no need to struggle. If you'll be calm you will realize that you are now quite safe."

There seemed to be magic in that voice and those words, for the stranger grew quiet, and lay looking up at Merry.

"You—you were trying to save me, señor," he whispered. "I saw you, my brave friend—I saw you looking down upon me. You called and bade me have courage. I saw you descending the rope, but my hands—I could cling no longer. I fell!"

"You didn't fall," said Frank. "If you had you'd not be here; you'd lie dead down in the bottom of the gorge beside your poor horse. I reached you just in time."
"Dios! Is it possible! It must be, for I still live. It must be, for you are here with me. I cannot understand."

"Don’t try to understand now. Don’t trouble your brain about it at present. There’s plenty of time. Swallow a bit more of this liquor. It will give you strength and life."

The man was lifted gently at Frank’s suggestion, and the flask was tipped to his lips. He took another swallow, and slowly the full blood of life began to recourse through his veins.

"It’s a marvel—a marvel beyond belief!" he muttered. "I gave myself up for lost. I thought that I fell. Señor, you saved me."

"Not alone," said Frank. "I’m afraid the task would have been altogether too much for me. We saved you—my friends and myself."

"It was a most brave and noble thing to do, for you certainly placed yourself in great peril for one you had never before seen. Are you an Englishman?"

"Hardly. I am an American—from North America."

"The good old United States of Ameriky is praud to claim him for a citizen, by gum!" said Crane.

"An American— from the United States. We were once led to believe that all such people were selfish and cowardly."

"Ugh!" grunted old Joe Crowfoot. "No savvy Dago talk."

With this remark he produced his old black pipe, found a place where he could sit on the ground with his back against a wall of stone, and prepared to enjoy a smoke. Apparently, all that had taken place had not even ruffled his nerves.

"Look out for the horses, Terry," directed Frank. "I see one of them is straying back down the road. Don’t let him get away, for he might give you a long chase of it."

So Terry started after the straying horse to capture and bring the animal back.

The rescued man grasped Frank Merriwell’s hands and sought to look the gratitude his tongue could not express.

"I shall never forget what you have this day done for me, señor," he declared. "How could I ever forget it? If it might some time be in my power to show how deeply I appreciate your brave deed—"

"Oh, never mind that," smiled Merry. "You’re coming round as fine as a top. It certainly was a close call; but we people of North America have a way of saying that a miss is as good as a mile."

"Señor, your name."

"Frank Merriwell."

"Mine is Augusto Leopoldina."

"That certainly is a mauchful," muttered Crane to himself. "Still, he spits it out jest as if it didn’t give him no pain a’tall."

"I am a native of Spain," explained the rescued man. "I do not belong in this country."

"Something I had already learned from your pure Castilian accent," nodded Merry. "Would you tell me, Señor Merriwell, whither you are bound, and how it chanced that you were here to save me?"

"Business brought me to South America. With my friends I am on my way to Corrales, where I hope to find an old college friend."

"And I, too, am bound for Corrales. Wishing to make haste, I employed two companions to escort me over the mountains rather than follow the road all the way round, which is many times as far."

"And that’s precisely why we chose the same road," said Frank. "We met your two companions, I fancy."

"The scoundrels! The treacherous dogs!" exclaimed Leopoldina. "Why they should wish to destroy me I cannot surmise."

"Then they were responsible for the plight in which we found you?"

"Listen, señor. We had arrived at this point. One of those rascals, Pietro, was riding in advance, the other following behind me. Right here Pietro took the inside of the road and suddenly swung his horse against mine, forcing my animal to face outward. At the same moment Recedo spurred up behind and jabbed his knife into my animal, causing it to leap toward the brink of the precipice."

"The poor horse tried to save himself, and while it was scrambling and clinging on the very edge I made an effort to leap back to the road. It was too late. The horse went down and I followed, sliding and grasping at anything and everything to check my descent. In this manner I seized bush after bush which gave way in my hands. At last, at the spot where you saw me, I succeeded in getting a hold which prevented me from plunging at once down to death. It was a fearful experience."

The speaker was shivering and quivering in every limb.

"You’d better not talk about it now," said Frank.

"What has become of those murderous wretches?"

"I’m afraid they’re miles away by this time. There is a bare possibility that they might be overtaken, al-
though I doubt it greatly. Still, if you wish we'll make an attempt to capture them."

“No, I'm sure you're right in saying it would be useless. You must not leave me, my friends. I am still feeble with horror and exhausted from my efforts to save myself. You have been wonderfully kind to me. If you will permit it, I will journey with you into Corrales.”

“Your company will be most acceptable, Señor Leopoldina,” assured Frank.

“Gall dernd if he don't say it jest as well as t'other feller!” muttered Josh in wonderment. “I kin understand this ere Dago lingo purty fairly well, but it sartinly does tie up my tongue when I try to talk it.”

In time the man recovered enough to sit in the saddle of Frank's horse when he was lifted to that position. He protested against riding while Merry walked, but Merry laughed at this, saying:

“It will do me good to stretch my legs, señor. If I should wish to ride any one of my friends will be ready to change places with me. Now we'll be off, for we still have many miles to cover before we reach Corrales.”

CHAPTTR IV.

THE SPANIARD’S STORY.

Descending the mountains, they halted at last by a gushing wayside spring. Below them stretched a broad and inviting prospect, and away down in a great valley they could see the distant city of Corrales, for which they were bound. On every hand the mountains surrounded that valley. In the distance they were softened by a purplish haze.

“A finer place to rest and lunch could not be found,” declared Frank. “Yonder is a little strip of grass where the horses may graze. Here by the spring there is shade and a soft cool breeze.”

“And I am much exhausted,” said Augusto Leopoldina, as he slipped from the saddle. “Ah! for a drink of that glorious water!”

Frank produced a pocket drinking cup, and the Spaniard was the first to quench his thirst, after which the others followed his example. The horses, having drunk from a pool below the spring, were pickeeted upon that little grassy slope.

A hamper pack of food was brought and opened near the spring.

“Hornswizzle me if I ain't hungry as a bear,” laughed Josh Crane. “I'd sorter forgot all about eatin' till I see this ere grub, and now I could eat a fried side of sole luther.”

“It's a good appetite ye have, Joshua,” nodded Terry, with a grin and a wink. “Ov' nevver noticed anything delicate or modest about it.”

“Oh, I guess yeou kin surround yeour share of the provender,” flung back the Yankee. “I've always noticed that yeou was right around at feedin' time, and yeou generally git busy with both hands.”

“If Oi could ate as much as you, Josh, Oi'd join a dime museum as the champion hungry mon, so Oi would. It's a foine salary ye would draw.”

“Yeou're alwus shurrying about somethin', ain't ye?” snapped Crane. “Bimeby, Mister O'Hara, you're goin' to git me sorter riled up, and I'll do some things to yeou that'll cause ye a heap of grief.”

“Josh, it's me private opinion, which Oi don't moidn expring public, that you're the biggest case av bluff Oi've ever seen in me loife. Ye're always after tryoin' to froighten some wan wid your chin music. If ye ever attempted to put wan av your hands on me Oi'd break yez up into cordwood lengths.”

“Now I guess, by gum, I'll give ye a chance to show what yeou can do breakin' me up!” rasped Crane, as he spat on his hands and started for Terry.

“Cut it out!” cried Frank authoritatively, while Señor Leopoldina gazed at his fractious companions in some apprehension. “I thought you boys had quit that business.”

“I'm naterally peaceable disposed,” said Crane; “but it's more'n human nater kin stand to have that little runt of an Irishman all the time braddin' a feller the way he brads me. Bimeby I'm goin' to smash him without givin' him no notice a' tall, and they'll have to pick him up on a shovel arter I hit him.”

Despite all this talk, in less than five minutes Josh and Terry were hobnobbing and joking and chuckling over the hamper of food.

There was enough for all, even Crane finally announcing that he was fully satisfied.

They continued to rest for a while beside the spring, Josh and Terry stretching themselves upon the ground, while Crowfoot squatted cross-legged, with his old red blanket pulled about him, and smoked his rank pipe.

Frank chatted with Augusto Leopoldina, and finally, of his own accord, the man told the story of his mission in South America.

“I am an agent sent here in search of a young man who is now the heir of a vast estate,” began the Spaniard. “It is a story of much romance, my friends. It
is a strange story, indeed. Many years ago Señor José del Norte and Roño Rosario were bitter political enemies in Spain. In spite of all this, Señor Del Norte wooed and won Señor Rosario’s sister. The marriage, however, did not bring friendship between these bitter enemies. Not even when a beautiful baby girl was born to Señor del Norte did Señor Rosario yield in the least.

“Then came a revolution, in which Señor Rosario was allied with the enemies of the government. The revolutionists had planned to overthrow the existing order of things, but ere they could strike effectively they were exposed. In this exposure José del Norte took an active part, and it was he who won the most credit and honor in preserving the stability of the government. Many leaders of the revolutionists were captured and executed. There was a reward offered for the capture of Señor Rosario. He was hunted like a wild beast, and at last, beset on every hand, he appeared at night and appealed to José del Norte for protection.

“In spite of their enmity, Del Norte listened to the entreaties of his wife, Rosario’s sister, and gave the fugitive shelter and hiding beneath his own roof. One would have thought, my friends, that such an act of generosity as this would have won the gratitude of Rosario.”

“Naturally,” nodded Frank.

“It did not, however,” continued Lepoldina. “Even while hidden beneath José del Norte’s roof, Rosario hated him with all the bitterness of which he was capable. Even while hidden and protected thus he planned to strike his protector a fearful blow. At least, this was what was believed at one time by Del Norte. There is now some doubt, Del Norte having been dead for more than a year.

“But I will tell my story in order, as it should be told. In some way José del Norte planned to aid Rosario in escaping from the country. The plan was carried into execution, and the fugitive found shelter and safety in Morocco. At the very last, it is said, Del Norte told Rosario to his face that what he did was solely because of his wife, and not through any pity or consideration for his old-time enemy.

“Six months after Rosario’s escape little Carlotta del Norte, not yet two years of age, was kidnapped. There is no need to give the details of this. The child disappeared as completely as if it had been caught up into the sky. All efforts to learn what had become of it were fruitless. The father was frantic and the mother crazed with grief. Great rewards were offered, for José del Norte was a man of much wealth. All these rewards were powerless to restore the lost child to her parents, and at last, discouraged and broken-hearted, Señora del Norte died.

“A year passed, and then José del Norte received from the United States a letter signed by Roño Rosario, which was full of taunting and mockery—which stated that Rosario himself had stolen the child and had her in his possession.

“Del Norte immediately sent trusted agents to the United States, and these agents found Roño Rosario. They found him, but they did not find the missing child. When accused Rosario laughed and declared that he had stated a falsehood in his letter. Having learned of Del Norte’s great affliction, he had written that letter in order that he might add to the father’s distress and anguish. He swore that he knew nothing of the missing child, and had taken no part in her abduction.

“For more than a year after this Rosario was secretly watched by Del Norte’s agents, who thought it possible that they might thus find some trace of the missing child. In the end they gave up the task, satisfied that Rosario had either spoken the truth in declaring he knew nothing of little Carlotta, or else that the child was already dead.

“I have not mentioned the fact that Roño Rosario had a son, Dorrego, who must now be a young man in his prime. Dorrego joined his father in the United States. It has only been learned of late that the exiled father and son were no longer in the United States, but were living in this country, Bolivia. This was learned when José del Norte came to die. By the terms of Señora del Norte’s bequests, her husband was to hold all her property while he lived. At his death the property was to descend to the son of her brother, Dorrego Rosario. This became permissible, as Dorrego’s father was no longer recognized as a legal citizen of Spain.

“It became necessary to find Dorrego if he still lived. At last both he and his father were located beyond question in the city of Corrales. I, señor, have been sent here to meet them and to satisfy them with proofs that, as there is now no doubt concerning the death of Señora del Norte’s only child, her nephew, Dorrego, is the heir to a splendid estate in Spain.

“I was able to travel by rail as far as Cáradas Novas. From that point it became necessary to make the remainder of the journey over these mountains. To pursue the usual road would require many days; to cross the mountains only two days would be neces-
sary. I made known the fact that I would pay well for trusty guides and companions to escort me over the mountains. I secured those rascals, Pietro and Recedo, but why they should have tried to destroy me is more than I can understand."

"Was it not plunder they were after?" asked Frank.

"How could it be, señor? They made no effort to rob me. They made no attempt to secure the money and valuables upon my person. Their one attempt was to kill me, and only for you and your brave comrades they would have succeeded. Had I fallen into that great chasm I see no way that they could have found my body and robbed me. I am satisfied, señors, that behind their action there was a purpose I have not fathomed."

"Waal," said Joshua Crane, who had been listening intently and had succeeded in following Leopoldina's story, "if any of this bunch ever runs up ag'inst them fellers ag'in they'll git it right slap-bang from the shoulder."

Frowning a bit, Frank sat thinking as he gazed downward toward the distant city of Corrales. Finally, nodding slightly, he said:

"Señor Leopoldina, I think you are right in believing those murderous wretches were impelled by a mysterious reason. It could not be that they would seek to kill you merely for the pleasure they could find in such a fearful deed. Something tells me that it will be well enough for you to keep constantly on guard. I have a fear that this may not be the last time your life is placed in jeopardy."

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CHAPTER V.
THE BOY FUGITIVE.

It was drawing toward sunset as they approached the city of Corrales, which, from the lower slope of the mountain, had strongly reminded Frank of the towns of old Spain. The architecture was almost wholly Spanish in design, the buildings being of adobe, stone, and stucco, with white walls and tinted roofs.

"I fancy we'll find Corrales rather gay," said Frank, "for this is the time of the regular 'Fete la Cochinba.' For a week each year, I have heard, they celebrate this fête in Corrales, and people journey from near and far to witness the sports and take part in the feasting and merry making."

"Dinged if these 'ere South Amerky people don't seem to be whoopin' it up all the time with some sort of a blowout," laughed Crane. "They're great critters for feastin' and dancin' and sportin' and havin' a general good time."

"But it's speech making they like to do bist av all," put in Terry O'Hara.

The rest by the roadside spring had seemed to restore Leopoldina in a most satisfactory manner, and he now appeared as vigorous and eager as any of them to come to an end of the journey.

As they advanced along the dusty road Frank's attention was suddenly attracted by the sight of a moving object which seemed suddenly to squirm or crawl behind the screening protection of some roadside bushes. Curiosity led Merry to investigate, and, to his surprise and that of his companions, he dragged a slender, pale-faced boy out of the bushes.

This boy, who had pleading black eyes, a sensitive mouth, and somewhat delicate features, was trembling with apparent terror.

"Oh, señor," he pleaded, "let me go—please do, señor! Don't make me go back to Domingo and Salvador!"

"Gee whiz!" muttered Crane. "The poor little feller is scat almost to death! I wonder what's the matter with him."

"We're not going to harm you, my lad," assured Merry.

"Then let me go, señor—please let me go! I sought to hide until you should pass."

"Where are you going?"

"I don't know."

"That's remarkable. You certainly were going somewhere."

"Oh, yes—somewhere, anywhere to get away from Corrales and Domingo!"

"Who's Domingo?"

"He is my master."

"Your master? Then you are a servant?"

"I am a bull fighter," explained the boy, with a sudden touch of pride.

Merry gasped.

"A what?" he exclaimed. "A bull fighter?"

"Great geewhiliken jumpin' jingoes! he don't look it!" spluttered Crane.

"Nivver a bit," agreed O'Hara. "A bull fighter is it he says, oi dummo? Begorra, a bull would be after eating him up in no time at all, at all."

Frank was puzzled.

"What do you mean, my boy, by saying that you're a bull fighter?" he persisted.

"It's true, señor. I go into the ring with my red
cloak and lure the bull to pursue me. I am swift on my feet. I can dodge like a flash. I avoid the bull's rushes again and again. The great crowd cheers and cheers, and at last, when I am weary and I have satisfied the people, Domingo slays the bull.

It was not easy to believe that this slender, delicate boy, who seemed fearful and timid, was the possessor of sufficient courage to enter the arena and perform such feats.

"Is Domingo a relative of yours?" asked Frank, whose interest in the boy was increasing with each passing moment.

"No, señor, he's not a relative of mine; neither is Salvador, nor Amalia."

"Who are Salvador and Amalia?"

"Salvador is Domingo's partner, who sometimes takes his place and kills the bull. Amalia is Domingo's wife; and, oh, she has been kind to me! It makes a great grief in my heart that I should have to leave her without once saying adiós."

"But why did you leave her?"

Again that look of intense terror crept over the boy's face.

"It was because there was no other way," he whispered. "I fled in fear of my life. I must cross the mountains. I must get away somehow."

"Do you expect to cross the mountains afoot and alone? Have you provisions for the journey?"

"No, señor, I have nothing."

"Boy, you would perish of starvation and fatigue, if you were not destroyed by wild animals. You cannot realize the undertakings you have set out upon. It is madness for you to make such an attempt."

"Oh, but what can I do, señor—what can I do?"

cried the lad, wringing his slender hands.

"What's your name?"

"It's Miguel Toro."

"Well, Miguel, I think you must go back to your master."

"Never! never! Señor, he would kill me!"

"Then he has been cruel to you? He has beaten and abused you?"

"Oh, no; never that. Never yet has Domingo lifted his hand to strike me."

"This is a consarned peculiar ease," muttered Crane, scratching his head. "One would think the little feller certainly must have been walloped to beat the band by his master to make him so dinged seat of the critter. But naow he says Domingo never give him a wallopin' in all his life."

"Your words make it hard for us to understand you, Miguel," said Merry kindly. "Why should you fear a master who has never illtreated you? Has he not been kind?"

"Oh, yes, once he was very kind. Of late, señor, his manner has changed toward me. I have seen him looking at me in a way that at first I could not understand, although it made me tremble. On our journey to Corrales I first had proof of what was meant by the look I saw in his eyes. We were crossing a stream where the water was deep and swift. I attempted to cross upon the trunk of a tree which spanned the stream from bank to bank, but I lost my balance and fell in. I cannot swim. I was helpless in the water. I cried out, but the water filled my mouth and nose. I saw Domingo watching me. I saw Salvador start to offer me help, but Domingo seized and held him. I should have drowned had not Amalia rushed down the bank, waded in until the water was almost up to her shoulders, and grasped me as the current bore me past. She drew me to the shore. I was almost unconscious. I'm certain Domingo thought I was unconscious, for when he came and stood looking down at me he called Amalia a crazy fool because she had saved me from drowning."

"Although I haven't an inkling as to Domingo's motive for wishing to get rid of you," said Merry, "I'm beginning at last to understand your fear of him. Are you becoming an incumbrance on his hands? Are you not serving him well?"

"I have never been an incumbrance, señor, for since I first learned to taunt and infuriate the bull in the arena it is what I do that arouses the people to the greatest enthusiasm, and I have heard Domingo himself say that I was very valuable to him."

"Frank, there's certainly some kind of crooked business behind this ere affair," observed Josh. "Tain't natteral for a man to want to git rid of a servant that's mighty valuable to him. Tain't human nature. It's jest as onnateral as it would be for cowcumbers to grow on punkin vines."

"There's a motive behind Domingo's behavior that I have not yet fathomed," nodded Merry. "Let me question the boy still further."

Frank turned again to the anxious lad.

"Miguel," he said, in his pleasantest and most convincing manner, "although we're strangers to you, we are, nevertheless, your friends. If there is a way by which we can prove it, you shall have the evidence. Tell me truthfully, have you no suspicion, no intimation of Domingo's reasons for wishing to be rid of you?"
"I cannot understand it, although I feel that Señor Monreal has something to do with it."

"Then there's another party in the case. Who is Señor Monreal?"

"He is a gentleman, señor—a man who must have much wealth. Ever since I can remember he has come once a year, at least, to meet Domingo and talk with him privately. He came to-day, three hours ago, and talked with Domingo near our tent. I saw them both look at me, and there was something in their faces which proved that they were talking of me. I saw Señor Monreal give Domingo money."

"I sorta guess," observed Crane, "that you're kinder gittin' down to the bottom of this scalawag business, Frank. I'll hate old Monreal is the crooked critter behind it all."

"When Señor Monreal had departed," continued Miguel, "I was sent by Domingo to gather wood for our fire. Returning, I stepped so silently that my master, talking with Salvador behind the tent, did not hear me approach. They were speaking of me, and I heard Domingo tell Salvador that I must die. I nearly fainted with terror then, for at last I had no doubt—I knew that my master meant to destroy me."

"Say," rasped Crane, "this ere old Domingo orter git his comeuppance. Somebody orter git at that there critter and everlastinglambaste the stuffin' aout of him."

"It is a most remarkable tale, Señor Merrivell," murmured Leopoldina in Frank's ear. "I am almost inclined to doubt its truth. I think it may be that the boy has had trouble with his master and wishes to run away. He is seeking to justify his action and arouse our sympathy."

"Señor Leopoldina," returned Merry, "I am inclined to place more confidence in the veracity of the lad. Somehow, I feel that he is not lying."

Apparently Miguel Toro caught Frank's final words, for he quickly cried:

"Oh señor—dear señor, I would not lie to you! It is the truth—every word the truth—that I am telling! I knew no one would believe me. I was sure it would be useless to seek friendship and aid from strangers, for they would say that I was lying."

"I have not doubted you, Miguel," assured Frank gently. "There's a mystery behind all this, but doubtless if we knew the solution we could understand why Domingo is so desirous to be rid of you. Will he not let you go in peace? If you promise to depart and trouble him no more, would he not agree to that?"

"Oh, never; señor; never! If he would I'd willingly take myself off, for I am sure I could find some method of living. Perhaps I'd never again be compelled to enter the bull ring."

"Then you do not enjoy your profession of bull fighting?"

"Enjoy it, señor—I detest it! It sickens me. I am sickened by the sight and smell of blood. Oh, the poor horses—the poor horses goaded by the bulls! And then at last the bull stabbed through the heart with a long, keen sword, and the blood gushing forth! No, señor—no, no, I hate it all!"

"Waal, I swan to man Mig is a purty sensible sort of a feller!" nodded Crane. "I don't blame him none for dislikin' that sorta dirty business. By gum, it would make me sick, too!"

"My friends," said Frank, turning to his companions, "what can we do with this boy? Doubtless Domingo has some sort of a legal claim upon him."

Old Joe Crowfoot, smoking his pipe, was the only one who seemed absolutely disinterested, and doubtless this was because he did not understand the story drawn from Miguel's lips by Frank's questions.

"It's a problem, Señor Merrivell," said Leopoldina. "I do not feel like offering advice."

"Miguel, do you know anything about your parents?"

"No, sir, nothing—nothing save what Domingo has told me, which is that both my father and mother are dead."

"How long have you been with Domingo?"

"Ever since I can remember, señor."

"Has he a legal claim upon you? Can he retain possession of you by law?"

"Oh, I think so, señor—I have no doubt of it."

"But you are not sure. Come back with us into the city, Miguel, and we'll investigate the matter. I will do whatever I can for you."

"Oh, no! oh, no! Do not force me to go back there! I cannot! What matters it if I perish in the mountains? I may escape. I may cross the mountains. I am much stronger than I look—truly, I am much stronger, señor. You think me weak because I am so slender, but I am not weak."

"Here comes some wan riding in a divvil av a hurry," said Terry O'Hara.

Through the gathering shadows three horsemen were approaching at great speed, the hoofs of their animals clattering on the roadbed and lifting a little cloud of dust.
Immediately Miguel was filled with renewed alarm. "Let me hide!" he entreated. "It may be Domingo!"
"Remain where you are, my lad," urged Merry. "If it is Domingo, we'll have a little talk with him."

CHAPTER VI.

THE MEN WHO CLAIMED THE BOY.

As the trio of horsemen came clattering up the boy cowered behind Frank, whispering excitedly and fearlessly that the one in advance was Domingo.

Domingo proved to be a man above medium size, powerfully built, yet quick and supple, with a slender waist and the lower limbs of a sprinter. He had a fierce black upward-pointing mustache and eyes, dark as night, gleaming forth from beneath shaggy eyebrows which met above his nose.

The next man, who was slighter in build but no less graceful or quick of movement, according to the whispered word of the cowering boy was Salvador.

"Señor, señor," palpitated the boy, "the other—the other is Señor Monreal!"

Monreal was a somewhat aristocratic-looking man of middle age, in whose dark hair and carefully trimmed beard a few streaks of gray could be seen.

Domingo drew rein.

"Señiors," he cried, "we are in search of a runaway boy. Have you seen him?"

Ere Frank could answer, Salvador espied the covering form of Miguel Toro, pointed, and exclaimed:

"There he is, Domingo!"

Señor Monreal drew rein, producing a silk handkerchief with which he wiped the dust and perspiration from his face. He surveyed Merriwell and his friends with a slight air of haughtiness.

"Sí, sí!" burst triumphantly from Domingo's lips.

"There he is! Come forth, you ungrateful little rascal! What do you mean by running away from your friends? Stand forth at once!"

"Wait a moment, Domingo," said Frank, putting up a warning hand as the man leaped to the ground and stepped forward with the evident intention of seizing the young fugitive. "Before you put your hands on him, I want to talk with you a bit."

"Yes, siree," put in Josh Crane. "Before you put your mudhooks onto that boy we're goin' to chin it over a leetle."

Domingo gave Merry a glare.

"Who are you who dares stand between the boy and his master?" he demanded.

"I'm Frank Merriwell from North America, at your service, Domingo," returned Frank quietly. "Cut out the dramatics, if you please. You will alarm no one by posing and looking fierce."

"Niver a bit av it," chuckled Terry O'Hara. "If the glut is after a scrap he'll get his accommodation raight away."

"Let us not have trouble, my friends," urged Augusto Leopoldina. "Let us talk this matter over amiably and settle it without a clash."

"We'll talk it over," muttered Crane; "but I've kinder got an idee in my head that there's liable to be some doin's."

Old Joe Crowfoot had sized up the pursuers of the boy. Although he had not understood Miguel Toro's words, the behavior of the lad, his present aspect, and the appearance of the three men gave the old redskin a very satisfactory idea of the situation.

"Mebbe heap much fight," he grunted. "Old Joe him too old to fight. Him no good. One time mebbe he fight some; now he all used up. Rheumatism knock-em him out. Old age make-em crick in Joe's back."

"Go on wid yez," muttered Terry O'Hara. "Ye can foight like a whole pack av wildcats, Joseph. It's an auold fraud ye are."

"Irish boy no understand," growled Joe. "When him get so old as Crowfoot, him understand."

"Begorry, if Oi ivver live to be as auold as ye are Oi'll be dead twinty years before thot," returned Terry.

"Possibly señor the North American does not understand," said Domingo. "It may be that Miguel has been filling his ears with falsehoods."

"I understand that this unfortunate boy has run away from you in mortal terror of his life," said Merry.

"It is that which he has told you, señor? He lies. I am his master and his best friend. Long years have I cared for him as if he were my own son. And now —now he runs away from me, the ungrateful wretch!"

"I'm sure the boy would not have run away from you, Domingo, if he did not believe he had good cause to fear you."

"I have never lifted a hand to him; but he shall be punished now."
With this threat Domingo attempted to swing past Frank and seize the lad.

Out shot Merry's hand, seizing the man by the collar and snapping him backward.

"Stop!" rang Merry's voice, clear and commanding.

"You shall not punish him here!"

In amazement Domingo poured forth a sudden torrent of savage language. At the same time Salvador cried for his companion to strike down the insolent North American.

Enraged, Domingo sprang panther-like at Merry.

Out shot Frank's hands, first one then the other, and both fists were planted with jarring force upon Domingo's person. Merry's right caught the man in the ribs, while his left smashed Domingo's head backward snappingly.

The bull fighter staggered, but succeeded in keeping upon his feet.

Salvador, snarling and palpitant, leaped from the saddle as if to join in the attack on Merry.

In a moment Josh Crane and Terry O'Hara were facing Salvador.

"Hold on, Terry!" entreated Josh. "Don't you go to mixin' up here. Jest let me look arter this critter. I ruther guess I kin take keer of him, by gum!"

"It's all the fun ye want to have, ye greedy divvil," palpitated Terry. "Shand off a bit and let me show yez the Irish stye av foighting."

Salvador paused in doubt, for they were two against him, and he did not fully relish such odds.

Old Joe Crowfoot let himself down from the saddle in a stiff and awkward manner, and dropped his red blanket carelessly in the dust of the road.

"Mebbe other man him want some fun," said the old redskin almost entreatingly. "Old Joe not much good to fight. Him all used up. Him joints heap stiff. Mebbe other man he lick-um old Joe mighty quick. Mebbe he have heap much fun with old Joe."

But, in spite of the Indian's words, Señor Monreal betrayed no disposition to get into the encounter.

"I am not here to fight," he said in excellent English. "I have come to see that Domingo gets his rights and recovers possession of the boy."

"Okl Joe heap easy to lick if you want to fight," assured the Indian. "You have much good time. You no try-um it, eh?"

"My friends, my friends," cried Leopoldina, "why is it necessary to quarrel?"

But words could not check Domingo now. Raging with wrath, he advanced in a crouching attitude, stepping on the balls of his feet and holding himself ready to leap at Merriwell's throat.

"Come on—come on, if you're coming at all," invited Frank.

But as Domingo circled, looking for an opening, Merry decided to take the initiative. In a moment he was at the bull fighter again, and this time he did not let up in his attack until he had struck Domingo a blow that sent him down in the dust of the road.

Satisfied at last that with his bare hands he was no match for this North American, the bull fighter rose, whipping forth a wicked looking knife.

With a snap of his hand Frank Merriwell produced a pistol and turned the muzzle on his antagonist.

"Put up that nasty little bit of steel, Domingo," he ordered. "I should dislike very much to blow a hole through your worthless body, but I'll certainly have to do it if you come at me with that knife."

He was perfectly cool and calm. Indeed, he laughed a little as he spoke those words. For the first time Domingo seemed fully to realize that he had met his master.

In hasty Spanish Señor Monreal called to Domingo and bade him cease trying to enforce his claims to the boy in such a manner.

"Señors," said Monreal, "you are apparently determined to get yourselves into a great deal of unnecessary trouble. I have long known Domingo, and I give you my assurance that he has every legal right to take possession of Miguel Toro."

"In this case, Señor Monreal," said Frank, "there's a moral question involved as well as a legal one. Why are you so interested in seeing Domingo recover possession of the boy? Will you answer that?"

"It is unnecessary," declared Monreal disdainfully. "I am a gentleman of some influence, and I give you my word that you'll find yourselves in very much trou-
ble if you persist in interfering in this matter. Who are you who dares interfere?"

"I think I gave Domingo my name," smiled Frank. "These are friends of mine, Joshua Crane, Terry O'Hara, old Joe Crowfoot, and Señor Augusto Leopoldina."

It seemed that Monreal started a bit at the sound of the last name. He certainly surveyed the man from Spain with something like curiosity and interest.

"Señor Monreal," said Leopoldina, "we have no desire to interfere with any one's legal rights. The boy has stated that he stands in the utmost terror of Domingo."

"There is no reason why he should fear Domingo. Has he given a reason, señor?"

"He has said that he saw Domingo looking at him in a manner that terrified him."

"Imagination—imagination, and nothing more, Señor Leopoldina. Despite Domingo's profession, I have known him long enough to be certain that he is one of the gentlest men alive."

"Jest about naow," chuckled Josh Crane, "he's a good deal more gentle than he was a few seconds ago. Frank has sorter gentled him daown."

Terry O'Hara was still squared away in front of Salvador.

"Oh, p'why don't ye sail into me?" the Irish lad was saying coaxingly. "Won't ye plaze come at me wance? Is it possible that O' am going to be disappointed again? Is it nivver a bit av fun can O' have at all, at all?"

"Ugh!" grunted old Joe Crowfoot disgustedly. "Nothing doing!"

Through the gathering darkness a woman came running swiftly. As she approached she cried out, and Domingo, turning his head to look round, answered the cry.

"It is Amalia!" breathed Miguel. "She also has come."

"Have you found him, Domingo?" questioned the woman. "Have you found our little Miguel?"

"Begorry, it's no so little he is at all, at all," murmured O'Hara. "It's not a goyant he's built likely, but all the same he's no baby, nivver a bit av it."

Reaching the group, the woman saw the lad, and tottered pantingly toward him, her hands outstretched.

"Oh, Miguel, why did you run away?" she asked.

"Why did you run away from Amalia?"

"Oh, I didn't run away from you, señora," answered the boy. "It nearly broke my heart to leave you."

"But why did you do it?"

"I was afraid."

"Of what? Of whom?"

"Of Domingo."

"You need not fear him, Miguel. He would not harm you. Come back with Amalia."

After a moment's hesitation the boy ran forward and clasped his arms about the woman, tears starting from his eyes.

"Yes, señora—yes," he said. "I will go back with you. No matter what happens, I will go back with you."

"Señors," said Monreal, with a shrug of his shoulders and a wave of his hand, "you will see that it is settled. The boy realizes his mistake. If he has told you foolish things, forget them. They were not true. At best they were but the silly fancies of his timid brain."

"Timid!" muttered Josh Crane. "He sartainly 'pears to be so, and yet he's a bull fighter! I'm willin' to admit that I don't jest git onto the natterle desposition of that feller."

"Miguel," said Frank, "do you wish to return with the señora? Do you wish to return with your master?"

"Oh, yes, señor, I will do so," was the answer. "I thank you, señor—I thank you very much for your kindness."

"Begorry, Oi belave that does sittle it!" muttered Terry O'Hara.

"I guess we can't carry the boy off against his own will," said Crane.

Domingo retreated to the side of his horse. There he paused to cast a fierce look at Frank, who smiled quietly in return.

"I will not forget the North American," said the
bull fighter, in a voice that was deep with hatred. "It may be that we shall meet again."

With those words he placed his foot in the stirrup and sprang to the saddle.

"Señora," he said, addressing the woman, "go on before with Miguel. We will follow you."

The boy turned to cry adiós to the strangers who had sympathized with him, and then permitted the woman to lead him away.

Salvador also mounted, and the three men on horses fell in behind Amalia and Miguel. Thus they moved away, and soon their figures melted into the gathering darkness.

"These ere ructions don’t seem to amount to nothing nohaow," complained Josh Crane. "Mebbe there’d been a little fun for me if that bogtrotter Irishman hadn’t stuck his nose into it. Confound him! I’m sore enough to wipe up the ground with him."

"Oi wish ye’d troy it! Oi wish ye’d troy it!" rasped Terry, fanning the air with his two fists. "It’s disappointed Oi am mesilf. If ye’d loike to relave my disappointment, jist sail into me wance, Joshua."

"Heap much bluff," grunted Crowfoot, as he picked up his blanket and flung it over his shoulders without a single shake to free it from the dust. "All talk. All hot air."

He lifted his leg slowly and stiffly to insert a foot in the stirrup, following which, with a grunt, he dragged himself up into the saddle.

"We can’t waste any more time," said Frank. "We should be in the city now. To your horses, Josh and Terry. After all, I’m more than half sorry we surrendered the boy."

Arriving at the Nacional, Frank was at first informed that it would be impossible for the hotel to accommodate him and his friends. After a little talk, however, and some special inducements in the way of money by Merry, the discovery was made that a suite of three rooms had that day been vacated, and Frank secured it.

It was arranged that Leopoldina should have one of the rooms, while the other two should be occupied by Frank and his friends.

In their rooms they washed up and made themselves as presentable as possible. They had brought little luggage save what could be easily packed upon the horses, but a glimpse of the shops and stores of Corrales had satisfied them that the city would provide almost anything they desired.

"By geewhilkerks, I’m hungry!" cried Crane. "I didn’t have no more’n a nibble aout of that lunch hamper to-day, and I’m empty as aour old rain barrel to hum in dry weather."

"Is it arrangements ye made at this hotel for ating as well as slopeing, Frank?" inquired O’Hara.

"Yes, our accommodations at this hotel are paid for one day in advance."

"Thin it’s lucky ye made the bargain before they ivver saw Josh ate. It’s a famine he will make in the house."

"There ye go ag’in!" snapped Crane. "Yaou’re alwus a-shurrin’. I ain’t goin’ to pay no attention to yeou arter this. Yeou ain’t wuth nothin’, Mr. O’Hara. Herearter I’ll jist simply ignore ye."

This caused Terry to whoop with laughter.

"Oi’ll have yez chewing the rag wid me before we turn in for the noight," he declared. "Ye can’t help it, Josh. Ye jist naturally loike to be after wagging your jaw."

The sound of music floated up to them from some part of the hotel, and this they found to be the big open central court where an orchestra was playing to a great crowd of diners who were enjoying the hospitality of the Nacional.

After a little delay a table was found for Frank and his friends.
“Dinner over,” said Merry, “I’ll try to look up the lad I’ve traveled so far to see. I hope he’s in Corrales, for I want to give him a surprise. I depended on his being here at the time of the Fete la Cochamba.”

Barely were they seated when Frank observed two young men who were following a waiter to a near-by table. One of these was evidently a South American, but the other was a good, clean, healthy-looking chap, who bore all the appearance of being a native of the United States, in spite of his light clothes and panama hat.

Merry sprang up, his face aglow, and stepped forth quickly, putting out a hand and grasping this man’s shoulder.

“Harry Rattleton!” he exclaimed.

The fellow whose name he had spoken turned like a flash and looked at Frank. In another moment, regardless of appearances and forgetful of the diners around them, he gave a shout and flung both arms round Frank.

“Oh, it must be a dutiful beam—I mean a beautiful dream!” he spluttered. “It can’t be Frank Merriwell—here, here in Bolivia! I’ve certainly seen the gillies—er, er, that is, got the willies!”

It was in truth Harry Rattleton, one of Frank’s most cherished friends of college days, and Merry laughed again as he noted that in his excitement Harry still twisted his language as much as ever.

“It’s no dream, Rattles,” he said, feeling a choking in his throat. “You haven’t got the willies. I’m here, and it does my soul good to hear you chewing up good United States talk the way you used to in the old days.”

“I always did get the hart before the corse—I mean the cart before the horse,” laughed Rattleton. “But say, Frank, where did you drop from? I can’t believe it, even now. What ever could bring you here to this out-of-the-way place?”

“I came to find you, Harry. I came to see you face to face once more. It has been a long time since you left God’s country for South America, but I’ve managed to keep track of you after a fashion, even though you finally forgot to write me.”

“Disgraceful neglect,” confessed Rattleton; “but you see, Frank—you see, I’m knocking around all over this cussed bluntry—I mean blessed country. I make my headquarters here in Corrales, but I’m away more than half the time. Came home for the celebration this week.”

“I depended on that,” said Frank. “I thought you would surely be here.”

“But you haven’t really told me how you happened to be in South America. You certainly didn’t come all the way to visit me.”

“The story is a bit too long to tell now, Harry. I did travel several hundreds of miles to see you, just the same. I have some friends here.”

“And I have a friend, Frank. Let me introduce him. Darrego, this is the man I’ve told you about more than once—this is Frank Merriwell. Merry, shake hands with Darrego Rosario.”

Augusto Leopoldina rose instantly.

“Darrego Rosario!” he said, stepping out as Frank shook hands with Rattleton’s companion. “Then you, señor, are the young man I have traveled all the way from Spain to meet. My name is Leopoldina, and I have come to confer with you and your father in regard to most important business.”

Rosario grasped Leopoldina’s hand.

“We received word that you were coming, señor,” he said.

Rattleton and Rosario were introduced to Crane, O’Hara, and old Joe Crowfoot. Harry seemed surprised when Merry placed a hand affectionately on the Indian’s shoulder and stated that Crowfoot was one of his dearest friends. The old redskin grunted and nodded in acknowledgment of the introduction to Harry and Rosario.

“Heap much like-um look of this one,” he muttered loud enough for Rattleton to hear; “but no like-um look of other one.”

“Joe is sometimes decidedly outspoken in his likes and dislikes,” said Merry. “We’ll have the waiter bring up another table beside ours. You must sit at my side, Rattles. Oh, it’s good to see you and grasp your hand!”

A table was moved up beside the one to which Frank’s party was assigned, and for the next half hour
Rattleton and Merriwell talked with each other, almost oblivious to their companions, practically ignoring the food that was placed before them.

CHAPTER VIII.
A DOUBLE SURPRISE.

No wonder Merriwell and Rattleton talked and laughed for a time almost totally forgetful of their companions. This meeting brought back to them both a thousand memories of the dear old days at Yale. They spoke of the games, the jokes, the pranks and escapades of their college life. They spoke of the old flock, mentioning one after another, Jack Ready, Jack Diamond, Buck Badger, Hock Mason, Bruce Browning, Bart Hodge, and many others.

Frank was able to give Harry much information concerning Hodge and Browning, and Rattleton expressed his sorrow on learning of the affliction which had befallen big-bodied, big-hearted, noble old Bruce Diamond, they knew, was still living across the water. Badger was a Kansas cattle raiser, and already two little Badgers had appeared to gladden his heart and that of his charming wife, once Winnie Lee. Mason had last been heard from as a prosperous and progressive young business man in the Southern States. Jack Ready, the light-hearted, the gay and eccentric jester, had met with sad misfortune and was still receiving treatment in a sanatorium for the mildly insane.

"And you, Harry," asked Frank—"how are you making it down here in this country?"

"Oh, I'm getting on," was the laughing answer. "I'm coming along right, Merry. The needful is piling up."

"Then it's likely some day you'll be a rich man. Do you intend to spend the rest of your life in South America?"

"Nay, nay, old chap. I shall go back to the good old U. S. A. as soon as possible when I've paid my mile—I mean made my pile."

"Where do you live when you're in this city?"

"Right here in this hotel. I have a suite of rooms. You must all come up to my rooms when dinner is over."

"Is was rather odd that we should come straight here to this hotel," said Merry.

"The Nacional is the best in Corrales. I presume that's how you came to select it."

The others ate, but, in spite of themselves, Frank and Harry were so delighted that they had quite lost their appetites. They nibbled a bit at the food, but it was impossible for them to eat and talk as they wished, and finally, discovering that their companions had quite finished and were sipping coffee, they laughingly decided that food was not what they wanted.

The meal over, they all followed Rattleton to his rooms, which proved to be a most comfortable and airy little suite, furnished to suit the taste of the young man from the far North. There were big easy-chairs, rugs upon the floor, bookcases filled with choice books, and on the walls many pictures, not a few of which Harry had possessed at college. In the place of honor was a framed and cherished photograph of Frank Merriwell. Frank's face could also be seen in several pictures of different Yale teams.

"Just distribute yourselves around comfortably, fellows," invited Rattleton, with a genial wave of his hand. Any one who wants to smoke will find cigars and cigarettes. Here they are. Help yourselves."

"Do you smoke, Rattles?" asked Merry.

"Frank, an honest confession is soul for the good—I mean good for the soul. I own up that I have acquired that pernicious habit. You see, everybody smokes down here, and I'm no longer in training for athletics. I don't suppose you've gallen from face—er, er, fallen from grace?"

"Not yet," smiled Merry. "I think it's too late. While I really enjoy seeing others smoke, I have no desire to smoke myself. And I still keep in training, you know. I have to at my school. It wouldn't do for me to set a bad example for the boys by smoking, even if I felt inclined, which, thank fortune, I do not."

Observing that Crowfoot had seated himself cross-legged upon the floor instead of taking a chair, Rattleton made haste to assure the old redskin that there were plenty of comfortable seats.
“Here’s my big Morris chair, Mr. Crowfoot,” he laughed. “I heard that. As the friend of my dearest friend in the world, anything I possess is yours.”

“Ugh! Heap good talk,” grunted Joe. “You chin much, all same words sound good. No like chair.”

“I once had the satisfaction of receiving Crowfoot as a guest at my home in Bloomfield,” said Merrwell. “He was a very sick man when we carried him into the house and put him to bed, but he wasn’t so sick that he couldn’t protest against lying in a real bed. We finally had to spread blankets on the floor for him.”

“Old Joe near croak that time,” said Crowfoot.

“Old Joe think him goose is cooked. He think pretty soon he shuffle off. Strong Heart bring paleface medicine man; paleface medicine man cure old Joe. He never forget.”

Although these words were spoken simply and quietly without the least apparent show of feeling, there was something in them which told of the tremendous gratitude hidden away in the old redskin’s heart.

“Well, if you prefer the floor to a chair,” said Rattleton, “you’re welcome to use it. Have a cigar.”

He offered a box of prime sweet-smelling weeds, but Crowfoot declined.

“No good,” he declared. “Old Joe try-un cigar some time. No like him. Pipe better. He smoke pipe.”

With which he produced his rank black pipe and began plugging the bowl full of tobacco with a rather dirty thumb.

Harry struck a match and held it for the Indian.

“You no bother so much,” objected Crowfoot almost peevishly. “Old Joe know him heap old, but him no get helpless yet. He can light-un his own match.”

This caused Rattleton to laugh heartily.

“Your red friend is certainly an independent person, Merry,” he observed in a low tone to Frank. “Did you bring him with you to South America?”

Briefly Frank explained in what a surprising manner he had met Shangowah in that far away land.

Darrego Rosario smoked cigarettes and chatted with Augusto Leopoldina, sometimes turning for a few pleasant words with O’Hara and Crane.

“I ruther like that feller, Terry,” whispered Josh. “He seems to be a purty decent sort.”

“It’s all roight Oi take him to be,” nodded the Irish youth. “If he wasn’t all roight, he’d niver be fri’ndly wid wan of Frank Merrwell’s fri’nds.”

“Rattles,” said Frank, “do you know a man by the name of Montreal?”

Harry shook his head.

“Don’t think I ever heard of him. Who is he?”

Then Merry related the story of their meeting with Miguel Toro. When he had finished that story Rattleton said:

“Oh, yes, I’ve heard of this bull-fighter, Domingo. He’s advertised to appear in the bull ring to-morrow, and the boy, Toro, is also advertised. What do you say, my friends, if we all take in the bull fight to-gether?”

“I’m not greatly struck on bull fights,” said Frank. “I once witnessed the real thing in Spain. It’s a repulsive exhibition. However, as I’m curious about that boy, I’m eager to watch a bit of the performance to-morrow.”

“I ain’t never seen no bull fights,” confessed Crane: “but I’ve read about them, and I never thought it would be a rippin’ lot of fun to watch one. All the same, if you fellers is goin’ to take it in, I guess mebbe I’ll traipse along with ye.”

“I’ll make arrangements for seats,” promised Rattleton. “I think I have pull enough to get them in the most favorable position close down to the arena, where we can see everything that takes place.”

“What toime does this foight come off?” inquired O’Hara.

“It begins at three in the afternoon. I doubt if we’ll care to stay through the whole of it. It’s something of an innovation in Corrales, which, however, is in many ways a real Spanish city, and I presume we’ll come nearer seeing the real thing to-morrow than we could if we attended such a performance anywhere else in this country.”

There came a knock upon the door, and Harry turned to learn who was there. A man, standing out-
side, begged Rattleton's pardon, and stated that he had taken the liberty to come directly to those rooms in hopes of finding his son, whom he wished to speak with at once on an important matter.

"Come in, Señor Rosario," invited Rattles, flinging the door wide. "You're always welcome here."

The man entered the room and paused, an expression of surprise and consternation appearing on his face as he beheld the gathering of visitors.

"Pardon me," he breathed; "I did not know, Señor Rattleton—I was not aware——"

"Great geewhiliken jumpin' jingo'es!" shouted Josh Crane. "It's Señor Monreal! Naow what do yeou know abaut that!"

Darrego Rosario had risen and stepped forward to meet the newcomer.

"You wish to see me, my father?" he asked.

"Close the door, Harry—close the door!" whispered Frank, stepping quickly behind the man who had just entered.

Rattleton obeyed, but turned immediately to ask in a low tone:

"What's the matter, Frank? This cannot be Señor Monreal, the man you spoke of. This is Señor Roñino Rosario, the father of Darrego."

"He is the man who, in company with the bull fighters, Domingo and Salvador, appeared in pursuit of Miguel Toro and gave his name as Señor Monreal," asserted Frank quietly.

In the meantime, young Rosario's father was vainly seeking to recover his composure. He had met with a surprise which, for the time being, quite upset him.

Augusto Leopoldina hastened to step forward.

"Señor Rosario," he said, "this is most fortunate. I am the agent from Spain whom you were expecting. I gave you notice that I would arrive, but I could not state precisely on what date I would be able to reach Corrales. I am here, and I have met your son, the heir."

Roñino Rosario bowed low, and gave Leopoldina his hand.

"We have been looking for you, señor," he stated. "It is true, however, that we did not expect you to arrive so soon."

Joshua Crane had Terry O'Hara by the shoulder.

"What's this ere business mean?" he was spluttering. "If this ere gent's name is Rosario, why in stutteration did he call hiself Señor Monreal?"

"Ask me! ask me!" muttered Terry. "It's a bit puzzled Oi am meself. Perhaps the gint will explain."

Old Joe Crowfoot was the only one in the room who had shown no signs of surprise. Still seated cross-legged upon the floor, the Indian pulled at his pipe and poured forth great whiffs of rank smoke which rose in a cloud above his head. But, although he had not moved, there was something in his quick, keen, black eyes which indicated that he had not missed a single feature of the scene.

"So this is your father, Señor Darrego?" said Merry. "Will you be good enough to introduce us? I shall esteem it a privilege to meet Señor Rosario in a proper and conventional manner."

The young man lost no time in complying with this request, and his father bowed rather stiffly and coolly, showing hesitation about accepting Frank's proffered hand, although he finally decided to do so.

"Señor Rosario," said Merry, "it seems to me that you can relieve our minds by explaining a little mystery. By chance we met you to-day as we were drawing near Corrales. You then gave us an entirely different name from Rosario."

The man flushed and stroked his beard, taking a little time to frame an answer. Merry waited quietly, but it seemed to Rosario that the young man's eyes were reading the secret thoughts of his heart.

"I'm sure there must be some mistake," said Darrego. "It cannot be that my father is the man you met under the name of Monreal, Señor Merriwell."

"He is quite right, my son," confessed the elder man. "For reasons of a private nature I am known to certain persons as Señor Monreal. I scarcely think the gentleman will wish to probe my private affairs."

"No, indeed," smiled Frank. "If you do not wish to explain——"

"Is it not explanation sufficient when I say that for private reasons I am known to some persons as Señor Monreal? I think it should be."
"The gall derned critter ain't despoised to make no explanation, is he, Terry?" whispered Crane.

"It's me believe, Joshua, that he'd be after tangling himself a bit if he trod it."

"I kinder took to the youngster," said Crane; "but his old man 'pears to me sorter crooked."

"Without wishing to pry into private matters," said Merry, "I would like, Señor Rosario, to learn more concerning the boy, Miguel Tero. It may be that you can provide some information."

"I know little of that boy, señor," was the answer.

"At one time Domingo was in my employ, and for the best of reasons I have cause to feel grateful to him. In a way, he is a wandering, incompetent man; and, not wishing to see him come to want, I have sometimes provided him with money."

"You have never told me that you were known by a name other than your own, my father," said Darrego wonderingly.

"No, my son," it was not necessary. It was to speak with you concerning Leopoldina's mission that I came to find you. As the señor has arrived, it will be unnecessary for us to speak privately. If he wishes, we may hold a consultation with him at once."

"It would give me the utmost pleasure, Señor Rosario," declared the man from Spain.

"Then I trust you will do me the honor to accompany us to my home, señor."

"I will gladly do so."

With a smile, Rofino Rosario turned and bowed to the others.

"Again I beg pardon for this intrusion," he said.

"If you will permit us, we will take our leave."

"I guess he'll be purty much relieved to git about of here as soon's he kin," muttered Josh Crane.

With almost exaggerated politeness, Rofino Rosario bowed himself backward to the door, which, at a nod from Frank, Rattleton opened.

"Come round and see us to-morrow, Darrego," invited Harry.

"I will," promised Darrego. "Don't forget to secure for me a seat with yourself and your friends at the bull fight."

The door closed behind them.
“All right, Crowfoot,” laughed Merry, “I’ll go down with you to our rooms, and you can spread yourself all over the floor.”

Having left Joe to “snooze,” they strolled forth upon the main street of the city, which was brightly lighted and thronged with gay crowds. From every hand came the sound of music and laughter. There was much throwing of confetti on the street and from the overhanging balconies. From these balconies many a dark-eyed señorita looked down and laughed at them as she showered them with a bright snowstorm of varicolored bits of paper.

“Gee whiz!” chuckled Crane. “There’s sartinly some pretty gals in this old toawn. I ruther like the looks of ‘em.”

“Hould on—hould on, Joshua!” objected Terry. “It’s married ye are. Don’t be after forgetting it, me bboy.”

“Waal, if I should forget it for a minute yeou’d be consarned sartin to take pains to remind me abaat it. Even if a man’s married he kin look at purty gals sometimes, can’t he? That’s human nater, and I own up that I ain’t no more’n human.”

A big gaudily-uniformed band was playing in the crowded plaza. For a time they were entertained by the music, but at last Frank admitted that he himself was inclined to follow Crowfoot’s example and “snooze some.”

They turned to retrace their steps to the hotel.

Not far had they proceeded when Merry suddenly gave a low hiss and made a gesture for his companions to halt.

“Look,” he whispered—“look at that pair yonder! See them?”

Two small, dark men were moving hastily along the street.

“Great flappin’ flounders!” gasped Crane. “Them’s the two critters that tried to kill Mr. Leopendodeena!”

“It’s roight ye are,” agreed O’Hara. “Thim’s the bhoyz that troied to roide over us on the mountain road.”

“Fall back,” directed Frank instantly. “I’m going to follow them. If we keep together they may see us. You may follow me at a distance.”

He was off at once, shadowing Pietro and Recedo through the crowd. The men were moving with some haste, but as long as they remained upon the thickly thronged streets Frank had no trouble in following them without special danger of being observed.

Finally, however, the men darted round one corner and then another, and Merry’s task became more and more difficult. Nevertheless he was not to be foiled, and in time he had pursued the two rascals to the very outskirts of the town.

His friends, however, were not equally successful in keeping track of him. The many quick turns he made were enough to baffle them, and he found that he alone was tracking Pietro and Recedo.

Not far from the outskirts of the town stood a tent in which gleamed a light. As the two men approached that tent, one of them whistled several times in a soft and significant manner, which Merriwell took to be a signal.

In response to that signal the flap of the tent opened, and for a moment Domingo was seen standing there in the light. Then he let the flap drop behind him and stepped out in response to the call of the signal whistle, which was made again.

At a distance from the spot where Domingo met Pietro and Recedo, Frank Merriwell lay flat upon the ground close behind some bushes, disappointedly wondering how he could approach sufficiently near to overhear the low-spoken words of the three. To his great satisfaction, the trio moved still further away from the tent and paused within ten feet of those bushes.

They were speaking in Spanish, but Merry understood every word. He heard Domingo angrily berating the little men because of their failure in some undertaking.

“We did our best,” declared Pietro warmly. “We forced his horse over the precipice.”

“And saw him go falling to seemingly certain death,” put in Recedo.

“How he escaped is a marvel,” declared Pietro.

“It was the infernal North Americans who saved him somehow,” snarled Recedo. “We did our work well. Why was it that they appeared to spoil it?”
“Bah!” rasped the bull fighter. “You bungled. You have received money you did not earn. Have you come here for more?”

“You promised—”

“When the work was done, I said you should have more.”

“Why is it that you should wish the man slain?” questioned Recedo.

“It’s nothing to you. It is bad that he has reached Corrales—bad, bad. It is now useless to bother further with him. Only one thing is left to be done. The boy must be put away. I need him to-morrow. I need him in the bull fight. Come to me here to-morrow night, and I will have work for you. If you do not bungle it you shall be well paid.”

“We will come,” they promised.

“To-morrow night, as soon as darkness falls, I will look for you.”

“We will come,” they repeated.

Then Domingo dismissed them, and Merry, lying flat behind the bushes, saw them turn back toward the city, while the bull fighter slowly returned to his tent.

“Well,” whispered Frank, finally sitting up, “it is practically certain that Miguel Toro will not be harmed until after the bull fight to-morrow. In the meantime, I must find some method of interfering to save him from those wretches who mean to put him out of the way.”

CHAPTER X.

THE BULL FIGHT.

Augusto Leopoldina did not return to the Hotel Nacional until ten the following day. He reappeared in high spirits, and announced that his business was settled in a most satisfactory manner. Darrego Rosario would return to Spain to claim his inheritance.

“Then, Señor Leopoldina,” said Frank, “you are satisfied beyond the shadow of a doubt that the girl, Carlotta del Norte, is dead?”

“Indeed she must be, Señor Merriwell. There is no reason to believe otherwise.”

“If she is living—what then?”

“If she were living, the estate would be hers.”

“And Darrego Rosario would get nothing?”

“Nothing, señor. But why do you speak of such a thing? There can be no question about the girl’s death.”

“I presume there is not,” nodded Frank.

In the midhours of the day Corrales became very quiet, despite the fact that it was filled with many strangers who had come to attend the fete.

Frank had talked with his friends concerning Miguel Toro, and he likewise held a consultation with Leopoldina. A plan to secure legal protection for the boy was discussed, but it was agreed that no move should be made until after the bull fight.

As the afternoon advanced, Corrales awoke. Rattleton had secured the seats he desired, and the party, waiting for the coming of Darrego Rosario, grew impatient as the hour of three struck and the young man was still absent.

“If we’re goin’ to see that there bull fight, we’d better be about it,” said Josh Crane. “Mebbe Darrego’s old man won’t let him come.”

“We’ll not wait longer,” decided Rattleton. “I’ll leave word for him. We’ll get a move on.”

To their wonderment, the streets of Corrales seemed almost deserted. But when at last they arrived at the open-air arena outside the city, and, having obtained admission, beheld the tremendous throng of people which packed the seats, they understood why so few were to be seen in town.

The bull fight was in full progress, and already the first bull, goaded to madness by his tormentors, had gored and slain two horses ridden by the fighters. Several gaily-dressed matadors were on foot in the arena, but the most of them chose to keep at a safe distance from the bull, which a number of horsemen were still tormenting into increased fury.

That the crowd thoroughly enjoyed the spectacle was betokened by their shouts of applause when any especially daring rider swooped beneath the bull’s very nose and sent a ribbondecorated dart into the animal’s bleeding neck.
"'Tain't human nater!" muttered Josfi Crane, whose face was pale and who looked ill. "Why, jest look at all these female wimmin a-clappin' their hands and a-laffin' fit to kill! Yeou'd think they was a-watchin' one of the funniest comedies ever imagined."

The seats secured by Rattleton were in the front row.

Barley were Frank and his friends settled into their places when the tremendous crowd gave a sudden great cheer, welcoming the appearance of a slender, pale-faced lad who ran lightly out into the arena, with a long red cape or robe fluttering from his shoulders to his heels.

"By gum, there's Mig!" cried Crane. "That's the very feller that was so almighty scat last night. Jest look at him! He's as cool as a cowcumber on ice."

The boy seemed to ignore the infuriated bull, as he turned to bow in all directions to the applauding people. Meanwhile one of the horsemen was luring the bull at full speed directly toward the seemingly unconscious lad.

Suddenly the horseman swerved to one side, and Miguel Toro, on foot, ran lightly forward into the path of the bull, whirling the cloak from his shoulders and giving it a flurry beneath the animal's very nose.

With a roar, the bull put down its head and charged. "Holy smoke!" shouted Crane. "Look a' that! He's ketched sure!"

But, laughing lightly, the boy skipped aside at the last moment, so that one of the bull's horns almost seemed to graze him as the animal sprang past.

The bull turned quickly to pursue Miguel. Again and again the lad snapped the cloak across the creature's eyes and avoided its charges. This he continued to do, while he danced down the arena, drawing nearer and nearer to the place where Frank and his friends watched breathlessly.

Some of the other men on foot followed the bull at a little distance. The horsemen drew aside and sat watching the performance of Miguel Toro.

Finally the boy made a signal, and, as if in answer to that signal, a gaily dressed man sauntered forth into the arena, bearing in his hand a long, slender, glittering sword.

Again the mighty crowd rose and roared. "Domingo! Domingo!" they shouted. "Bravo, Domingo!"

It was the famous bull fighter, whose appearance announced to the expectant crowd that the death of the bull was soon to take place.

Proudly Domingo bowed in answer to the plaudits. He continued to bow, as he slowly walked down the arena, like a gentleman strolling along the streets of a peaceful city. In this manner he approached the spot where Miguel was still taunting and baffling the bull.

"We'll get a chance to see the finish at close range," said Rattleton. "They're going to kill the bull right here in front of us."

"I kinder guess I'd better go aout and git some fresh air," muttered Josh Crane. "I ain't feelin' lusty. I'm sorter upset."

Miguel continued to hold the attention of the bull while Domingo drew near. The horsemen likewise closed in a little, as did some of those on foot.

Suddenly the boy's eyes discovered Frank and his companions. For a single moment Miguel's attention wavered. In that moment the bull whirled and charged like lightning.

Miguel attempted to spring aside, again snapping the cloak across the beast's eyes. He made a miscalculation, and one end of the cloak caught upon one of the creature's horns, tearing it from the lad's hands.

A shrill shriek rose from the watchers, for the bull had caught the lad and tossed him high in the air.

One of the creature's horns had caught in Miguel's sash. It tore loose as the boy was flung aloft.

Down to the ground fell the lad with a sickening thud, and lay there stunned, while the snorting, belowing bull shook its head in an effort to cast loose the blinding cloak. Only one of the animal's eyes was obscured.

"Domingo! Domingo!" shouted men and women on every side. "The stroke! the stroke!"

But, to the amazement of everyone, Domingo sud-
denly placed the point of his sword on the ground, leaned heavily upon it, and snapped the blade short off within a foot of the hilt.

There were some who fancied this act unintentional; there were others who believed the man who was to slay the bull had thus disarmed himself with deliberation.

Frank Merriwell was one of the latter. He saw the bull fighters scattering, as the animal whirled round and round, shaking its head and causing the red cloak to snap and crack in the air. Even Domingo turned and ran, at the same time calling for some one to provide him with another sword.

Frank did not wait. Before his friends could realize his purpose, he was over the first barrier into the narrow place provided for the protection of the bull fighters when forced to seek shelter from the hot charges of the beast. His hands seized the top of the inner barrier, and, with a mighty leap, he swung himself over into the arena.

Twelve feet away, Domingo had half paused to look back.

As Frank Merriwell rushed forward, he shot out his right fist and planted it beneath Domingo’s ear, felling the cowardly wretch to the ground as he might have fallen beneath the blow of a sledgehammer.

Merry did not even seem to check his speed in the slightest as he did this. Straight toward the bull and the prostrate boy he raced.

The bull seemed to see the lad lying there. With lowered head it swooped at Miguel, but the cloak still clung fast, and just in time Frank seized and dragged the helpless lad aside.

When they beheld this fearless act of the young American, the immense crowd rose and cheered wildly.

Lifting Miguel as if he weighed no more than a baby, Frank Merriwell retreated swiftly, keeping watch of the bull. The animal started to follow up, but paused to paw the ground and shake its head, roaring all the while. It was well for Miguel and Merry that the beast was thus annoyed, for the time being, by the cloak.

Suddenly the cloak was shaken free and fell to the ground. The bull started at once in pursuit of the rescuer, who was now running at full speed, with Miguel Toro lying limp across his shoulder.

“Hit it up, Frank!” shrieked Josh Crane. “The tarnation critter is arter yee” Reaching the barrier, Merriwell pitched the boy headlong over, and followed an instant later with an amazing sprint.

The bull crashed head foremost against that barrier, missing Frank’s feet by inches.

The uproar of the crowd was deafening. The immense audience shrieked and screamed its delight over the spectacle.

“Bravo!” they cried again and again. “Bravo! bravo!”

But suddenly there rose a sound so shrill, so wild and weird that it was heard above all that shouting, and caused the multitude to fall silent in amazement. It came from the lips of an old Indian, who had risen to his feet and was pealing forth the warwhoop of his tribe.

In this manner old Joe Crowfoot expressed his joyous admiration and approval of the feat he had seen performed by Strong Heart, the white man who called him friend.

CHAPTER XI.

THE MYSTERY SOLVED.

Again lifting the unconscious lad, Merry bore him outside the confines of the arena, where he hailed a carriage, into which Miguel Toro was quickly placed.

“To the Hotel Nacional as fast as you can drive,” cried Merry, as he sprang in beside the lad.

Frank’s friends came rushing after him, and he called to them that they would find him at the hotel, and then was whirled away.

The hotel reached, Frank again lifted the boy, who was now slowly recovering consciousness, and, calling for a doctor to be summoned at once, ascended the stairs to the suite of rooms he had secured.

It chanced that there was a doctor in the house at the time, and he arrived at those rooms not a full minute behind Merry.
There's the patient, doctor, on my bed," said Frank, who was soaking some towels in cold water. "I don't know how badly he's hurt. He was tossed by the bull in the arena."

The doctor advanced to the bed, and looked down at Miguel Toro, whose eyes were now open and whose lips moved as he sought to whisper some words. Bending over the bed, the physician tore open the collar of the boy's shirt. A moment later he turned to Frank Merriwell, a strange expression on his face.

"Señor," he said, "this is not a boy; it's a girl! If you will be good enough to call, there's a house nurse who will assist me."

For a single moment Frank stared at the doctor, and then he turned to the door, outside which a number of servants had gathered. The summons for the house nurse was sent at once.

Then came Merry's friends, panting, to the door, to be met by Frank, who checked them.

"Perhaps we'd better keep out of that room," said Merry. "The doctor has just informed me that Miguel Toro is a girl."

"Great geewhiliken jumpin' jingoes!" spluttered Josh Crane. "You don't say! It can't be possible! Say, Frank, what be you tryin' to do, string us?"

"This would be a poor time for joking," said Merry. I brought Miguel here, determined that Domingo should be baffled in his evil purpose. Now I'd like to have a few words face to face with Domingo himself. I'd also be pleased to interview Señor Rofino Rosario."

"My father has left the city, Señor Merriwell," said a voice, as Darrego Rosario made his appearance, "but I'm here. Where is Señor Leopoldina?"

The man from Spain had arrived, and young Rosario requested the privilege of a private talk with him. Darrego was pale and somewhat agitated.

"There are three rooms in this suite," said Frank. "You may have one of them, gentlemen."

With a sudden impulse Darrego turned to Merriwell and Rattleton.

"I wish you both to come," he said. "I wish you to hear what I have to say."

One minute later the four men were alone in one of the rooms, and Darrego, hesitating and stammering, his eyes downcast, his appearance abashed and ashamed, slowly found words to express himself.

"My friends," he said, "it is with the greatest sorrow and shame that I am compelled to tell you what has this day come to my knowledge. I did not join you to witness the bull fight, for the reason that I was closeted with my father, seeking to persuade him to do justice to one who has been grievously and bitterly wronged. Not many hours ago, señors, Domingo, the bull fighter, came to me with a strange tale and threat. He told me that Miguel Toro was not a boy, although he had worn masculine clothes for years. Domingo then made a statement that filled me with the utmost incredulity."

"He declared that the one who has been known as Miguel Toro was none other than the abducted daughter of José del Norte, Carlotta, stolen years ago by my own father in revenge. I could not believe it. I came near throttling the man, but something held me in check. I listened. Domingo swore that for years my father had paid him regularly each year a sum of money to take care of the stolen child. Carlotta has been cared for by Domingo's wife and reared as a boy."

"Gunder and thuns—I mean thunder and guns!" exploded Harry Rattleton.

"Some days ago," Darrego went on, "my father informed Domingo that Señor Leopoldina was on his way from Spain, coming here for the purpose of meeting me and satisfying himself beyond doubt that I was the son of Rofino Rosario, and, with Carlotta del Norte supposed to be dead, the legal heir to the estate in Spain. Domingo, fancying the end of his regular yearly revenue was approaching, foolishly engaged two ruffians to destroy Señor Leopoldina, thinking in that manner to maintain his hold upon my father. The plot failed. Señor Leopoldina arrived in Corrales. Someone—I will not say who—seems to have suggested to Domingo that he would be well paid to get rid of the rightful heir to the estate."

With his head bowed, young Rosario stumbled over these words, choking and faltering. The listeners
pityed him, for they knew it was his father who had
tempted Domingo, the bull fighter, to put away the
real heir. Not one of them, however, ventured to hint
at this, and the young man continued:

"Domingo threatened me. He told me that I was
not the true heir. He threatened to expose me unless
I induced my father to pay an immense sum. I know
not how I repressed my wrath. I presume I was able
to do this because of the fact that I was shocked and
horrified by what I had heard. Dazed, I permitted
Domingo to depart, promising to meet him after the
bull fight and give him my answer.

"Then, señors, I sought my father, and we had a
terrible scene. It's ended now; all is over between us.
My father has left Corrales. I hope you'll not ask me
whither he has gone. I had him go. I begged him
to go. Señors, I hope you can have it in your hearts
to think generously of my father, who hated José del
Norte most intensely. It was this undying hatred
which led Rosino Rosario to abduct Del Norte's
daughter.

"Doubtless my father believed himself justified in
substituting me in the place of the legal heir to that
estate in the mother country. But now that I know
the truth, nothing on earth could induce me to accept
the riches which rightfully belong to the unfortunate
injured girl.

"Señor Leopoldina, Carlotta del Norte, the rightful
heir, is in the adjoining room. I will engage myself
to supply the proofs you may require. I will compel
my father to make a sworn deposition of the truth.
I am sure he must still have in his possession some
personal trinket or belonging found upon the child
when it was stolen, which will be of material as-
sistance to you. This is all I can do to right the ter-
rible wrong."

The young man's eyes were a trifle misty, and there
was joy in the eyes of Harry Rattleton, as he seized
Darrego Rosario's hand and gripped it warmly.

"Darrego," he said, "I always knew you were a can
to the more—I mean a man to the core."

"He has proved it, Rattleton," said Frank, with a
smile. "Darrego, do me the honor to take my hand.
I am proud to know such a thoroughbred as you."

Throwing off his bewildered amazement as best he
could, Leopoldina likewise shook the young man's
hand.

Then came a tap upon the door, and the doctor was
there.

"Señor Merriwell," said the doctor, "the young
lady has been told how you saved her life, and she
begs a word with you. You may come in."

"Is she seriously hurt?" asked Frank.

"I have found no broken bones, señor, and I am in-
clined to believe that she will recover quickly. Enter."

The nurse had placed the girl in Frank's bed, from
the pillow of which her dark eyes were turned admir-
ingly, almost lovingly, upon Merriwell as he ap-
proached.

"Señor," she whispered softly, smiling up at him—
"senor, I owe you my life. It was you—you, dear
señor—who believed in me and protected me when
first we met, only yesterday. Last night I prayed to
Heaven for you. I shall pray for you always, every
day, as long as I live."

She clasped his hand and pressed it to her lips, and
for once, although he smiled, Frank's tongue was
chained.

THE END.

In the story of next week there are so many good
things it is hard to pick one that is most worthy of
special mention; the more so since the exciting events
are like so many links in a chain, one holding fast to
another. That, you will see, is one way of saying it's
a very well-built story. And the characters—the prin-
cipal ones; those you like best—they seem to share
equally in accomplishing the wonderful results. Still,
you may award the cake to a certain astonishing feat
performed by Frank while holding to a rope that dangles
from a dizzy rock-bound height. It is the sort of
deed that calls for the best brand of Merriwell
courage. The tale in which it is all told bears the title,
"Frank Merriwell in Diamond Land; or, The Vanish-
ing Girl of Vista Grande." Quite a lot of title, you
may say; yet not a bit too much for the bigness of the
story, which you will find entertaining from the
opening to the end. The issue of Tip Top it will ap-
pear in is No. 725.
YOUR LETTERS TO "TIP TOP."

We get a big lot of letters from you every week, and we should like to print them just as fast as they come in, for they make mighty good reading.

But with the Merriwell story, which takes up so much of the space of "Tip Top"—for this you must have in full—and the shorter tales and sketches, there is not a great deal of room left for your interesting letters.

Still, we want you, one and all, to write to us.

Remember, your editor is always glad to hear from you about yourself and your favorite weekly.

Your letters will be printed—just as many of them as we can squeeze into each number, without cutting down the other things you like to read.

So don't feel hurt if what you write to us does not appear for a while.

Prof. Fourmen is always ready to help you, his chums, with advice about exercise, your physical condition, or anything relating to athletics. He would like you to write to him whenever you are in doubt or difficulty, and need a friendly tip.

DOG CLIMBS MONT BLANC.

A dog living at Les Praz, near Chamonix, in the summer of 1908 distinguished himself by climbing Mont Blanc. His master, a workman, was employed on repairs to the observatory on the summit. One morning, after having been seen by his owner's wife at eight o'clock, the dog disappeared. He must have rapidly tracked his master by scent, for he arrived at the summit at half past two in the afternoon, having accomplished in six and a half hours what usually is estimated to require thirteen hours for a man. The presence of some tourists at the top insured this fact being properly attested, and Mont Blanc, as the dog is now called, is quite a hero in his village.

HE WAS GETTING THERE.

Mother: "I hope you are not at the foot of your class this week."

Johnnie: "No, mother; I'm at just about the ankle!"
and women and wagons, and he spoke of Ben and Billy, but he did not seem to know whether or not he had a father and mother.

"He’s prowled off from some train on the way to the Hills," said the guide. "The train may be near, an’ it may hey gone on ‘thout him, reckonin’ him dead."

"What shall we do with him?"

"Tote him with us inter ther Hills. Mebbe we’ll find out who he ‘longs ter wen we git thar."

There was no other way.

The train came up, and we camped for the night.

Jim was soon made happy with enough to eat.

Then I tried to get something more out of him.

I failed. It seemed that he told everything when he was questioned in the first place.

I took charge of the boy. He was not much trouble, for all that he was foolish.

Night after night he sat by a fire, with the light fluttering over his vacant features, and played the two tunes he knew—"Yankee Doodle" and "Home, Sweet Home."

Day after day he sat on the spring seat of Jock Harper’s wagon and blew at the old fife, getting out bits of the tunes, broken by the jolting.

Jock had a little girl. She was blue-eyed and sun-haired, and she liked Jim and his fife. She liked "Yankee Doodle" best, for she could dance to that tune.

Jim played the other tune at night, and the strains often floated out sadly into the darkness, where skulked the prowling wolf.

One day Jock fell off his wagon and broke his leg.

Then Jim seemed to consider himself the guardian of little May, and he watched over her like a hawk.

He was jealous of her in his way, and she tormented and teased him after the manner of a child.

So things went till we were hard down to the Hills. In another day we would reach them.

We had halted for the midday meal on the open plain. Somehow, as we had seen no sign of Indians, everybody seemed to think all danger of an attack by them was past.

All at once fifty red devils swept down on the train.

Then there was hustling to swing the wagons into a circle, with the horses and men inside, to provide a means of protection.

The redskins had not taken us as much by surprise as they expected. We met them warmly with a hail of bullets, causing them to swerve and circle about us.

"We’ll make it cost ther p’sonal, too fer every skelp they take out o’ this yar party," said the guide.

Of a sudden a cry came from Jock Harper. He was lying in his wagon, protected by flint bags all about him.

"May—where is May?"

His sunburned face peered about from beneath the dirty canvas one hand had lifted.

Where was the girl? We looked all around for her, and then somebody gasped:

"Mercy of Heaven! look out thar!"

We looked, and we saw her sitting beside a knoll out on the prairie, where she had been gathering wild grasses, at least eight or ten rods from our enclosure.

The red dogs had not seen her. She was protected from their view by the knoll.

But she had been frightened by the shooting, and was crying. She would rise to her feet in a minute.

Then the copper-skims would riddle her with bullets.

"Can’t no man go out thar fer her," muttered the guide.

WITH "TIP TOP" IN DREAMLAND.

BY R. D. E., MT. Kisco, N.Y.

One night I sat in thought serene,

On many a book and magazine;

But out the crowd, with magic wing,

Rose o’er and o’er the Weeklies’ King.

First, Dick Merrivell stood in view,

Then dear Brad Backhart, tried and true;

And the fair girls, so sweetly dressed—

June, Claudia, and all the rest.

Circus, "Cap" Wiley, brimming fun,

Old Joe Crowfoot, the noble Indian;

Frank Merriwell, the noblest of all—

And then Bart Hodge, stalwart and tall.

Next, with a hearty thrill of joy,

I saw Arlington, the better boy,

Then Joe Cohen, Dick’s Hebrew friend,

Here the glad vision had its end.

"Ther red skunks w’ld plug ther crater soon as he showed

his nose."

"Don’t tell Harper—for mercy’s sake, don’t tell him!"

No need to tell him—he saw her.

"May, May—my little girl!" he groaned. "Save her, boys—

save her!"

We turned away and shuddered.

"Jim will fetch her!"

Then out from beneath a wagon darted the foolish lad. Like a deer he raced toward the knoll.

We watched him without breathing.

The redskins saw him. They set up a mad yell, and twenty rode toward him.

"Merciful God, spare him—save her!"

The rifles of the Indians spat forth puffs of smoke and deadly bits of lead.

Still the boy ran on, apparently untouched.

He reached her—caught her up—turned! We saw him stag-

ger. The red fiends were hard on him, but we were working our repeaters now, turning a torrent of bullets upon them.

On came Jim, the curly head over his shoulder, the little arms tight around his neck.

He reeled—he stumbled—still he did not fall. His face was bloody, his eyes staring.

The wagons were reached. A dozen hands dragged the boy and the rescued child inside.

Then what a cheer went up! The savages answered with fierce yells, but we cheered again.

"God bless you, Jim! You’re a noble hero! You have saved

her, and you shall be rewarded!"

Yes, rewarded—but in another world than this. He was bleeding from half a dozen bullet wounds, three of which were fearful to look on.

The guide examined them. When he rose to his feet he shook his head, and we knew it all.

Little May was in her father’s arms.

"I fetched her," said Jim faintly. "I be hurt—I’m tired. My

life—where—"

They gave it to him. He put it to his lips and played a bit of "Home, Sweet Home." His breath failed; he sunk back in the arms held about him; his chin dropped on his breast.

With his fife clutched tight, Jim had gone "Home."

We beat off the redskins, and we buried Jim out there on the

bare Dakota plain. No stone marks the spot, but there he sleeps to-day, one of God’s own heroes.
English Game not Gentle.

ONE has heard much talk recently of the iniquity of American football and of the corresponding gentleness of the English Rugby," remarks the Yale Alumni Weekly. "It is interesting, therefore, to read an account of the annual Oxford-Cambridge game which was played a short time ago in London. The list of casualties would be considered a fairly good one for a Princeton or a Harvard game, but does not seem to have created the comment in England that the same number of accidents would have if they had occurred over here.

"One reads that Mr. Tarr broke his collarbone, Mr. Turner had a bad concussion, Mr. Cunningham lost several of his teeth, and Mr. Gilray was badly knocked about." In addition, there were several minor mishaps not so serious as knocking about. To the unprejudiced observer it would seem that the English game has 'nothing on us.'"

Princeton’s Captain not Disabled.

THE reports that Captain-elect Hart, of the Princeton football team, had been declared by a team unfit to play next season on account of injuries to his neck, and that he was opposed to the election of W. W. Roper, '19, as head coach has met with denial by Hart.

"As for my being unable to play next season, I wish to state," he says, "I have been playing football seven years, and, during that period, I have weighed two hundred pounds, and scarcely ever have I had time taken out for me. Four years ago I injured my neck while playing for Exeter. I kept on playing. In fact, I had no time taken out in that game. I played the next season at Exeter, a year at the Princeton preparatory school, and my freshman year at Princeton, without a headgear or any other protection, and felt no inconvenience in playing.

"Except for a shoulder injury on one occasion, I never had time taken out for me during the last season, and I don't believe the opposing teams went out of their way to handle me with care. The headgear I wore last season was really unnecessary, but in deference to the wishes of the coaches, I played with it on. A physician who examined my neck last fall said it is as strong as any other part of my body. I intend to play next season, and I hope this statement will put an end to the false and erroneous reports which have been circulated about my condition."

Athletics in the Army.

THE United States soldier is tougher and stronger—physically tougher—than he was before the Spanish War," said Capt. R. E. Thomas, of Wilmington, Del.

"It is not the war which is to be thanked for it. Athletic training has done the work. It is said this country gives far more attention to the physical culture of its soldiers than does either Great Britain, France, or Germany.

"While they require a daily setting-up exercise similar to our own, these gun calisthenics and other prescribed forms of muscle stretching are supplemented in this country by athletic sports.

"These are not compulsory. They do not need to be. They have been entered into so heartily that every post of any size has its organization, which backs its track team, its football eleven, or its baseball nine. This is just what the War Depart-

Great Progress in Baseball.

THOMAS J. LYNCH, president of the National Baseball League, said recently:

"Generally speaking, it is doubtful that any season since baseball became a fixed institution in this country has seen so much progress made as the year 1900. In every department of the game there has been a noticeable improvement. The artistic portion of the game has been made more attractive by the elimination of much of the wrangling that had marred the sport to some extent in the past, and by the influx of a greater number of capable young players than ever before in the history of the game. And in this improvement in the playing strength of the teams, the club owners not only gave additional impetus, but they went further to perpetuate it by supplying the patrons with comforts such as were not dreamed of a few years ago.

"The coming season will see more improvements along these lines, and with these improvements will come increased patronage. The confidence which the public is showing in baseball makes it imperative for the club owners to keep the game clean and free from all questions, snarks or any controversies that might in the slightest degree cause a falling off of belief in the absolute honesty of the sport."

Ten Eyck for Princeton University.

EDWARD TEN EYCK, who for some time coached the Wisconsin crews, has been appointed athletic director of Wisconsin University. As a rowing coach, Ten Eyck is well known among oarsmen, and his popularity at Wisconsin is manifest by his appointment of athletic director, which means that he will have supervision of all branches over sports at the university.

TO SCHOOL IN HEATED WAGONS.

In many sections of Kansas the small boys and girls living on the farms have had to tramp from one to three miles through the mud and snow to school. Now the plan of combining small country districts about one graded school and providing comfortable transportation for the youngsters is spreading rapidly.

The consolidated school is the solution of two or more districts and the formation of a large one with a graded school in the centre. This makes the transportation problem an important one, and in all consolidated school districts the tax levy is made large enough to pay for hauling the children to school and back home. A wagon is often purchased by the district, and a contract given to some farmer to do the hauling.

Sometimes the farmer takes a long time contract and buys his own wagon. If a farmer desires to haul his own children to school, the district pays him a certain amount for doing it, or neighbors may club together and turn over this money to one boy, who drives the team each day and takes care of it and sees that the children get to school all right and safely home. But the most common plan is the use of a big covered and glass-enclosed wagon with an oil heater inside.

Figure compiled by the State Superintendent of Instruction show that the children do better work and in less time than under the old methods. The statistics on file in the office also show that, even with this great hauling expense, the actual cost to the taxpayers is less in provinces than in separate districts. Better teachers are employed and higher salaries paid, but there is a larger reduction in fuel, repairs and maintenance of the larger building than in several smaller structures.
APPLAUSE.

Grateful for Many Pleasant Hours.

Although I have only read "Tip Top" for a short time, I wish to express my gratitude for the many pleasant hours I have spent in reading it. I have three friends reading it now, and expect to have more very soon. JAMES ORNE.

Haverhill, Mass.

Yes; It is an Easy Guess.

You can guess what my brother and I think of "Tip Top" when we say that we have started twenty or twenty-five friends reading it. Thanks to "Tip Top," I neither smoke nor chew. Wishing Burt L. Standish a long life, we remain your friends.

Motherly, Mo. HUENE MISEMER.

FRED MISEMER.

Helped On Athletic Field.

"Tip Top" has helped me on the gridiron and baseball diamond, for when I got discouraged I would think of Frank or Dick Merriwell. I let everybody know that I read it and always try to get them to take it, and have succeeded in my efforts more than once.

RAY LEON.

Humboldt, Kan.

"Doesn't Come Out Often Enough."

I have been reading "Tip Top" weekly for over two years without missing a week, and I think it is the best five-cent weekly I have ever read. I have got several boys to read it in the past year, and they all think it is great. The only thing I think is wrong about your paper is that it doesn't come out often enough. I wish it was published twice a week instead of once, and I am sure if it was everybody who reads it would be glad to have you do so. I think that all the characters in "Tip Top" are fine. I think that Burt L. Standish is the best boy's writer in America, and I am sure that all the "Tip Top" readers think the same.

B. J. KELLEY.

Montreal, Canada.

Used to Stay Out Late and Smoke.

Before reading "Tip Top" I used to stay out late at night and smoke on the sly. Now I don't. I find "Tip Top" the best weekly I have ever read. This is how I came to read it: A friend lent me one, and I took great interest in it. Instead of being asleep, I read the whole story and the other interesting things in your fine weekly.

JAMES ROGERS.

Trenton, N. J.

Helps Him to Control His Temper.

I like "Tip Top" because it has such good stories and fine examples of manly courage in Frank and Dick Merriwell. It has helped me to control my temper under provoking circumstances. My friends read it every week. I like Dick, Frank, June, Inza, and all their friends. Three cheers and long life for Burt L. Standish.

WILLIAM BALDE.

Brooklyn, N. Y.

Appreciates Them, "Good and Plenty."

I think it would be a hard job to leave off reading "Tip Top," having read them all from the first one published, and, to the best of my knowledge, I have not missed over four or five. I don't believe there is another man in the United States who could write a series of stories for as long a time, and keep up the interest like Burt L. Standish. Long may he continue to write his fine and realistic stories of baseball and other athletic sports. Living, as I do, on the banks of the Thames River, in sight of the crews practicing, I can appreciate the stories of the college boat races, good and plenty, you just bet your boots.

Gales Ferry, Conn. M. W. MOXLEY.

Your Enthusiasm is Splendid.

I am an old timer of the "Tip Top Weekly." I have read all the old "Tip Tops" in my life, and think it is very fine. We have a reading club, and have nearly all the "Tip Tops" and the whole story of Bill Bruce of Harvard, in the Popular Magazine. Every member must buy one of the latest "Tip Tops," and pay in twenty-five cents for one month, which goes for gymnasium supplies. I have made seven young men "Tip

TIP TOP ROLL OF HONOR.

Following the suggestion of Mr. Burt L. Standish, that appeared in his letter to "Tip Top" readers in No. 48, the following loyal Tip Toppers have won for themselves a place on our Honor Roll for their efforts to increase the circulation of the King of Weeklies. Get in line, boys and girls, and strive to have your name at the head of the list.

"Billie" Burke, Montreal, Canada.

Marsden Hayward, Sturgis, Mich.

Raleigh Holt, Blanchard, Iowa.

Frank J. Curran, Jr., Syracuse, N. Y.

August Frohnauser, Chicago, Ill.

B. J. Kellert, Montreal, Canada.

Otis Coe, Olma, Neb.

Maggie C. Graham, Lonaconing, Md.

Frank Wall, Pierce City, Mo.

Pierre L. Beach, Goshen, Ind.


Pete St. Pierre, Ottawa, Ont., Canada.

H. S. Hossler, Canton, O.

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 Merriwell stories. Address your letters, "STREET & SMITH, 79-89 Seventh Avenue, New York City," and write in one corner of the envelope, "Tip Top Post Card Offer."

"Tip Top" converts since our club started two months ago. I am willing to exchange post cards with readers of "Tip Top." Chicago, Ill. JOHN ORNE.

Saved Him from Drink and Cigarettes.

A year ago I was a drinker and a cigarette fiend, but after reading some "Tip Top," and thinking what many men its heroes were, I decided to follow in their footsteps as near as I could. To-day I can look a person in the eye and truthfully say that I neither drink nor smoke cigarettes, thanks to "Tip Top." S. A. RICKARDS.

Sacramento, Cal.

Has Made Him Try to be Kind.

We have read "Tip Top" for about ten years, and would not be without it. I like it because it is so interesting, and because of its moral principles. Since reading it, I have tried to be more generous and kind to all that I have anything to do with. I have got three of my friends to take it, and I am trying to get two more to take it by letting them read ours.

Sturgis, Mich.

MARSDEN HAYWARD.

Foremost Among Club's Periodicals.

I get "Tip Top" every Friday. My mother and father objected to my reading it, but I urged them to read one, and since then they have never objected to my reading the King of Weeklies. We have a club for reading, and "Tip Top" is the foremost among all our periodicals.

WILLIAM E. HALLIGAN.

Boston, Mass.

Steady Reader Finds It All to the Good.

I have been reading "Tip Top" for three years, and it's all to the good. I am very fond of Dick, Frank and Chet Arlington, and hope you will bring back Dave Flint. I hope to be on the "Roll of Honor" in the near future. Three cheers for Burt L. Standish and Street & Smith.

J. O'Rourke.

Cuddy, Pa.
Talks with your chum

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 Merriwell'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. Fourmenn.

In Shape for All-round Athletics.

PROF. FOURMENN: I would like your opinion of my measurements: Age, 22 years; height, 5 ft. 7 3/4 in.; weight, 129 lb.; stripped; chest, normal, 38 1/4 in.; waist, 28 1/2. Kindly let me know what branch of athletics I could become proficient in.

New York City.

MARTIN F. MALETTON.

Your measurements are well up to the average for an all-round athlete, which you are fitted for.

A Bad Sign for an Athlete.

PROF. FOURMENN: Please tell me what you think of my measurements: Age, 13 yrs. 10 mos.; height, 5 ft. 2 in.; waist, 27 in.; chest, normal, 26 3/4 in.; expanded, 34 in.; weight, 102 lb. What part of athletic work am I cut out for?

Jacksonville, Fl.

L. S. W.

You are about right save for your waist measurement, which shows a tendency toward stoutness. Look out for that; keep down your waist measurement by exercise and abstention from fattening foods. But for the defect mentioned, you seem to be in correct form for any sort of athletic work.

About Overcoats in Winter.

PROF. FOURMENN: Is an overcoat absolutely necessary in winter? Is there any danger in not wearing one? Is it proper to keep windows open from top and bottom, and about how far? What is the correct way to sleep?

New York City.

If you are accustomed to wearing an overcoat, you'd better not go without it. On the milder days of winter, if you are hardy, an overcoat should be dispensed with, provided you are going to move about and move lively. Some men go through a winter without overcoats; but in a blizzard they look more determined than happy. When sleeping have as much fresh air as you can stand, getting it from either the top or the bottom of the open window. So long as you can sleep at all, don't worry about the position in which you lie.

What Are You Best Fitted for?

PROF. FOURMENN: I have the choice of two situations—one as a teacher, the other as clerk on a railway. I am undecided which to take. Will you please help me out of my difficulty?

Atlanta, Ga.

MARTIN S. GROUL.

The main question is one you alone can decide—which are you better fitted for? Answer that, if you can, and you are out of your difficulty. Successful school teaching seems to be a gift. You must love the young and the work of training their minds. If you feel that you possess these qualifications, take the place as teacher. If not, go into the railroad office, and do your best there.

To Fight Against Round Shoulders.

PROF. FOURMENN: I am fifteen years of age, 5 ft. 8 1/2 in. tall, and growing fast. My work compels me to lean over, and I am growing round-shouldered. Can you tell me how to effect this? I don't want to grow up round-shouldered.

Newark, N. J.

PAUL C. VANE.

You should go in for dumbbell drill morning and evening, taking those exercises that particularly affect the shoulders. Sleep on a mattress that is not too soft. Take as much outdoor exercise as you can. When walking to and from your work—as you should do—hold your head well up, shoulders squared, and chest thrown well forward. Sit with your back square against the back of the chair; avoid sitting in a cramped position.

For Short-winded Football Lovers.

PROF. FOURMENN: I am very fond of football, but I am short-winded. Can you tell me what to do to remedy this defect?

Cleveland, Ohio.

ROSS HEINEMANN.

As a rule, short-windedness may be overcome with perseverance. A course of training is needed. Short, brisk runs two evenings a week; longer but slower runs on another two evenings; frequent exercise with the skipping rope—the rope should not be too long, and should be swung backward over the head, not forward. No smoking or alcoholic drinks at all, and only plain, wholesome food. Plenty of sleep. Play outdoor games moderately, and take a tepid bath at least three times a week.

All-round Exercises Needed.

PROF. FOURMENN: My measurements are as follows: Age, 16 years; weight, 112 lb.; height, 5 ft. 4 in.; chest, normal, 27 in.; expanded, 33 1/4 in.; waist, 29 in. Do I weigh enough? What is a good all-round exercise?

St. Paul, Minn.

R AY E. F.

You weigh enough; but your waist measurement is too great by about four inches. You are shy at the chest by two inches, according to the standard for one of your height. Your waist needs reduction and your chest building up. For the all-round exercise which you require the book, "U. S. Army Physical Exercises," by Prof. Donovan, would give you the proper directions.

Indians vs. Whites as Runners.

PROF. FOURMENN: Are Indians equal to white men as runners? We hear a great deal about Indian runners, but haven't white men, by training, thrown them in the shade?

Toledo, O.

MAX L. LONGLEY.

Probably a trained white man, generally speaking, would outstrip an untrained Indian in a race; yet the best runners in the world are said to be a race of Indians living near the Gulf of California. They are known as Seris, and the tribe is very small in number. Wonderful stories are told of their running feats. In their tribal games, a man is matched against a fleet-footed horse, often with victory to the young Indian.

General Health Building Needed.

PROF. FOURMENN: My measurements are: Age, 16 years; height, 5 feet 10 inches; weight, 27 1/4 inches; chest, normal, 30 inches; weight, 170 pounds. How can I gain more weight?

SIOUX CITY, IOWA.

E. L. BENSON.

You are decidedly tall and thin, but you are also very young, and if your health is sound, time probably will give you the added weight that you need. Meanwhile, you should study the science of nutrition and general health building. Plain, wholesome food, exercise in the open air, plenty of sleep, and avoidance of tobacco will do much for you.

The History of Bill Pickens.

PROF. FOURMENN: I would like to know in what number Bill Pickens appeared as a cattle rustler. It says in one of the recent Merriwell stories that Frank drove him out of the cattle rustling in Wyoming.

SIOUX FALLS, S. D.

JOHN PAGE.

That part of Bill Pickens' history which relates to his career as a cattle rustler in Wyoming was never recounted at length. The only reference to it is in the recent story to which you refer.
A NEW PUBLICATION FOR BOYS

Top-Notch Magazine
BURT L. STANDISH, Editor

All readers of the Tip Top Weekly will be delighted to hear that Burt L. Standish has taken charge of a brand new publication for boys that is entirely different from anything ever published before. It is known as the Top-Notch Magazine, and in it Mr. Standish has assembled nearly fifty thousand words of bang-up adventure fiction for boys, by such authors as Robert Russell, Gilbert Patten, Albert W. Tolman, Edwin Larkmore and Julian St. Dare.

First comes "Bob Halliday, Freshman," a three-part story by Mr. Larkmore, which is woven about the adventures of two Princeton freshmen.

The second feature is a long installment of a splendid serial that is bound to hit right with every Tip Top reader. It is called "The Deadwood Trail," and Gilbert Patten is the author.

The third feature is "In the Coulee," by Robert W. Tolman, a short story of a cowboy's thrilling adventure.

Julian St. Dare has given us a long complete story, entitled "Chi Stirling, Captain of the Nine," which has absolutely no equal as a baseball story.

Robert Russell has contributed "A Scandal of the Gridiron," a most absorbing college tale of circumstantial evidence.

Any one of the five features mentioned is worth the price we ask for the whole magazine, but together they represent such great value that no boy who purchases Top-Notch will be content to miss a single copy of it.

We feel that in securing Mr. Burt L. Standish as editor of this publication we have immediately endeared it to the hearts of thousands of boys who are familiar with his splendid work in the Tip Top Weekly. He writes such wonderfully good stories himself that he is a most competent judge to select interesting tales for our youth.

The March number of Top-Notch, which will be issued monthly, will make its appearance about the 25th of February. We hope that you will place an order with your newsdealer for a copy of it, as the edition that we have prepared, although large, is not going to last very long.

Price, Five Cents Per Copy
At all newsdealers, or mailed direct by the publishers, upon receipt of price.

STREET & SMITH, 79 SEVENTH AVE., NEW YORK CITY
EARLY NUMBERS OF THE TIP TOP WEEKLY ARE PRESERVED IN THE NEW MEDAL LIBRARY

The following books in the NEW MEDAL LIBRARY contain numbers 1 to 441 of the TIP TOP WEEKLY. Many of the individual numbers before 441 are entirely out of print so that the thousands of boys who are interested in the early adventures of Frank and Dick Merriwell and who want to read everything that was written about them, will welcome this opportunity to secure their favorite reading in a form that is more readily preserved. PRICE, FIFTEEN CENTS.

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