TIP TOP WEEKLY
AN IDEAL PUBLICATION FOR THE AMERICAN YOUTH
Dick Merriwell At Montauk Point

JULY 15, 1911
5 CENTS

No. 796

THERE WAS A FURIOUS STRUGGLE, A SPLASH, A DEXTEROUS SCOOP OF THE NET, AND THE TROUT WAS SAFE.
Dick Merriwell at Montauk Point;

OR,

THE TERROR OF THE AIR.

By BURT L. STANDISH.

CHAPTER I.

WITH ROD AND REEL.

“Spark must have been dreaming,” murmured Dick Merriwell to himself, as he drew back for another cast, “I don’t believe there is a trout within five miles of here.”

Poised on a jutting rock, he flicked the gossamer-like line forward with that graceful, sweeping motion of the arm which is the culmination of long practice. Out shot the fly, seemed to hover an instant in the air, and then settled down on the surface of a shadowed pool across the stream.

For just a moment it floated there, trailing across it with a scarcely perceptible motion. Then it rose into the air again and another cast was made farther upstream.

One would have supposed it an ideal spot for trout. The little river ran swiftly, foaming and tumbling over a rocky bed, narrowing down at one moment to a scant rod in width, only to widen out the next into a broader pool. For the most part its way led through dusky tangles of overhanging undergrowth, with here and there a white birch gleaming amid the shadowy green of sturdier pine and maple.

It is just such spots as these the trout love, yet Dick had been fishing for nearly an hour without having so much as a strike. However, with the patience of a true angler, he persevered, trusting that when the fish finally appeared they would make up in size what they lacked in numbers.

That there must be trout somewhere along the stream the Yale man felt positive, not only because of Dale Sparkfair’s assurance, but more, even, from the character of the surroundings. And so he continued to wade upstream, dropping his fly into every likely pool or eddy, and thoroughly enjoying the excursion, even though it had so far proven barren of results.

The two chums, Merriwell and Buckhart, arrived at the Sparkfair cottage the day before, and were made instantly at home. They had come directly from New Haven, which they left with vast regret. Their belongings had been packed and shipped west, they had visited for the last time every familiar haunt and bade farewell to the places and people who had been part...
of their life for five long, joyous years. When next they saw it all it would be as returning graduates, to whom the excursion would be a pleasant one, but not in the least a vital matter.

Yet such is the buoyancy and enthusiasm of youth that already New Haven and all it meant was passing into the background of their minds. It was being swiftly crowded out by thoughts of the future, and what it held for them.

The more he considered it the more Dick’s imagination was stirred by the possibilities contained in Frank’s plan for a year spent in traveling over the country to become familiar with the many vast enterprises that go to make up America’s wonderful prosperity. The idea was, in the main, educational, but of so broad a scope and so varied a nature that Dick looked forward to it with an interest and eagerness which no books he had poured over had ever brought forth.

The fact that his chum, Buckhart, had received permission by wire from his father to go along completed Dick’s happiness, and it is safe to say that, from the moment his back was turned on the college town, his regrets at leaving the university had ceased with a swiftness and thoroughness he had not thought possible.

Perhaps the expected visit of June Arlington to the long, low, straggling cottage, nesting among the sand dunes of Montauk Point, may have had something to do with this mental point of view. It was not often that the two were able to look forward to an entire week spent together in such a spot as this, so it is scarcely to be wondered at that Dick wasted no thoughts upon the past when there was such an attractive present and interesting future to occupy his mind.

June was not expected until just before dinner, so Merriwell had donned his fishing togs directly after lunch and slipped away to investigate the possibilities of the stream.

There had been small difficulty in accomplishing this. Dale and his younger brother, Jack, were busy putting the finishing touches to the rigging of their boat, while Brad was also otherwise engaged.

As he waded slowly upstream, casting the fly unerringly into likely pools, Dick laughed whenever he thought of his chum. Short as had been the time since their arrival, the hitherto unimpressionable Texan had already begun to show signs of unmistakable interest in the piquant, attractive Celia Sparkfair. There could be no doubt at all of her fascination, but the contrast between the two was almost laughable. To begin with, the girl’s head hardly reached to a level with the Texan’s muscular shoulder, and she was tiny in every way. She had, too, much of her older brother’s whimsical, airy manner, and at first sight one would have thought her the most fly-away, utterly irresponsible creature in the world.

She seemed forever on the move, flitting about with the purposeless grace of a butterfly, chattering, laughing, teasing continually. She was as likely to go fishing in high-heeled slippers and a trailing silk gown as she was to ride to the nearest village in a short skirt without a hat.

One could, in fact, never predict what she was going to do next, except that it was perfectly certain not to be anything dull. She always said that most people needed stirring up, and apparently she had taken upon herself the office of doing that service to humanity.

She succeeded invariably. She could do the most absurd thing in such a charming manner that it ceased to seem absurd, which was probably one of the causes of her attractiveness. Another, greater reason was her ability and readiness to do anything under the sun. She could ride with a perfection seldom seen in a woman. She was perfectly at home on the water or in it. She played tennis and golf, fenced, and on more than one occasion had been known to take part in an impromptu baseball game, where her boyish, straight-from-the-shoulder pitching was a joy to see. She was afraid of nothing, and yet for all her versatility she never lost a tithe of womanly, illusive charm, or became in the least degree mannish.

Dick liked her immensely from the very first; and, as for Brad—well, she seemed to appeal to him as no other girl had ever done. There was no trace of diplomacy or guile about the big Westerner. When he wanted a thing he usually went straight for it without any circumlocution. He liked Celia Sparkfair, and apparently she returned the feeling to a certain degree, which was quite enough for him. He went his way stolidly, paying no attention whatever to the sly jibes and digs from Spark and Dick, who were intensely amused at the situation.

Directly after lunch they had departed for a long walk up the beach, and Merriwell laughed aloud as he recalled the picture of the stalwart Brad striding over the sands, his head bent down to catch the prattle falling from the lips of the vivacious, childlike figure at his side, who could only keep up with him by taking about two steps to every one of his.

“The old fellow’s certainly got it bad,” he chuckled.
“But that’s always the way with these indifferent
chaps. They hold off for a deuce of a while, but when they are bowled over, look out for squalls."

A moment later he pushed his way through some overhanging bushes and emerged onto a wide pool, across which the late afternoon sunshine streaked in flecks of molten gold, with beautiful play of light and shade on the clear, rippling water.

"Getting late," Merriwell murmured, pulling out his watch. "Nearly five. Well, I'll try a little farther, and then, if luck doesn't come my way, I'll have to give it up for the day."

The water barely reached to his knees as he waded across the pool and into the narrower, swifter-running stream beyond, where again the clustering trees and underbrush made that pleasant, cooling shadow.

Presently his keen eye caught a streak of little, white bubbles gliding down from where the current dashed over a submerged rock.

"Just the place for a big fellow to be hiding," he murmured, and flicked the fly dexterously at the spot.

There was a sudden rush as the slack line he held in his left hand ran swiftly out; a quick bending of the slim pole, followed by the rhythmical whirl of the spinning reel. With an eager sparkle in his eyes, Dick braced his feet and began the fight which sets every true fisherman's nerves to tingling and the blood to racing swiftly through his veins.

CHAPTER II.

A STARTLING INTERRUPTION.

"By Jove! he must be a big one," muttered Merriwell, as he carefully played out the line.

It was impossible at the moment to check the desperate rush the creature made against the current. With amazing power, it zigzagged back and forth across the narrowing stream, with now and then a sudden stop or swift turning back for a little space, as if trying by every device to loosen the firm hold of the steel hook in its mouth.

Though it needed every particle of skill he possessed to follow the erratic movements of the trout, Dick had fished too often to be beguiled by any of those tricks. While the creature was dashing ahead, he played out the line slowly, keeping it taut without endangering the pole. And at each one of the sudden turnings back, he reeled in swiftly to avoid any slackening of the strain.

Back and forth the fish shot with no apparent lessening of energy, but little by little, by scarcely perceptible degrees, Merriwell took in his line. From seventy feet the distance gradually lessened to sixty, then to fifty. At that point there was a swirling rush, and the trout turned downstream like a flash, apparently hopeless of making progress in the other direction.

For a moment it was touch and go, but the Yale man managed to take in the slack, and an instant later the fish was past him and darting across the wider pool behind.

Then began one of the gamiest plays Dick had ever seen. Darting, diving, lunging with such rapid movements that the reel seemed buzzing continuously, the fighting fish kept the angler working as if his life, not that of the equatic creature, depended on the result.

Once or twice he stepped into holes where the water trickled over the tops of his high boots, but he scarcely felt it, so enthralled was he in the struggle. Twice the creature broke water, and the sight of its glistening brown body rippling the smooth surface of the pool, sent a thrill through Merriwell.

At last the wide circling began to grow less and less. Slowly, inexorably the line was reeled in, with now and then an occasional letting out as the trout made a desperate break for freedom. Closer and closer it came, until at length Dick could see the struggling fish through the rippling swirl a dozen feet away.

With a swift movement, he caught hold of the landing net, raising the pole high at the same time. There was a furious struggle for an instant, a splash, a dexterous scoop of the net, and the trout was safe.

"What a beauty!" murmured Dick, watching the quivering length of brown and greenish-blue and bright pink. "I almost wish you'd got away. You certainly fought hard enough to win your freedom. However, I promised Mrs. Sparkfair a trout, so you'll have to come along. Must tip the scales at two and a half pounds, easy."

With a feeling of elation at his luck, he slipped the speckled beauty into his creel and waded toward the shore. Having reeled in his line and taken his pole apart, he glanced at his watch.

"By George!" he exclaimed. "I'll have to hustle some if I want to get back to the house before June comes. Had no idea that playing that fellow used up so much time."

He had something of a tramp before him, having been almost constantly on the move ever since he left the house, so he set off at once with a brisk stride, an expression of whimsical annoyance on his face. He had fully intended driving his motor car over to the
station, twelve miles away, but it rather looked as if the train would get there before he did.

"I suppose she'll be a bit put out," he murmured. "But how the mischief could I think of time, or anything else, while I was playing that corking trout! That won't be any excuse, though. Even June can't understand the fascination of having a beauty like that on your line."

Presently he left the bank of the stream and cut across through the woods toward the shore. He had never been on this part of Long Island before, but he possessed that rare gift of locality which enables a man to make his way through apparently trackless forests by what seems more like intuition or a sixth sense than any conscious reasoning. It had often been of the utmost service to him in the western wildernesses, and here the exercising of it was extremely simple. The woods were neither very extensive, nor in the least impenetrable. Inland they were composed of maple, birch, and other lighter woods which threw in the sheltered stretches away from the sea. But as the bold, ragged cliffs which fringed the ocean were approached, they gave place to stunted scrub oak and wind-swept, misshapen pine, which, in their turn, were succeeded by wide, open spaces where nothing but sturdy bay, silvery, brittle gray moss, and lichens could find a tenacious hold in the face of the furious tempests that swept in from the wide sea, carrying the sand up from the beach and spreading it over everything.

The Sparkfair house nestled below the cliffs and faced the beach. From its wide, encircling verandas was an uninterrupted view of wild, tossing waves and turbulent whitecaps. Straight out stretched the boundaryless ocean, and the effect was an inspiring one.

The storms of several winters had tinged the shingles of roof and walls to a silvery gray which toned so perfectly with the gaunt cliffs behind it that one sometimes had trouble in telling, from a little distance, just where the rocks began and the house ended.

It lacked but a few minutes of six o'clock when Merriwell emerged from the trees at a dogtrot and hurried along the edge of the precipice, wondering whether there was not some spot down which he could descend without making his way along past the house for nearly half a mile to the point where the road curved up through a natural gap.

Apparently there was not, and he was on the point of entering a little grove of straggling pines which grew boldly out almost to the edge of the cliff, as if they were making a last brave stand against the fierce elements, when some one suddenly stepped out of the shadow.

"Boo!" exclaimed that person, in a very deep voice. "June!" Dick gasped. "Well, how in the mischief did you get here?"

He did not give her time to answer his question, and for a minute or two they were both so occupied as to make speech impossible, nor, indeed, desirable.

"There, that's quite enough," she told him, with mock severity. "I'm really surprised and shocked at the way you behave."

She hesitated, and a smile dimpled her cheeks.

"You do it almost too well," she went on slyly. "It makes me wonder where you got all that practice."

Dick laughed.

"It's just one of those things which come to a fellow instinctively," he assured her.

"Humph!" June commented doubtfully. "It doesn't seem to come to all fellows—"

She broke off abruptly, and Dick grinned with delight.

"Ah, ha!" he exclaimed. "And how do you know?"

"At least, so I've been told," the girl explained, with some haste. "Did I really surprise you?"

"You sure did. I understood you weren't coming until the six-o'clock train. I suppose you changed your mind. That's a woman's undoubted privilege, you know."

"Exactly. I thought it would be fun to surprise everyone. I came awfully near being surprised unpleasantly myself, though. I never thought about how I was to get over from the station, and it was pure luck that brought the lighthouse keeper into the village this afternoon. If it hadn't been for him I should be even now dangling my heels on the station platform. He's the nicest man you ever knew. Insisted on putting my trunk into the wagon, though I'm perfectly sure it mashed a lot of his supplies, and drove me all the way to the house. I'm really in love with him, and he's promised to show me all over the lighthouse."

"Has he, really?" commented Dick, without any great enthusiasm.

"Of course, he's terribly old and weather-beaten," June remarked demurely; "but, all the same, I like him tremendously."

"I'll have to look him up and present him with a pipe, or some tobacco, or something," Dick smiled. "How'd you come to be up here?"

"I saw Dale and Jack fussing over their boat—everybody else was out—and they told me you were fishing. So I thought if I came this way I might
Nothing loath, Merriwell spread out his coat on the edge of the cliff, and they settled down comfortably, their backs against a great bowlder.

"Isn't it splendid!" June exclaimed presently, her eyes taking in the irregular outlines of the roofs far below them, and then sweeping out to the restless, ever-moving ocean. "I’m crazy about the place."

"Yes, you feel as if you were a thousand miles away from civilization," Dick put in; "and the people are corking. They don’t pester you to death with elaborate plans every minute of the day, but just turn you loose to do whatever you like."

"That’s just it. But do you know, Dick, when Celia asked me down last year I thought it would be awful. Twelve miles from the railroad, with no neighbors within six miles, sounds fearful. I thought I was going to pass away from loneliness, but I had the time of my life. Where is Celia, by the way? I’m wild to see her."

Merriwell chuckled.

"Out walking with Brad," he explained.

"Brad!" exclaimed June. "Do you mean to say that——"

Dick nodded.

"Looks that way," he smiled. "I should say it was a pretty bad case;")"

The girl shrieked with laughter.

"How perfectly delicious!" she cried. "Fancy the indifferent Bradley falling a victim at last. But I’m awfully glad, for she’s a dear. Do you think she likes him, too?"

"Hard to tell," Dick returned. "At all events, she hasn’t a positive aversion——"

The words froze on his lips, and for an instant the blood congealed in his veins. From the other side of the grove a scream, long-drawn, high-pitched, and agonized, rang out upon the still, calm air, so full of desperate, mortal terror that it made the two spring to their feet and gaze that way in petrified horror.

"It’s a horse," he explained, in a relieved tone. "It certainly sounded bloodcurdling for a minute."

June shuddered.

"It’s that yet," she said. "Poor thing! He must be frightened to—— Gracious!"

A sudden crashing in the undergrowth interrupted her. Then came the clatter of hoofs upon the bare rock, followed almost instantly by the rattle of falling stones, a dull thud, and——silence.

The girl drew a long, quivering breath and gazed at her companion. To her surprise he was not facing the cliffs from which the strange, ominous sound had come, but gazing inland, striving to pierce the thick screen made by the interlocked branches of the pines. And on his face was a curious, puzzled look as if he could not understand.

June was about to speak when suddenly she gasped and fumbled for her handkerchief as an overpowering odor, sickening to the point of nausea, was borne to them by the gentle breeze.

"Whew!" exclaimed Dick, wrinkling up his nose.

"That’s something fierce!"

"Horrible!" agreed the girl indistinctly, through the folds of her handkerchief. "What under the sun is it?"

Dick picked up his coat and slipped his arms through the sleeves. His face still wore that puzzled expression, and again he glanced inland.

"Give it up," he murmured absently. "Smells like something dead. Come on, June. Let’s get down to the house."

The girl came readily, and they entered the wood together. The odor was now scarcely perceptible; presently it had departed altogether.

"It’s gone," June remarked thankfully. "It couldn’t be something dead."

Merriwell did not answer, and the girl went on, with a worried pucker in her forehead:

"But Dick, the poor horse—went over the cliff, didn’t he?"

"I’m afraid so. It sounded very much that way."

She cast a sidelong glance at his perplexed face.

"What’s the matter with you?" she asked the next instant. "What are you thinking about? And what did you see over the trees?"

Dick hesitated an instant.

"I really didn’t see anything, June," he explained at last. "But I could have sworn that a shadow—a big, broad shadow—passed over the trees just as the horse clattered on the rocks."

CHAPTER III.

THE MADDERNED HORSE.

"What—is—it?" breathed June, in a stifled voice.

Every particle of color had vanished from her face, and she caught Dick’s arm instinctively.

Merriwell recovered himself almost instantly.
"A shadow?" the girl exclaimed. "Why, what do you mean? A bird, or something like that?"

Merriwell shook his head.

"No. It was far too big for any bird. I couldn't see it distinctly at all. The trees are thick, and only here and there the sunlight gets through. But as that crashing sound came, a whole lot of those little spots of light were suddenly shut off for a minute, as if something had come from the north, circled around, and flown back again. Something like an aëroplane, you know."

"An aëroplane?" the girl cried. "But what in the world would one be doing about here?"

"You've got me. Somebody experimenting with a new sort, perhaps. They always take secluded places for that sort of thing."

Emerging from the trees, they walked instinctively toward the edge of the cliff. Here scratches on the rocks, plainly visible, led straight to the very edge of the precipice, and then stopped. Dick shook his head regretfully.

"I'm afraid he went over, poor fellow," he commented. "He must have been driven mad with fright. It's too bad."

The cliffs curved inward at that point so that it was difficult, if not impossible, to get a view from where they stood of the sands below. They, therefore, turned back a little way and started briskly for the road which led down to the cottage.

"I suppose an aëroplane might have frightened him," June remarked. "He'd probably never seen one before."

"It's possible," Dick agreed.

He had been searching the horizon keenly on every side, but there was not so much as a speck to be seen anywhere. Evidently the strange aerial thing, whatever it was, possessed sufficient power of flight to carry it beyond the range of his vision in the comparatively short time it had taken them to traverse the wood.

There was little conversation between them as they made their way down the winding road leading to the beach. They were both thinking of the odd and decidedly unpleasant occurrence and wondering what had brought it about.

Passing in front of the cottage, they encountered the two Sparkfairs just coming up from the dock.

"Whither away so fast?" inquired Dale. "And why this extreme sobriety of visage?"

Upon Dick's explaining things, however, his own face lost something of its airy, whimsical expression. Without a word, he and Jack tossed their coats on the veranda and turned to accompany them to the spot where the horse had fallen.

This was some distance to the rear of the stables, but, nevertheless, they found gathered there a small group of servants, discussing the matter with considerable excitement.

"Black, it was," shrilled the housemaid, as the party came within hearing. "Black as your hat, an' but a bit of it peeping above the tops of the trees. Then comes this poor critter a-leapin' down the rocks to his death, an' be the time I'd let a scream or two out of me, the airship, or whatever it was, was gone. Bless my soul!"

The latter exclamation was drawn forth by the arrival of Dale Sparkfair and the rest, a fact of which the cook had been vainly trying to appraise her of for some moments by sundry stealthy winks and divers contortions of the face.

"Well, Mary," Dale said quickly, "what was this extraordinary black thing you saw over the trees?"

"A flying machine, I think, sir," she explained, in some embarrassment. "'Twas but a bit of it showed above the trees, but I do be after seen' pictures of the things in the papers, and it looked something like. Though what it's doing about here, I can't say."

Further questioning revealed the fact that she had been standing on the kitchen veranda at the time and was just going in to set the table for dinner when her blood was "crushed," as she expressed it, by the scream from the cliffs above. She looked up just in time to see a wide, black, flat surface show for an instant above the treetops and then disappear. A moment later the horse came whirling over the cliffs, and she and the cook had run at once to the stable.

She was unable to describe the flying machine in any further detail than this, and no one else among the servants had even glimpsed the thing.

The horse had been, of course, killed instantly by the frightful fall. He lay crumpled in a heap with almost every bone in his body broken, and Dick's regret was considerably tempered by the consciousness that the poor creature's end had been mercifully swift.

"I don't suppose he knew what struck him," he remarked. "It certainly seems strange, though——"

He was interrupted by an exclamation of surprise from June, who had only now ventured to look at the animal's body.

"Why, it's the lighthouse man's horse!" she cried. "The very one which brought me here from the station."
CHAPTER IV.
WHAT WAS IT?

Dick looked at her in astonishment.
"Are you sure, June?" he asked quickly.

"Perfectly," she declared. "It had those ivory rings hanging from its bridle. I remember noticing them especially. You see them on express horses in New York. Besides, it's exactly the same color. Oh, I'm positive it's the one."

"The young lady's right, sir," ventured one of the grooms. "It is Linstrom's horse. Leastwise, it's the one he uses to take his supplies to the point. It belongs to Joe Wells in the village."

A closer examination revealed bits of wagon harness still hanging here and there from the animal, showing that he had but recently broken away from a vehicle of some sort.

"But I don't understand it," Merriwell said, in a puzzled tone. "The man must have left here nearly an hour ago. He had time almost to reach the point before the horse broke away. Was he a high-strung, skittish animal?"

He glanced at the groom who had just spoken, and the man shook his head emphatically.

"Not so's you could notice it," he answered. "I never heard of his running away before."

"He was probably frightened by this airship affair," ventured Jack Sparkfair.

There was an expression of curious intentness on Dick's face.

"Quite likely," he returned slowly; "but doesn't it seem a little strange that the horse should be frightened enough to bolt several miles from here, and continue to be so absolutely terrified as to dash itself over the cliff twenty minutes or so later? It looks very much to me as though the driver of this aeroplane had deliberately pursued it all the way, and as deliberately driven it to its death."

There was a momentary pause, and more than one face grew serious at the thought of such a thing. It opened up possibilities of an unpleasant sort. A human being possessed of the cold, calculating cruelty necessary to drive a helpless dumb creature to such a death, was capable of almost anything. At the guiding wheel of an aeroplane, able to flit over the country at extraordinary speed, and thus deprived of the necessity of making himself known, his capability for harm was almost infinite.

"But what's happened to Mr. Linstrom?" June inquired suddenly. "He must have been thrown out, and all sorts of awful things."

"Get the car out at once, Rogers," Dale said tersely, turning to the chauffeur. "We'll have to investigate this."

The man saluted and started back toward the garage at a run. The next moment a gay voice sounded behind the group:

"Well, people, what's the excitement?"

"Celia!" cried June, whirling about and rushing toward her.

For a minute or two the air was full of eager greeting and interested questions and answers. Each girl talked at once, but both seemed, nevertheless, able to follow what the other was saying. When they had calmed down somewhat, Dale explained what had happened as they walked toward the garage.

"How perfectly dreadful!" exclaimed Celia, her eyes flashing angrily. "A man who'll do that to a horse, will do anything. I do hope Linstrom isn't hurt. He's too nice for anything."

"Isn't he?" put in June. "I don't know what I should have done to-day but for him."

"Well, we'll soon find out," remarked Miss Sparkfair. "Here's the car. Hop in, dear."

"Now, Celie," expostulated Dale, "you girls ought not go, and you know it."

"I don't know any such thing. Don't be a silly. Dale. The poor man may have a leg or an arm broken."

"Or a head," added Spark significantly.

Celia turned a little white at the thought, but her voice did not falter.

"Just the same, we're going," she returned positively. "You may as well make up your mind to that and stop delaying things."

With a sigh and a resigned shrug, Dale stepped into the car and slipped behind the driving wheel. He knew that once his sister's mind was made up it stayed that way, and he had long ago discovered the futility of argument.

Dick took the seat beside him, the others followed the girls into the tonneau, and they were off, flashing past the house and circling more slowly up the winding road to the cliffs above.

Once on the level, Spark turned the car into a narrow, scarcely perceptible road which followed the lines of the cliffs in an easterly direction. It was really more of a track than a road, and, after running on for a couple of miles in the open, it turned abruptly
to the left to avoid a deep crevice, and presently entered a straggling growth of pines.

The party was not gay. They were all wondering what they would find somewhere on that lonely, shadowy road winding through the pines, in whose topmost branches the wind mourned drearily. Sparkfair drove slowly, his eyes darting constantly to right and left for any signs of the wrecked wagon.

Rounding a curve, Celia gave a sudden joyful cry: "Oh, there he is! He's all right."

Limping toward them, Dick saw a man of about fifty, with a gnarled, weather-beaten, but pleasant face. He was in his shirt sleeves, and his progress was decidedly slow. As the car slowed down and he recognized its occupants, his face lit up with an expression of thankfulness.

"Waal!" he exclaimed, in a tone of relief. "If I ain't goldarned glad to see you folks. I'm in a great pickle, and I didn't know as how I was goin' to git out of it. Seen anythin' o' that hoss o' mine as you come along?"

Dale nodded.

"I'm sorry to say we have, Linstrom," he said seriously. "He went over the cliff, and you own a dead horse now."

The light keeper drew a quick breath.

"Shoo!" he exclaimed. "Don't that beat all! God-dang it! That puts me in bad. Over the cliff, you say? Whew!"

In a few words Dale went on to explain all that was known of the peculiar condition of affairs, to which Linstrom listened with an ever-growing expression of bewilderment on his weather-worn face.

"I can't make nothin' of it," he sighed, as Dale finished. "Why for would anybody chase the poor critter over the rocks that way? An airship, eh? So that's what's got him started."

"Didn't you see anything of it?" Dick asked quietly.

"Nary a thing. It happened in the woods along a piece. He was joggin' on peaceful enough, when all at once he stops an'-snorts. Then he begins to tremble all over, and the next minute he gives another snort and turns around so sudden like that I was pitched off agin' a tree. When I got up that wan't anythin' to be seen o' him. I didn't notice no airship, nor nothin'. The trees is purty thick there, an' I was payin' more attention to the horse than anythin' overhead; but if I didn't see it, how in time did he?"

There was a momentary pause which was broken by Dick.

"Did you notice anything else?" he asked. "Like a queer smell, for instance?"

The keeper scratched his head.

"Now you speak of it, I did get a whiff like the wind was blowin' over suthin' dead," he admitted. "But I didn't think no more of it."

"That might be what started the horse," Merriwell went on. "They have a mighty keen sense of smell. When he got into the open, the aeroplane did the rest."

"Mebbe so. Waal, I found my stuff scattered all over the road, and purty soon I came to whar the wagon was wrecked agin' a tree. I thought mebbe I could make out to walk to your place and git help, an' I'm mighty glad you took it into your heads to look me up."

It took but a short time to collect the supplies from where they had been tossed, and pack them into the car. The wagon had been totally wrecked, and was left where it was. Then Linstrom squeezed into the tonneau, and Dale drove him the rest of the distance out to the point, where they found the keeper's son waiting with some uneasiness for his father's return.

While the various packages and bundles were being removed from the car, Dick extracted a crisp bill from his case and managed to convey it into Linstrom's hand, as he thought, unseen. Evidently, however, Miss Sparkfair's eyes were as keen as her mind.

"Selfish!" she cried. "We're all in on that. Lend me some, Brad, till we get home. Everybody fork up, now, to pay Jim for the horse."

Everybody did, with great willingness, and when the car at last started back, Linstrom's face looked as if a great weight had been removed from his mind.

CHAPTER V.

THE PERIL IN THE AIR.

The topic of the runaway horse and the black aeroplane occupied the Sparkfair family and their guests that night to the exclusion of everything else. Dale's father, a retired business man who devoted his time to various scientific researches, was especially interested.

"I can't understand it," he remarked at the dinner table. "I wish that some one might have got a better view of this supposed aeroplane. It seems incredible that there should be one about here and we know nothing of it. And black, too! Why should any one go to the trouble of painting it black?"

"If you come to that," put in Mrs. Sparkfair, with a slight shudder, "why should any one pursue a poor
harmless animal for miles and deliberately drive it over the cliffs. Such inconceivable cruelty is positively appalling."

"To me," remarked Merriwell, "the most puzzling detail of the whole business is the strange odor. It might have been a coincidence if June and I had been the only ones to notice it, but Linstrom smelled it, too."

Mr. Sparkfair darted a quick, approving glance at him.

"Ha! You've thought of that, have you?" he asked. 
"I agree with you, Merriwell. It's most peculiar. Have you thought of any possible solution?"
- Dick smiled.

"I don't believe I have—at least, no reasonable one," he answered. "There are all sorts of possible explanations, but they seem more or less wild and improbable."

"Suppose you give us one or two," the older man urged, pushing back his chair and crossing his legs. "A number of heads are always better than one, and, perhaps, among us we may be able to arrive at a satisfactory solution."

In spite of the short time that had intervened since the arrival of the two Yale men, Mr. Sparkfair was already evincing a decided liking for Dick Merriwell, whom he found possessed of a more than ordinary amount of shrewd common sense and reasoning power.

"Well, the man with the aéroplane might have discovered a new fluid motive power which gives off that objectionable smell," Dick suggested.

"Good! He might. That's quite true. I hadn't thought of that. What next?"
- Merriwell's eyes twinkled.

"He might be throwing over receptacles of some sort containing an offensively odorous gas, which is possibly poisonous as well."

"Not so good," chuckled the older man. "What would be his object?"
- "His object the first time might have been to start the horse running away," Merriwell returned. "The second time, to urge the animal over the cliffs. You forget, though, Mr. Sparkfair, that we can't let reason or probability enter into the discussion. From the beginning the whole thing has been apparently senseless and more like the work of a lunatic than of a normal person."

"Apparently!" repeated Mr. Sparkfair emphatically. "That's just it. But underneath it all there must be some governing motive. Even madmen have reasons for their acts, though they may not always be apparent. The reason in this case was undoubtedly a desire to kill the horse. Why he wanted to kill it is another matter and probably the key to the whole problem."

"You're becoming slightly prosy, dad," put in Celia airily, "and the room is getting rather warm. I move that we adjourn to the veranda, where it's comfortable."

Buckhart gave her a grateful look, and her father stood up and pinched the cheek nearest him.

"Impertinent minx!" he commented, with mock severity. "You should have lived in the Puritan days and learned to respect your elders."

"Horrible!" she grimaced. "Imagine me being seen and not heard! I should have blown up and busted."

"Celia!" expostulated her mother. "Really, your language—"

"Burst, then," said the girl. "I was a little in doubt as to which was correct."

Mrs. Sparkfair sighed and led the way into the hall. Reproof always seemed to effect Celia about as little as water does a duck. The two girls followed, arms twined about each other's waists, but it might have been noticed that, when the shadowy veranda was reached, they separated with a rapidity suggesting a preconcerted plan.

June somehow found herself, quite by accident, of course, beside Dick. Unfortunately on the other side was Mr. Sparkfair full of suggestions and theories as to the motives of the unknown driver of the aéroplane, which was rather trying to them both.

Merriwell resigned himself to the inevitable, without a sign that he would a little rather devote himself to June, but the girl could not suppress a tiny sigh of envy as she saw Celia step brazenly off the veranda and vanish into the darkness with Buckhart at her side.

"I love to sit in the sand and listen to the waves rushing up the beach," Miss Sparkfair murmured. "Don't you?"

"I sure do," Brad agreed fervently.
- At that moment he would have been equally vehement had she told him in that sweet, drawling voice that two and two made five.

"And look at the stars, and their funny, jumpy reflections in the water," Celia pursued dreamily.

"It's right corking, isn't it?"

Buckhart, however, was not looking at the stars or their reflections. His eyes could not seem to get beyond a rounded cheek and a tiny little ear, above which curled a vagrant tendril of red-brown hair. He felt as if he were walking on air, and he might have gone on contentedly for half the night listening rapturously
to that soft, sweet, voice, had he not been brought up with a sudden shock.

"Here's the place," remarked Miss Sparkfair, stopping abruptly. "Now, let's sit down and talk sensibly."

Brad gasped. He flattered himself that he had been holding up his end of the conversation very well, in spite of his preoccupation.

"What place?" he managed to inquire, with some degree of composure.

"Oh, just a special nook I have in the rocks here," she informed him airily. "It's out of sight of any one passing, and yet you can see the whole wide ocean spread out before you. It's heavenly on moonlit nights."

The Texan scowled jealously.

"This is where you bring them all, I opine," he said, in what he meant to be a dignified, cool tone, but which only succeeded in sounding hurt and angry.

"Oh, dear, no—not all," she laughed. "Only a very special few. Now don't be cross, please. I want you to be sensible and nice."

His offishness lasted for about three seconds. It was quite impossible to be angry very long with a girl like Celia. After all, what did it matter if there had been others? He would have been vastly surprised and unbelieving had he been told the contrary.

So they entered the little rock-bound depression in the cliffs and settled themselves on the dry sand. Straight out before them stretched the dim, mysterious surface of the restless ocean, above which would presently rise the silver moon. A jutting canopy of rock above their heads kept out the wind, of which not a breath penetrated to their corner. In their ears sounded the soothing, rhythmical splash of the waves striking the shelving beach. They could barely see the rush and backward swirl of the foamy ripples. They seemed thousand of miles from anywhere, and yet it was not lonely.

"What do you think about this strange aeroplane?" the girl inquired, as she tucked her long, trailing skirts of shimmering, green transparent stuff under her tiny, spangled slippers.

"Why, I don't know," Brad returned hesitatingly. "I haven't thought an awful lot about it, to own the truth."

His mind had been busy elsewhere.

"It worries me," Celia confided, leaning just the least bit toward him. "There's something shivery in the idea of such a person flying about. You never can tell where he is or what he'll do next. If he'll drive a poor horse over the cliffs, why not a man?"

"But a man wouldn't be driven," Buckhart smiled. "He wouldn't be afraid of the machine."

"Perhaps not. But what about this queer smell they told about? Suppose Dick should be right and it's some poisonous gas he drops down on purpose. Another thing worries me. Dad goes out for his drive as regularly as clockwork. What if the team should be driven frantic some time and bolt? I don't like it a bit."

The Texan's face grew serious at the tone of real worry in her voice. He would have given the world to be able to erase those lines of trouble from her forehead. Such a girl ought never to be worried. But no consoling thought came into his mind, so he kept silent, repressing with difficulty the desire to squeeze the little hand which lay so close to his big fist, and tell her to brace up, for nothing like that was really apt to happen.

"If we only knew something more about it, I'd feel better," continued Celia. "But the whole thing is dreadfully puzzling and mysterious. Why has no one else ever seen the aeroplane? How does it come that we're the only ones to get a glimpse of it?"

"Perhaps some one has put it together in the wilds around here," Brad suggested, "and has kept his operations so close that nobody's found out."

The girl shook her head decidedly.

"You don't know the natives in an out of the way place like this," she returned. "They're a great deal more curious than a lot of women. I suppose they get so sick and tired discussing each other that they simply have to find something else to talk about. Why, if a person comes within ten miles of them, they aren't happy till they've ferreted out every morsel of his family history from A to Z. They've had more callers in the kitchen since you and Dick arrived than during the three weeks we've been here, and that's all they come for; to find out—"

The words ceased with extraordinary abruptness, and her teeth came together with a sudden click. The next instant she had caught Brad by the arm and held him tight.

"Listen!" she breathed, in a strange voice.

In the silence which followed, broken only as it was by the splashing of the waves on the beach, Buckhart was conscious of a peculiar sound in the air above them. It was an odd combination of a stiff sort of rustling, and a creaking like the working of unoiled machinery. Louder and louder it became until it could be heard clearly above the rush and swirl of the breaking surf. Then as suddenly it ceased. It did
not die away in the distance; it simply stopped abruptly. A moment later there came to his nostrils an offensive, nauseating odor unlike anything he had ever smelled before.

The girl’s grasp on his arm tightened. He could feel her lips close to his ear, and the wayward lock of hair brushed lightly across his face.

“The aëroplane!” she whispered, in a voice so low and cautious as to be scarcely audible.

CHAPTER VI.

THE DEAD SHEEP.

Silently they waited. It seemed hours, but it could not really have been more than a few seconds, before the tension was broken in a startling manner.

Quite without warning, there came a whirring rush through the air, a dark, silent mass flashed past the front of the rocky depression, and, striking the sand not twenty feet from them with a heavy, dull thud, lay still.

Brad drew his breath swiftly through his teeth. His first thought was that it was a human being; that the mysterious owner of the strange aëral machine had fallen to his death. His first impulse was to leap forward to see what had happened.

He started to his feet, but the girl’s hold on his arm kept him back.

“Be still,” she whispered. “You mustn’t go. Don’t stir. Listen!”

Then, and only then, was the Texan conscious of a faint whirring above. It was as if the flying machine was keeping itself in one position by the swift revolving of its propeller, and yet it was not quite like that.

He sank back on the sand again, the girl close against his shoulder. And, though his eyes were fixed on that ominous, silent heap with a horrible fascination, through it all he thrilled with an instinctive joy at the nearness of her presence.

A moment more and the rustling, creaking sound started up again. A breath of foul air was wafted down to them, and then the pulsations began to die away in the distance. When they finally ceased altogether, a shudder passed through the girl and her hold on Buckhart’s arm relaxed. In the increasing light—the moon was just peeping above the horizon—he could see that her face was set and white, and her eyes wide open and full of horror.

“Go—and see—now,” she said unevenly.

Slowly Buckhart rose to his feet and approached the dark mass on the sand. Halfway there he turned back.

“You’d better let me take you back to the house first—Celia,” he said.

She shook her head decidedly.

“I must know what it is,” she answered, and then, with feminine inconsistency, covered her face with both hands so that she should not see.

She snatched them away again an instant later as Buckhart gave a stifled exclamation and burst into a laugh of broken tension and infinite relief.

“A sheep!” he cried.

Celia scrambled to her feet with a hysterical giggle that ceased abruptly as she bent over the body of the sheep, which lay crumpled where it had fallen.

“Poor thing,” she murmured, laying one hand gently on its woolly coat. “Heavens! Look!”

The hand she held out was smeared with blood on which she gazed with a sort of curious horror. It did seem a little odd that an animal, which had been crushed to death by falling from a height, should be so covered with blood as this one was.

Hurrlely Buckhart struck a match and was not long discovering that the blood came from a gaping wound in the creature’s body. Apparently it had not met its death as they at first supposed. A sharp, smooth implement of some sort had been driven straight through the body with such force as to penetrate the back, making there almost as large a wound as the one by which it had entered.

Suddenly the girl caught Buckhart’s hand.

“Come on, Brad,” she whispered, gathering up her skirts hastily. “I want to get back to the house. It’s uncanny. I’m beginning to be afraid.”

In another moment they were racing over the sands, hand in hand, like two scared children. Brad was not frightened, but he was perfectly conscious of an uneven beating of his heart at the thought that somewhere above them might be this human being whose diabolical mind had conceived these futile, senseless killings, and whose hand had carried them out without a qualm.

That he was a madman the Texan now had no doubt. And a madman, equipped with such a tremendous power for evil as was a perfectly controlled airplane, possessed of such unusual physical strength—Brad knew, as Celia did not, how powerful must be the arm and the frame behind it to drive a knife or stake straight through the body of a full-grown sheep—was something one might well be excused for fearing.
Almost at once his arm slid around the girl’s waist, and from that moment her feet scarcely touched the ground. She made no protest. It was decidedly soothing to her excited nerves to feel that strong, encircling arm, and presently she ceased those swift backward, upward glances at the starry heavens.

At last the house came in sight with its long, low, comfortable bulk, and many irregular squares of cheery-lighted windows. Celia stopped at once and raised her hands instinctively to her slightly ruffled hair.

“What a silly I am!” she laughed. “It seems so perfectly absurd to be running away like a two-year-old.”

“I don’t know that it is,” Brad answered slowly. “There’s a sort of creepy feeling in the idea that a fiend like that may be circling around way above your head, ready to drop down at any minute. I opine he’s sure locoed, and you can’t tell what to expect from a chap like that.”

The girl flashed a grateful glance at him.

“You do understand, don’t you,” she murmured. “Well, let’s go in and add our contribution to the puzzle.”

Their contribution caused not a little excitement, but did not tend to clear up the mystery. It was nearly midnight when they finally left off discussing it, and the only decision arrived at was Mr. Sparkfair’s determination to start a thorough investigation in the morning. It seemed impossible, even in that somewhat wild stretch of sand and rock and forest, that an aeroplane and its owner could be long hidden from every eye, and the head of the household meant to find out something definite before another twenty-four hours had passed.

CHAPTER VII.

THE CRY IN THE NIGHT.

Sunshine is a wonderful transformer. Bathed in the golden glow of a perfect morning, with the light glinting from the choppy waves stirred up by a brisk breeze, the stretch of rock-bound beach assumed an extremely comfortable, not to say commonplace, appearance. Even the dead sheep, partially buried by the drifting sand, had nothing ominous about it; for, after all, a sheep is a sheep, and destined from its very birth for slaughter.

At the thought of her absurd panic of the night before, Celia Sparkfair raised her eyebrows with a slight air of annoyance and glanced significantly at Buckhart. It was something to be thankful for that only he knew, and that he would never tell.

“Do stop fussing over the creature,” she remarked, “and send one of the men to bury it. It’s perfectly dead, and nothing you can do will bring it back to life again.”

Her father raised his head and frowned at her. “Remarkable head you have, my dear,” he said sarcastically. “I suppose it doesn’t occur to you that we may be interested in finding out what killed it?”

The girl shrugged her shoulders.

“I don’t see how you are going to discover that by poking at it,” she commented airily. “That dreadful airship man stuck a knife straight through it. I should think that would be plain to any one. Why he did it, or why he dropped it here to frighten me to death, I can’t imagine. Now, if you’d only ferret that out, it would be something worth while.”

Mr. Sparkfair took off his glasses and put them carefully into his pocket. There was a quizzical gleam in his kindly blue eyes.

“Your lack of observation is appalling,” he remarked. “It may interest you to know that the animal was not killed by a knife, but by some smooth, sharp-pointed instrument like a wooden stake or an iron bar with a sharpened end.”

Celia’s forehead wrinkled in a puzzled way.

“But why under the sun would any one kill a sheep with a wooden stake?” she asked, interested in spite of herself.

“I can’t conceive,” her father answered, “unless the creature was dropped from a height and impaled on one stuck into the ground. But that would first necessitate carrying it up in the aeroplane alive, which is almost incredible. And there is, furthermore, no stake of any sort on the beach here, so——”

“So you’re as much at sea as when you came out,” the girl smiled. “Well, I’ve had enough of it. Who’s game for a ride?”

No one seeming particularly anxious for that form of amusement save Buckhart, the two departed together, not at all averse to the state of affairs. Fifteen minutes later they had changed into riding clothes, and found the horses waiting for them at the front entrance.

“I suppose they’ll moon around that dead sheep half the morning,” Celia remarked, as they started up the curving road. “I’m getting sick of it, and, besides, I shall always hate that place after making such an idiot of myself there last night.”

Brad instantly began to protest warmly that her ac-
tion had been perfectly natural, and after a little argument the conversation drifted to other topics.

For a time they roamed along the cliffs, and then turned inland, taking a narrow bridle path which led through patches of pine and scrub oak by devious ways to the highest part of the point from which Celia promised her companion a view extending over all the country thereabouts, and even, on clear days, to the distant waters of the Sound on the north.

They had almost reached this summit when Buckhart decided that his saddle girth needed tightening, and dismounted for that purpose.

"I'll go on and wait for you at the top," the girl said. "It's only a little bit of a way."

Touching her horse with her whip, she was off, and the Texan watched her disappear around a curve in the road before bending to his work. He had scarcely pulled the strap tight before a single sharp cry came to him through the trees, chilling his blood and making him straighten up as if shot.

With a leap, he was in the saddle and tearing up the slope, his heart thudding against his ribs as it had never done in times of the utmost peril for himself.

Whirling around the curve at a gallop, his eyes suddenly blazed, and he gave a furious exclamation of anger at the sight before him.

Fifty yards away was Celia, still in the saddle, engaged in a desperate struggle with a powerful, square-shouldered man. As Brad came within sight, he saw the girl raise her arm and lash the fellow across the face with her riding whip, and even at that distance he could make out the broad, red welt springing out across the other's forehead, and see him wince, though he still kept his hold on her left arm.

The next instant he caught sight of the charging horseman, and, thrusting the girl back fiercely, he leaped into the fringe of bushes and went crashing through them out of sight.

"Are you hurt?" gasped Brad, flinging himself from the horse beside her.

Celia's face was flushed angrily, and her eyes glittered.

"No! He hadn't time——"

Without waiting to hear more, Buckhart thrust the bridle into her hands and dashed after the flying man, whose progress through the bushes still came faintly to his ears. He was wild with anger, and, had he come up to the fellow, he would have experienced the greatest joy in smashing the ruffian's face.

Unfortunately, however, the unknown man had too good a start, and seemed, moreover, to be perfectly acquainted with the country. Before long the sounds of his hurried progress through the bushes ceased altogether, and, though Brad kept on for a little longer—his running decidedly hampered by the heavy riding boots he wore—he had finally to give up the chase. He did so the more readily, since it suddenly occurred to him that leaving Celia alone was not the wisest possible thing to do.

"I was afraid you wouldn't catch the beast," the latter said, as he pushed his way through the undergrowth to the road.

"He had too good a start," Brad growled angrily; "and these blamed boots kept me back. Who the mischief is he? And what did he want?"

"I never saw him before," the girl answered. "He was after my bracelet."

As she held out her arm, Brad noticed the heavy gold band set with sapphires. He saw also that her sleeve was rumpled and the heavy glove torn.

"The cur!" he gritted. "I wish to thunder I'd got him."

"I wish you had," she agreed, with warmth. "I'd like to have seen him——"

She broke off abruptly, and her eyes widened.

"Good gracious!" she gasped. "I never thought of that?"

"What?" inquired the Texan quickly.

He had mounted by this time, and they were walking the horses slowly up the slope.

"Do you suppose he could be the airship man?" she asked, unconsciously lowering her voice and glancing quickly to right and left.

Buckhart gave a slight start, and a flicker of anxiety crossed his face. If this was true, the thought of what might have happened with the girl even for an instant in the power of this madman, was horrible.

"By Jove!" he muttered. "He might be. What did he say? Where did he come from?"

"He didn't say a word. When I was almost opposite him he jumped out of the bushes and caught the bridle. He surprised me so that I screamed, and then I told him to take his hands off. He just glared at me and made a grab for my bracelet. Then I struck him with the whip, and after that you came."

"Did he look like he was crazy?" Buckhart asked.

"N-o, I can't say he did," the girl returned hesitatingly. "His eyes were fierce, but they didn't seem especially wild. His clothes were rough looking and his beard straggly. If I'd met him anywhere else I'd have thought him a tramp. The strangest part was his not saying a word."
By this time they had reached the summit of the hill, but the view did not absorb them long. The topic of the strange man was much more interesting, and it continued to occupy their minds all the way back to the cottage.

Mr. Sparkfair was furious. He fumed impotently through the luncheon, and could scarcely wait for the carriage to be driven around that he might get over to the village and make a complaint.

"Though little good it is likely to do," he snapped. "They do a lot of talking about their police force— it consists of one man—but I notice that it generally ends there. Any attempt to get hold of this ruffian will have to be made by ourselves, but I may find out something about him, which will help us. At least, we know now something of his haunts. I'll stop at the Greers on my way back and see if I can't get them to come over to-morrow morning for a thorough search of Knob Hill and the vicinity. If we don't run the creature down we shan't have a moment's peace all summer."

Toward the end of the afternoon he returned highly elated at what he had learned. It seemed that his description of the fellow had been recognized by a number of the villagers as that of a stranger who had shown up at the town a couple of weeks before. He had been dumb, which accounted for his lack of speech on the hill that morning, and had generally been taken for a tramp. When he vanished from the place twenty-four hours later it was supposed that he had gone west on the train.

"Instead of that he's been hiding in the woods ever since," Mr. Sparkfair said decisively. "Just what's he got to do with that aëroplane, or whether he's connected with it in any way, I don't know; but I hope we'll find out to-morrow. The Greer boys will be over directly after breakfast and bring with them a couple of fellows who are staying there. If we don't rake Knob Hill with a fine-tooth comb, I'll miss my guess."

The evening was cold and damp, with a thick fog coming in from the ocean, which made sitting out of doors unpleasant. The company, therefore, congregated in the big living room after dinner, where a fire was started and found not at all unpleasant.

At nine o'clock they were all gathered around it, chatting in a desultory manner. For the time being the topic of supreme interest had been abandoned. It had really been talked to death, and nothing new remained to be said, though they all hoped that the solution might be arrived at next day.

Dale was in the midst of one of his amusing stories, of which he had a vast fund, when suddenly from without came the terror-stricken scream of a woman, muffled a little by the distance and the closed doors, but so full of fear and horror that it brought every person in the room to their feet with a startled jerk.

Dick leaped to the door, and, as he did so, there came the sound of running feet stumbling across the veranda. The next instant the door was flung violently open, and the housemaid, white-faced and panting, dashed in, followed by an equally pallid groom.

"Shut the door!" screamed the woman frantically. "Shut the door! It's after us!"

While she was speaking the groom slammed the door in trembling haste and shot the bolt. As he straightened up, his back against it, the woman reeled, tottered, and, without a sound, crumpled down on the floor in a dead faint.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE GROOM'S STORY

Merriwell was the first one of that amazed, bewildered party to move. Bending over, he gathered the unconscious maid in his arms and carried her to a divan. His action seemed to break the spell. The two girls hurried to the side of the woman, while Dale dashed into the dining room, from which he returned in a moment with water.

"What is it?" helplessly inquired the elder Sparkfair, staring from one face to another. "Will some one explain what has happened?"

There was no answer. Most of them knew no more than he, and the only man who could throw any light on the subject kept his place against the door apparently petrified with terror. He was trembling in every limb, and his white face and staring eyes seemed to irritate the head of the house beyond endurance. Swiftly crossing the room, he seized the groom by the shoulders and shook him till his teeth rattled.

"Why don't you say something?" he exclaimed. "Why don't you speak instead of standing like a dummy?"

"Don't, dad," interrupted Dale, coming up at that moment. "Can't you see the poor fellow's nearly scared to death? Here, James, swallow this."

He handed the man a glass containing a generous measure of stimulant, and the fellow drained it at a swallow. It seemed to calm his twitching nerves a little, and presently, bit by bit, in incoherent snatches, they managed to get his story from him.
It seemed that he and the housemaid were keeping company, and almost every night were in the habit of taking a stroll along the beach. They had left the house about half an hour before, taking, contrary to their habit, the beach eastward of the cottage.

They walked perhaps half a mile through the fog, and then, finding that it was drenching them both, turned back. How far they came the man did not know. The outlines of the building were not visible through the gray blanket, and he had no notion of distance, having, as he said somewhat naively, something else to think about.

Of a sudden they were conscious of a peculiar and unpleasant odor which seemed borne to them by the easterly wind. They both exclaimed upon it at the same time, and he remembered Mary suggesting that perhaps it was some decaying fish which had been cast up on the shore, and wondering why it had not been noticed during the day.

The next instant something happened which drove every other thought out of their minds. From the cliffs above came a strange rustling, flapping sound like the beating of a bird's wings, but multiplied to an incredible extent. Then something swept past above their heads, but so high as to be invisible in the fog bank. And all the while that offensive reek filled the air about them to a nauseating extent.

Mary was desperately frightened, instantly recalling the black airship she had glimpsed over the trees the day the horse was killed, and the groom confessed to a decided weakening of the knees. Together they hurried on, bent on gaining the house in the least possible time.

Before they had taken a dozen steps the flying thing passed them again, beating up against the strong wind with the utmost ease.

They broke into a run now, thoroughly panic-stricken, and with fearful backward glances. The house was not yet in sight, and the mysterious gyrations of the unseen aerial monster filled them with the terror of the unknown.

A second or two later—and with the recollection of that horrible moment, the man fell to trembling again—they heard the rushing sound returning. A terror-stricken backward glance nearly proved their undoing. A huge dark mass, like some monstrous bird, was dropping through the fog and heading straight toward them with fearful rapidity. In his fright the man had not observed just how it moved; he thought the wide, flat surfaces flapped like the wings of a bird, but he could not be sure. He stuck to it that the creature was glaring at them with two wide-open, lidless eyes which gleamed like lamps. He noticed no further details save that the disgusting smell was almost overpowering.

Mary screamed wildly, and they both fled down the beach with frantic haste. A moment later one or the other tripped over something, and both fell flat on their faces. The thing dashed on and over them, flying not more than five feet from the ground, and disappeared into the fog. The instant it was gone they scrambled up and saw that they were close to the veranda of the cottage, onto which they dashed, scared out of their senses.

This appeared to be all. Asked in detail about the appearance of the "thing," the man could recall nothing further. He could not remember what the "wings" looked like, save that they were broad and flat and black. The whole surface covered by them might have been anywhere from thirty to a hundred feet; he confessed that the latter seemed the more correct figure. He stuck to it, however, about the eyes. They seemed to have impressed him strongly. Of the rest he had neither seen nor remembered anything.

The maid, recovering from her fainting spell, was unable to add anything to the groom's description. She was in a half-hysterical condition, unable to talk coherently of the thing which had frightened her so. When they had departed to the back of the house, a silence fell upon those who remained.

"Eyes!" remarked Mr. Sparkfair thoughtfully. "They were lamps, of course, supplied by storage batteries."

"But what aëroplane propels itself by flapping the wings?" objected Dale.

"He wasn't sure about that, you remember," his father reminded him. "He only thought so. We must make allowance for the brief glimpse they both had of it, and the blind terror such an experience would naturally cause."

"There seems to be no question of their being deliberately pursued by the fiend, just as he pursued the horse," Mrs. Sparkfair said, with a shudder. "It's perfectly dreadful, Edwin! Why, no one will dare venture out of the house after dark. As for the servants!" She sighed. "Well, you may as well order out the station wagon directly after breakfast. I shall be very much surprised if one of them would consent to put in another night here for six months' wages."

"Then you'll have to telegraph to New York for more," returned her husband promptly. "I admit it's
pretty bad, but I have great hopes of our expedition to-morrow. What do you think about it, Richard?

Dick had been sitting on the arm of a chair, one leg swinging absentmindedly, a thoughtful frown on his face. At Mr. Sparkfair's words, he started and looked inquiringly at the older man.

"I beg pardon," he said slowly; "I didn't hear you."

Mr. Sparkfair glanced at him keenly, and noticed the curious look in the Yale man's eyes.

"You don't believe it is an aëroplane?" he asked abruptly.

Merriwell hesitated an instant.

"I don't see how it could be anything else," he returned evasively. "The flapping puzzles me. It's against every known principle of mechanical aerial locomotion. And there are the eyes——."

"Lamps, of course," put in Mr. Sparkfair.

"But why two so close together?"

"Hum! That's true. Still, as I said before, we can't trust to the details. There might have been but one, you know. Imagination does wonders in a case like this."

Dick did not answer, but when there was a general movement for bed a little later, he was still thinking——

CHAPTER IX.

THE GIGANTIC FOOTPRINT.

Mrs. Sparkfair's doleful prediction about the servants proved to be quite accurate. Directly after breakfast the maids came to her in a body, and, with many tears and protestations of regret, made known their determination to depart by the first train.

"I never slept a wink last night, ma'am," sobbed Mary. "I just lay awake tremblin' an' seein' that awful creature a-sweepin' down on me. The stench of it's in me nose this minute. I'd die of fright, ma'am, if I stayed here another day."

She sniffed and relapsed into a limp handkerchief. The cook groaned in sympathy. The upstairs maid, a colorless blonde, started nervously as some one crossed the veranda. Mrs. Sparkfair sighed.

"It's nothing but an airship, Mary," she explained, though she well knew the utter futility of any effort in that direction. "Mr. Sparkfair believes it is run by some one who is—er—not quite right in his head. They are all going to make a search for him to-day and put him in custody. It's very annoying, I know, but we're all perfectly safe indoors."

"Maybe so, ma'am," sniffed the parlor maid; "but I can see the eyes of it this minute. How do I know it wouldn't be after pokin' its head into the window some night?"

"Lord save us!" gasped the startled cook, glancing around as if expecting to see that phenomenon forthwith.

"I'm all of a twitter," put in the blond girl.

Mrs. Sparkfair heaved another sigh and crossed to her desk. Having made out the checks, she handed these over with a word or two of real regret, for she had to acknowledge that the women had excuse and to spare, according to their lights, for this sudden departure.

The door had scarcely closed behind them when it was opened again to reveal the two grooms and the stableboy.

Mrs. Sparkfair made no effort this time to induce them to change their minds.

"I'm sorry you had such an unpleasant experience, James," she remarked, as she handed him his check.

"Oh, by the way, where are the others?"

"Which, ma'am?"

"Bradley and Rogers."

James colored a little.

"They're going to stay, ma'am," he explained, a trifle shamefacedly. "They don't believe as what we saw was true."

"Well, that's something to be thankful for," Mrs. Sparkfair murmured, as she went to find her husband.

The disruption of the household was regarded by the younger members somewhat in the nature of a lark. Announcing that they were not altogether ornamental, they took possession of the kitchen the moment it was vacated, and when Rogers, the chauffeur, showed an unexpected willingness to fall to and do unpleasant chores, they decided that they did not care how long the house remained servantless.

The bustle of departure was scarcely over before the Greer boys and their two friends cantered up, and fifteen minutes later the entire cavalcade, accompanied by Mr. Sparkfair in a runabout, started forth on the expedition.

Reaching the spot of Celia's unpleasant encounter, they held a brief consultation, and then spread out to make a thorough search of the neighborhood. Each one was armed with some sort of a weapon, for by this time the dangerous nature of the unknown had been fixed beyond a doubt. If any one wanted help, he was to fire his gun or revolver three times in rapid succession, and those who heard him were to hasten to his aid at once.
Dick had chosen the lower side of the road, and at once started off downhill, making his way through the trees and bushes rapidly, with now and then a short detour to right and left to investigate some promising glade or clearing.

He was still puzzled and thoughtful. Just what he expected to find he did not even know himself. There was a man, at least, prowling around the neighborhood, but that he was the cause of the strange happenings of the past few days Dick was not at all sure.

Presently, as he decended the slope, the trees began to thin out, and a little later he paused at the edge of a clearing and found himself looking down upon a flat depression at the bottom of which lay a fair-sized pond.

It was a rather pretty sheet of water as it glistened in the morning sun. White lilies, with their flat green leaves, showed here and there about the border, and at the farther side a group of cat-tails clustered thick in the marshy soil.

It seemed to be the source of the turbulent stream he had fished a couple of days before, and a more peaceful, utterly quiet spot could not be imagined.

After surveying the surrounding woods keenly for any signs of smoke, Merriwell walked down to the water’s edge. Here he found the ground very wet and marshy, but apparently quite undisturbed. Evidently the man they were seeking had not come this way.

He had made a circuit of perhaps three-quarters of the little body of water, and was beginning to think the spot, which had looked rather promising at first, was going to prove quite devoid of interest, when suddenly he stopped stock-still and rubbed his eyes.

In the soft ooze bordering the pond was a footprint. It was clear and distinct as if it had been made within the hour, but of such an extraordinary nature that Merriwell could not believe his senses.

“Am I dotty?” he murmured, staring at the thing as if he expected it to vanish the next instant.

The print had apparently been made by a bird. There were five toes, equipped with long, sharp claws; and so heavy had been the pressure exerted to make it, that the very texture of the rough, scaly skin was clear in the soft, smooth mud. But the incredible part of it was its enormous size. From the back of the foot to the end of the longest toe measured at least fourteen inches—possibly a little more. The wildest flight of the imagination could not picture a bird with a foot like that.

It reminded Dick forcibly of his studies in geology. In the university collection of fossils there were many prints like this preserved in enduring stone. But the creatures who made them had perished from the face of the earth millions of years ago.

Suddenly Merriwell dropped to his knees and passed his hand lightly over the surface of the impression. It was soft and pliable. A heavy rain would obliterate it in half an hour. It had not been made millions of years ago. It had been made that day!

Slowly he arose to his feet, a chill running down his spine. He glanced around swiftly, dazedly. Above him was the same cloudless azure sky from which the sun shone down on the peaceful little pond, glinting from the ripples stirred up by the fresh morning breeze. About him was the same tangle of trees and undergrowth. It was all quiet and calm, and yet he felt a slow horror creeping over him.

Where was the thing which had made that footprint?

His mind flashed back to the frightened groom’s words of the night before.

“Eyes!” he muttered, in a strange voice. “Wings! But how can it be?”

He looked down at the footprint. It was still there, significant, horrible. It had not vanished. It was real.

“Heavens above!” gasped a voice behind him.

And Dick, whirling around with a nervous start, saw Mr. Sparkfair, white-faced, round-eyed, staring at the weird impression in the mud, as if he never meant to leave off.

CHAPTER X.

OUT OF THE PREHISTORIC PAST.

Swiftly the seconds ticked away in silence, and still the older man did not stir or utter another word. He might have been unconscious of Merriwell’s presence for all the signs he showed. He simply stared and stared at the ground before him, with the look on his face of one walking in a dream.

At last he moved. As Dick had done, he dropped on his knees and passed one hand gently over the imprint. As his fingers touched the soft mud and displaced a little crumbling bit on the edge of one gigantic toe, his whole arm trembled.

“It’s real,” he said, aloud.

As he stood up, Dick saw that the expression of dazed wonder and incredulity on his face had given place to one of equally amazed certainty.
"Did you ever see anything like that print, young man?" he asked, with a strong effort at calm.
Dick shook his head.
"Nothing except some of the fossils at the university," he retorted.
"Exactly—fossils. Do you happen to recall which particular fossil it most resembles?"
"I'm afraid not. I didn't take that course, you know, and, though it interested me, I never had time to follow it up extensively. I should think, though, that it might be one of those enormous flying lizards—I never could remember the names. I don't believe there's ever been a bird big enough to make a print like that."
"Right!" almost shouted the older man. "You've hit the nail on the head. That fresh footprint in the mud, not twenty-four hours old, is identical with the traces left by the most gigantic-winged creature the world has ever seen; a creature who lived millions of years ago—no one can accurately calculate just how many—the pterodactylus. I've been blind—blind as a bat from the very first! But how could one imagine such an incredible, utterly unbelievable thing as this?"
Dick looked dazedly at Mr. Sparkfair and then to the footprint.
"But—I don't—understand," he stammered. "How can—"
"Nor do I," broke in the older man rapidly. "But it fits—it all fits in. The wings, batlike, of stiff membrane, with a spread of fifty feet. The eyes—James stuck to it that they were eyes. Above all, the beak—five feet long and keen as a razor. That beak could transfix the body of a sheep as easily as you or I could spear an oyster, and it would make just that sort of wound. Don't you see how it all fits in? Don't you see how this would account for the unaccountable; for the blind terror of the horse which drove it over the cliff to escape the monster?"
"I see all that," Merriwell admitted. "But this creature has been extinct for uncounted ages."
"Supposedly extinct," Mr. Sparkfair corrected. "Assumed to be extinct until proof arises to the contrary. But should this be true, it would not be the first time science has been wrong. The mammoth was said to have vanished from the face of the earth, but not five years ago a living specimen was seen in the wilds of Alaska by competent, reliable witnesses. A persistent rumor has just come from the region to the east of Great Bear Lake of a monstrous animal, the description of which tallies so closely with that of the prehistoric dinosaur as to be extremely significant, if nothing else. Why, then, should not a solitary specimen of the pterodactylus have survived?"
"But where could it have been all this incredible time without some one discovering it before?" Dick objected.
"Possibly inside the earth. Who knows what lies under this shell on which we live? Who can tell that there are not enormous caverns there in which are reproduced the conditions which made it possible for the pterodactylus and other equally terrible creatures to continue living and breeding after they were driven from the surface of the earth by the glacial epoch? Sealed up, perhaps, until some volcanic disturbance has opened the way for the emergence of one. Let us hope it is the only specimen which has escaped."
Dick sighed resignedly.
"I give it up," he said, shrugging his shoulders. "It sounds possible, and yet, when I look around at this quiet, humdrum spot, and think that such a monster has left its mark here within a few hours, I feel as if I were in a dream."
"Quite natural," agreed the older man. "I feel much the same way myself. But to my mind there's nothing else which explains the mystery. And if my theory should prove true, we are on the verge of the most extraordinary discovery of modern times. Think of the sensation which would be created the world over if we could but secure a perfect specimen of the pterodactylus!"
"Under the circumstances," Merriwell remarked, somewhat dryly, "it looks to me as if this creature with the long name stood a rather better chance of securing us. I'm afraid we wouldn't have much of a show if he came swooping down into this hollow."
Mr. Sparkfair started and glanced quickly around.
"Bless my soul!" he ejaculated. "You're quite right, Richard. My enthusiasm has been running away with my common sense. The thing for us to do is to collect the boys and get back to the house. I hardly think we are in any imminent danger. Except for that first appearance, the creature seems to confine itself to nocturnal ramblings, but there's no use running unnecessary risk."
Before leaving the pond, however, they searched about and found half a dozen other prints, all more or less distinct. Some of them were decidedly smaller than the first one.
"Its forefeet are little more than half the size of the hind ones," Mr. Sparkfair explained. "Well, let us get on. I'm beginning to feel like having a roof
over my head, and the boys should be warned without delay."

Turning up the hillside, they scrambled through the undergrowth with ever quickening steps, the older man showing a surprising vigor and briskness. Think what they would, they could not help feeling a certain nervousness, which showed up in sudden starts and hurried turnings of the head at the slightest sound.

The thing which faced them now was infinitely more terrible than an aeroplane driven by the most homicidal maniac. A monstrous flying creature such as Mr. Sparkfair had described, armed with that sword-like beak, with strength enough to drive it through almost anything, and protected by an impenetrable scaly armor, was enough to strike terror to the stoutest heart.

It was small wonder, therefore, that the two men were breathing a little unevenly as they reached the road where the horses had been left.

"Fire the three shots," Mr. Sparkfair said quickly, "and get them in. We have no time to lose."

The echoes of the revolver shots had scarcely died away before distant crashings were heard on every side, and a few minutes later Brad burst through the thickets running at top speed. He stopped abruptly and stared amazedly as he saw the two standing quietly by the horses, no one else in sight.

"Well, I'll be hanged!" he exclaimed. "I thought you fired."

"I did," Merriwell said quietly. "We've found something. I'll tell you about it when the others get here."

The story was received with open-mouthed amazement, and more than one face expressed utter incredulity.

"By Jove, dad!" exclaimed Dale. "Are you really in earnest?"

"Perfectly," retorted Mr. Sparkfair, somewhat testily.

He was hastily untying his horse from a tree.

"But a flying lizard as big as a house and, millions of years old, does sound a bit fishy," pursued Spark airy.

His father turned the horse around so short that the buggy tilted up on two wheels.

"I don't care how it sounds," he said sharply, as he climbed spryly into the vehicle and gathered up the reins. "You can believe it or not, as you like. But I want you all to get away from here. It's not safe."

Dale glanced swiftly at Dick and saw that his friend's face was unusually serious. Perhaps it was that, or possibly it may have been his father's partly suppressed, but palpable emotion, which made him untie his horse and spring into the saddle without another word.

The others followed his example, and presently they were all galloping after the buggy, which was by this time well in advance.

There was little conversation on the way back. They rode rapidly, with curious, wondering glances around at the woods and hilllocks. They did not credit the theory, of course. The idea of a fabulous monster appearing mysteriously out of the long-vanished past to visit this peaceful, drowsy end of Long Island was too utterly fantastic for belief. But, still, they could not help being impressed a little by Mr. Sparkfair's manner, and wonder what had brought it about.

The girls were flatly incredulous. Mrs. Sparkfair was reduced to a state of helpless bewilderment at the story. She, more than any one else, knew the extent of her husband's researches in matters of this sort, and she did not know what to believe.

The head of the house very soon gave up attempting to convince the scoffers, and retired to his study with Dick.

"We've got to make a systematic effort to kill the creature," he said decidedly, as soon as the door was closed, "both on account of its deadly menace and from the extraordinary scientific value of the body."

"I suppose ordinary guns would be ineffective," Dick remarked thoughtfully.

"Quite so. The protecting armor would turn anything in the way of a rifle ball, unless it penetrated the brain through the eye. And when is one going to get an opportunity for a shot like that, with the monster apparently appearing only at night?"

"It was daylight the first time he was seen," Merriwell observed.

"True, but I think that was an exception. I have a notion that he may have been hidden in the woods asleep, perhaps, and was disturbed and angered by the passing of Linstrom. No; the only thing for us to do is to get hold of some guns of very large caliber and make a deliberate attempt to bag him at night."

"Elephant guns, I suppose," Dick remarked.

"Precisely. Have you ever used them?"

Dick nodded.

"Yes, several times, though not lately."

"You're willing to try this scheme?" Mr. Sparkfair asked, rather anxiously. "I'm a wretched shot myself and should be quite useless."

"Of course you can count on me," Merriwell assured
him quickly. "I'd be a pretty poor sport to back out now."

"Well, I'll wire at once to New York and tell them to rush them down. They ought to be here to-morrow at the latest. They can't come a moment too soon for me."

The message was written and dispatched to the village at once. After that things settled down into something of their accustomed routine. The Greers and their friends stayed to lunch, and every one complimented the girls on their successful culinary efforts. Afterward an impromptu tennis tournament was gotten up which occupied most of the afternoon. Toward five the new batch of servants arrived from New York, and at dinner time no one would have guessed that the house had lately been turned topsy-turvy.

Sitting there at the table glittering with silver and glass and china, and lighted with softly shaded candles, Dick found it almost impossible to believe in his host's extraordinary theory. The laughter and careless gaiety, the swift-footed, silent servants, the homelike comforts and luxuries on every side, were staggeringly remote from this monster out of the past.

It all seemed the acme of ordinary, commonplace life. The very lapping of the waves on the beach, that sounded clearly through the open windows, seemed to breathe of reassuring safety. And yet, somewhere in the darkness outside, high up in the void above that very roof, perhaps, lurked something—unknown, terrifying, horrible. Whether it was something that owed its being to the brain of man, or really this incredible, death-dealing creature came mysteriously out of the ages, he did not know. He only felt that danger was about—danger in a very acute form, which made him determined to be ever watchful, ever on the alert, not for himself so much as for these others—and one other—who meant more to him than life itself.

CHAPTER XI.

THE BODY ON THE BEACH.

"But you heard it, and I didn't. Can't you tell what it sounded like?"

"Oh, I don't know," Buckhart answered. "Just creaking, as if the machinery hadn't been oiled, and a sort of rustling. Might have been shellacked canvas, for all I know."

Dick shrugged his shoulders.

"Still sticking to the airship theory, are you?" he said.

"Jove, Dick!" broke in Sparkfair. "Surely you don't think there's anything in this flying swordfish theory of dad's? Why, it's utterly beyond belief."

Merriwell smiled a little.

"I wonder if you would have been quite so skeptical, Dale, if you'd seen that footprint?" he asked quietly.

The Harvard man raised his eyebrows.

"I think I should. Footprints are all very well in their way, but they're just—footprints. Just because dad's posted on the dead and gone ages, he goes and reconstructs a horrible nightmare of a creature and expects us to believe it's flying around waiting to pounce on us. Why couldn't your old print have been made by an ostrich escaped from some circus? That would be reasonable."

Dick burst into a laugh.

"Don't see it," he chuckled. "Did you ever happen to run across an ostrich with a foot over twelve inches across? An ostrich has two toes."

"Stung!" grinned Dale. "Is that really straight, though? I never noticed it."

"Shows how unobserving you are."

The three friends were taking a before-breakfast stroll along the beach, and incidentally discussing the all-absorbing question which had taken possession of the minds of the entire household.

"No, fellows," Dick went on, rather earnestly, "the thing which made that impression in the mud was something the like of which no living man has ever seen. It's got me guessing. Wild as your father's idea is, it's the only one which seems to fit the evidence."

"Well, you'll have to show me, that's all," Dale laughed. "You can't make me believe without ocular evidence that—Heavens above! Look there!"

The smile vanished from his face as he pointed at the dark heap crumpled in the sand around a ragged buttress of rock they had just circled. For a moment the three fellows stood still gazing at it. Then, as if governed by the same impulse, they started on a run up the beach.

The heap lay a good half mile beyond the point where Brad and Celia had had their unpleasant nocturnal experience a few nights before, and instantly remembrance of that came into the Texan's mind.

"Another sheep," he muttered.
But it was not a sheep, as they very soon saw. This time the aerial terror had struck down other, bigger game, and it was the body of a man that sprawled there, face down, with limbs contorted, silent, motionless, and quite dead.

Suddenly Dick stopped short.

"Hold up, fellows!" he cried sharply.

They paused and glanced at him inquiringly.

"We want to go carefully," he explained. "Otherwise we'll mess the sand up and destroy any traces which may show here."

With eyes on the ground, they went forward slowly again. Dick hardly expected to find any marks in the sand until they had come close to the body, but at least twenty feet this side of it, he paused abruptly with a low exclamation.

"Look there," he said, in a tone of excitement.

The two others, following the direction of his finger, gasped. In the sand was an impression of a great claw, the prints of the toes deeply imbedded, as if great pressure had been brought to bear upon them. And as Dale gazed at it a look of awe came into his face.

"By Jove!" he exclaimed, in an uneven voice. "By Jove!"

"You see?" Dick questioned quietly. "And here's another—and another still."

Silently, with dazed faces, they followed him as he walked slowly toward the body, following with their eyes the line of monstrous footprints.

"But where do they go to?" Brad asked suddenly. "Looks like they ended with the first one we saw."

"And why does it walk at all if it has wings?" put in Dale.

The skepticism of both seemed to have vanished completely.

"You've got me," Dick answered, "unless it has to get a running start before it can launch into the air. You noticed how deep that last print was, just as if it was giving an upward shove to his body. Poor chap! I don't suppose he ever knew what struck him."

They had reached the body and stood looking silently down on it. It looked almost as if he had been thrown from the cliff above, so completely crushed and broken were the limbs, while straight through the back was a great, gaping wound exactly like the one which had killed the sheep.

Suddenly Brad gave a sharp exclamation, and, dropping down, raised the fellow's head. In the instant before he dropped it again his companions saw clearly the expression of frantic horror which was fixed there even in death.

"I thought so," Buckhart muttered, rising to his feet. "It's the fellow who scared Celia. I'd know him in a minute."

"Great Scott!" Merriwell exclaimed. "The one we thought might be running the aëroplane. Poor chap! He's more than paid."

He glanced beyond the body and discovered a curious thing. The sand to the eastward was absolutely unbroken by any mark. There was no footprint, human or otherwise, on its smooth surface for a distance of fifty or more feet.

"But how the deuce did he get here?" Sparkfair asked, when Dick called their attention to this fact.

"Carried, I think," Merriwell said tersely. "Look back here."

He was walking rapidly eastward as he spoke, and the others followed. Some fifty feet back they came upon the first print of a shoe. To be more correct, it was the last, for the man had been walking from the other direction when the monster overtook him.

It was easy to reconstruct the tragic scene by the aid of these traces in the sand. The man had been walking toward the cottage, apparently in a slow, slouching way. His trail led along the beach in a wavering line as far as the eye could reach. Then suddenly he had stopped and turned around. The blurred, partly defaced prints showed that clearly. The next instant he started to run—swiftly, wildly. The footprints were far apart with the toes deeply indented and heels showing scarcely at all. A dozen steps he took, and that was all.

The three friends could picture the rest only too vividly as they clustered around that last mark of a shoe in the sand. Mentally they saw him lounging along the beach, when and for what purpose they would never know. Absolutely unsuspicious of danger he must have been, or he would never have ventured there at such a time.

Suddenly he hears a sound behind him and looks around. There, bearing down upon him with terrible speed, he sees this monster, wild, horrible, fantastic as any nightmare. He flees in terror-stricken haste. A brief, mad rush along the lonely sand, bright in the cold moonlight, and then—the end.

The pterodactylus—if such it is—carries the limp body for some distance impaled on its fearful beak, before it is shaken off, to fall a huddled mass to the beach below. Then the creature itself swoops down,
takes a little run along the beach, and launches into the air again.

Where was it now?

That question seemed to surge through each of the three minds almost at the same moment. What if the monster did not confine its appearances to the nighttime? What if the girls should take it into their heads to stroll along the beach, and—

Dale shivered.

"Let's get back to the house," he said suddenly. "The people ought to know about this right away. We'll have to let the authorities at the village, such as they are, know what has happened, and they can—"

He broke off abruptly and glanced at Dick with a bewildered look.

"Great Scott!" he burst out. "How the mischief are we going to account for his being killed? They won't believe in the existence of this antediluvian flying machine. It's hard enough for us to admit the possibility, after what we've seen. Even now I find myself wondering whether I haven't dreamed it all."

Dick shrugged his shoulders.

"Your father can decide how he wants to proceed," he returned. "Personally, if I were running it, I should tell them nothing. Let them inspect the body and find out what they can from the evidence. If we told them what we know, or, rather, what we suspect, they'd only believe us crazy, and, ten chances to one, would connect us in some way with the murder."

"But they ought to be warned," Dale objected. "They ought to be told the danger of going about at night while this creature is at large."

Merriwell hesitated an instant.

"I doubt whether it would do any good," he said at length. "Unless, of course, we could put the warning in an indefinite form. We might hint that some maniac is at large, and perhaps that would frighten them. At all events, it's up to us more than ever to make a determined effort to put an end to this monster. I wish those guns would hurry up. They can't possibly arrive here until the afternoon train, I suppose."

"Hardly," Sparkfair agreed. "But we can send Rogers over to meet it, so that there won't be a moment lost."

CHAPTER XII.

THE FLYING DEATH.

It was after lunch, and the excitement had somewhat subsided. The half dozen tanned, weather-beaten farmers, who constituted the village authorities, had spent an hour or more inspecting the body of the tramp and making an exhaustive examination of the surrounding beach, to the accompaniment of much waggling of chin whiskers and a perfect babel of nasal voices.

As Dick had predicted, they were quite at sea regarding the perpetrator of the mysterious murder, and there were almost as many opinions as there were men to voice them.

The presence of the mammoth claw prints, and the absence of any marks of shoes, save those of the party from the cottage, formed, naturally, the greatest stumbling block. The former they could account for by no theory whatever, and promptly proceeded to ignore them. One opined that the unknown had been stabbed on the cliff above and thrown to the beach—a not impossible feat considering his position.

His conviction remained unshaken when they mounted to the upper plateau and found there absolutely no trace of any struggle.

One and all coincided in the belief that there was a dangerous maniac abroad, and it scarce,ly needed any words of caution to point out the danger of venturing out at night until he was discovered.

Toward four o'clock they departed, taking the body with them, and comparative quiet settled upon the household for the first time since early morning. The servants had not been told anything beyond the fact that it would be unsafe to venture far from the house, especially after dark, a caution which was unnecessary; for, after the discovery of the body on the beach, not one of them could have been hired to stir from the place. Mrs. Sparkfair was completely prostrated by the developments of the day, and every one more or less depressed.

"There isn't a chance of those guns arriving until the six-o'clock train," Mr. Sparkfair said anxiously, as they gathered on the veranda after the departure of the rustics.
"I think we'd better chase down in the car and be at the station when the six comes in," Dale remarked decidedly. "Considering everything, we can't afford to delay an hour."

His father nodded.

"No, there's no time to waste," he agreed. "I scarcely think there will be any danger so long as you are back before dusk."

"June and I will go along," spoke up Celia. "I'm sick and tired of sitting around all day, doing nothing."

"I don't believe you'd better," Mr. Sparkfair said doubtfully. "One can never tell what might happen."

"Oh, pshaw, dad!" the girl expostulated. "It doesn't begin to get dark till eight, and there won't be a particle of risk."

In the end she got her way, as she usually did, and a little after five the car was brought around, and they all piled in. Dale was at the wheel with Dick beside him, while Brad sat in the tonneau with the girls. Jack remained behind to put a few last finishing touches to the boat.

Arriving at the station, they had some minutes to wait for the train, but when it appeared Dale hurried into the office to inquire for the expected box. Five minutes later he came out frowning.

"Nothing doing," he commented. "Those people ought to be shot. They had plenty of time to get it on that train if they'd only hustled."

"Can't get here until nearly noon to-morrow, can it?" Merriwell asked.

"Twelve-six," snapped Spark crossly, as he climbed into the driver's seat.

He started the car and circled around toward the road.

"Let's go round by the bay," Celia suggested suddenly. "It's a lovely drive, and won't take much longer."

Dale slowed down the car, a doubtful expression on his face.

"It's a good three-quarters of an hour longer," he commented.

"Well, what of it? It isn't dark until eight, and, even if we should see this nightmarish thing of dad's, I don't believe it could possibly go as fast as the car."

Spark glanced questioningly at Dick.

"I hardly think it could," the latter answered slowly.

"Provided the roads are all right and nothing happens to your mechanism, there are few creatures alive could make fifty miles an hour. Still——"

"Now don't be a wet blanket, Dick," Celia bantered. "We really do need some fresh air. We shan't be able to stir off the veranda to-night, you know."

Again this irresistible young person had her way.

Dale let in the clutch again and swerved to the left. In a couple of minutes the village was left behind, and they were speeding out on the road which led along the edge of Gardiner's Bay, circled the point, and returned by the south shore.

It was a beautiful drive. The road dipped in and out of the woods, with constant glimpses of the broad, placid waters of the bay, across which loomed the low shores of Gardiner's Island, and back of that the glowing sun sinking toward the west in a blaze, of gold and crimson.

Here and there on the surface of the water the light glinted on a distant sail or showed the dark, low streak of a power boat chugging homeward. Behind them the trees rustled in the light breeze, with only the chatter of a squirrel or the shrill note of a bird to break the restful silence.

But somehow it was not so restful. More than one of the party was conscious of the wish that they might hear some of the familiar, commonplace noises which betokened the presence of other people. They wished another machine would pass them, or come up behind, so that they might not feel they were the only human beings abroad on that lonely neck of land.

Somewhere in those shadowy forest depths lurked something the very thought of which set nerves to twitching. That there was little chance of its appearing, did not make the idea any less unpleasant. It was there, somewhere, and that was enough to spoil the pleasure of a lovelier scene than this.

Of course none of these thoughts were given expression. To all appearances the crowd was a jolly, light-hearted one, joking, laughing, and chaffing one another in the very excess of their relief after a trying day.

If the laughter was a little louder than was common,
no one seemed to notice it. They were all of the sort which kept their feelings and emotions well in hand, and not for an instant would one of them have admitted the sensation of relief which would follow the appearance of the long, rambling roof lines of the gray cottage.

And so they reached the end of the point, flashed past the lighthouse, standing boldly on the rocks some distance away from shore, and started on the homeward stretch.

The sun dropped out of sight behind the fringe of trees, amid a riot of flaming color. The chattering of the squirrels ceased and the notes of birds became few and far between. Presently the talk and laughter were the only sounds that broke the stillness, save the regular breaking of the eternal waves on the beach below them.

Suddenly the engine began to pound loudly and irregularly. A moment later the noise ceased and the car came to an abrupt stop. For an instant there was intense silence, which was broken by Celia’s voice.

“What in the world is the matter now, Dale?” she asked.

Sparkfair had descended from his seat and went forward with Dick to have a look at the engine.

“Tell you presently,” he answered, with some shortness.

Celia moved uneasily as the two exposed the engine and bent over it. She tried to make a light, casual remark on the nuisance of having things break down just when one did not want them to, but somehow it sounded a bit forced, and she relapsed into silence.

“Well?” she asked, when her brother straightened up from his examination.

“Nothing wrong that I can see,” Dale commented. “I’ll look at the batteries.”

Brad descended from the tonneau, and together they made a thorough test of the batteries, while Dick crawled under the car to take a look at things there.

Unconsiously Celia drew a little closer to her companion, and at the same moment both of them cast a furtive, hurried glance at the neighboring treetops. Then both laughed a bit nervously.

“I’m afraid it’s a short-circuit of the electricity,” Merriwell said quietly, as he emerged a moment later. “Everything else seems to be all right.”

“Blazes!” rasped Dale. “That’s the worst possible thing it could be. We may be an hour finding it.”

“Possibly,” Dick acknowledged. “Well, we’d better get after it. The sooner we start the sooner we’ll hit on it. May not take five minutes, you know.”

They set about it systematically and with a cool nonchalance and lack of flurried haste which was distinctly reassuring to the girls. It very soon became evident, however, that five minutes was not going to see the righting of the trouble.

Twice that time passed quickly with no results forthcoming. A half an hour flew by, and still nothing doing.

In the west the bright colors were swiftly paling into drabs and somber grays. Back of them the waning moon was becoming brighter and brighter as the day died away. Slowly, inexorably, the outlines of the trees faded into one indistinct blur of shadow. Above their heads the stars kept popping out in the darkening arch of sky, like glowing pin points.

Celia’s fingers closed over her friend’s hand.

“Oh, dear!” she sighed. “I wish I’d never suggested this. I wish we’d gone straight home from the village.”

“How could you know the car was going to break down?” June returned quietly.

“I couldn’t, of course, but still I might have known something would happen—now.”

“Very likely they’ll find it soon,” June said hopefully.

Celia made no answer. She only sighed again, and for a time no one spoke.

“Better light up, hadn’t I, partner?” Brad inquired a little later. “Pretty quick we won’t be able to see.”

“I wouldn’t if I were you,” came back in Merriwell’s quiet voice. “Just hunt up a flash light. We can work by that.”

Buckhart fumbled in the tool box and secured the light. By its aid the three men resumed their searching for the trouble. For a time the silence was broken only by Dale’s hurried breathing, and now and then a
stifled exclamation of anger. A sense of suspense, of tension, was strong in the minds of them all, the sort of feeling which makes one's fingers turn to thumbs. The curtain of night had fallen, the lurking shadows made only the more blacker by the moonlight. Celia shivered as with the cold, and cast a hurried glance about her.

Another moment and she drew a quick, shuddering gasp, her fingers tightening on June's with a convulsive strength which made the girl start and almost cry out.

"Look!" breathed Celia, in a voice of unutterable horror. "Oh, heavens—look!"

Instantly the men ceased their work and sprang up, a sense of foreboding clutching them by the throat. The girl had twisted around and was pointing upward with trembling finger, and, as they followed its direction and saw what she had seen, they seemed suddenly as if turned to stone.

High, high above their heads—miles, almost it seemed to their dazed senses—soared a creature horrible beyond imagination. Slowly, majestically, it swept in wide circles, and now and then, when it passed against the face of the yellow moon, its every outline showed with incredible distinctness.

The vast spread of wing supported a body which looked small out of all proportion, but which was unmistakably reptilian. Its long, snaky neck waved slowly from side to side, and the hideous head, terminating in that long, murderous beak, seemed now and then to turn earthward as if seeking something.

It was the pterodactylus, beyond a doubt, yet it is a question whether one of those petrified observers in all their imaginings had pictured anything a tithe as dreadful as this. There was a sense of power in the slow, easy gyrations of the monster, which made them seem infinitely small and infinitely helpless. They felt as if that waving head must sight them quickly, far below as they were, and then it would be but the work of a moment for those great wings to bear the creature swiftly out of the void in a slanting, dropping flight to where they stood.

Suddenly Dick's voice broke the spell of horror.

"Get out of the car," he whispered. "Quick!"

How the girls found the strength to tear their eyes away from the fearful thing above them and tumble out to the ground, they never knew. It seemed almost as if they were being held in the grip of a horrible nightmare from which they could not wake up.

"Now make for the woods," Merriwell went on hurriedly. "We may get there before it sees us."

Brad caught Celia about the waist, and Dick followed with June. They had taken half a dozen steps toward the fringe of trees a hundred yards or so away, when he stopped abruptly.

"Too late!" he panted, through his teeth.

The monster had sighted them. With incredible swiftness it was plunging down from the starry void in a wide, sweeping flight which carried it over their heads at a distance of several hundred feet. On it went, and then, swerving, hung poised with neck outstretched, the personification of ghastly gloating. Evidently it was taking its time for the attack.

"Get under the car," Dick commanded, his face set and pale, but his voice firm. "Hurry! Dale, light the lamps—quick! It may help to dazzle him."

He had drawn the revolver which he had been carrying for the past two days, and, swiftly stooping, he turned on the actylehe. As he straightened up, June, her face white as chalk, sprang toward him and lifted her face to his for a brief instant.

"My dear!" she whispered brokenly.

He kissed her hurriedly, and then, with firm but gentle touch, thrust her after Celia, who had already disappeared beneath the car. Then he whirled about and faced the hovering monster of the air.

As the searchlights sprang up, splitting the darkness with a wide swath of light, the pterodactylus seemed to grow uneasy. The long, writhing neck twisted to and fro, and the creature circled higher in the air, where it hung quivering, the whir of vibrating wings sounding clear above every other sound.

"You fellows get behind me," Dick said tersely.

"I'll do my best to wound him, but if he gets past me, you must save the girls. Look out for the beak. If he comes at you, dodge or drop flat on the ground."

There was a murmur of agreement. Brad, seizing a wrench, stood directly back of his chum, while Dale,
armed only by a thin rod of metal from the tool box, took up his position at the rear of the car. There was a momentary pause, then—

"Look out!" cried Dick. "He's coming!"

Down swooped the monster straight for the lights which he seemed to take for the eyes of some living thing which flaunted him. Swiftly he swept on then, the snaky neck straight and rigid now, and the terrible beak extended.

Merriwell braced himself against the forward wheel and prayed for steadiness of aim.

Crack!

A streak of flame leaped from the revolver, lighting up the darkness for an instant behind the lamps.

The creature came on with undiminished speed.

Crack! Crack!

Two more bullets were wasted against the scaly armor of the flying reptile.

If he could only see the eyes! Every other point seemed invulnerable. It was almost upon them now, dropping swiftly downward in a sweeping rush. The perspiration stood out in beads on Merriwell's forehead, and, though he felt an almost irresistible impulse to fire the remaining bullets, he held himself with a determined effort.

The protruding head leaped suddenly into the path of light, not thirty feet distant. Appallingly hideous as it was, Dick's heart leaped with joy. The eyes were there, wide open and staring in the light of the powerful lamps. He must hit them—be must! It was the only chance left now.

Crack! Crack! Crack!

Crash!

The monster struck the car with terrific impact, smashing the lamps and wind shield with a splintering of glass, and driving the whole heavy body back several feet in spite of the tightly locked brakes.

Dick was thrown a dozen feet away by the single stroke of a powerful wing. Dale was knocked down by the backward motion of the car, but both leaped up again ready to stand their ground.

It was unnecessary. One of those last bullets had penetrated to a vital spot, and the pterodactylus was writhing in a horrible death struggle. Over and over the ground it went, twisting and turning and beating the great wings in agony. The air reeked with the foul odor from the dreadful thing, and resounded with a bellowing roar unlike anything they had ever heard.

Writhing, tossing, it neared the cliff. With one last frantic burst of terrifying sound, it toppled over, wings outspread, and sailed downward out of sight into the darkness. A moment later there was a loud, distant splash—then silence.

Out of the dim, vague past it had come, so now it vanished into the unsounded depths of the ocean, which hold, perhaps, as many equally great mysteries. A riddle it remained to the very end, and, as they stood there by the ruined car, their eyes straining out over the dark, restless water and their limbs trembling a little with released tension and infinite relief, a queer sense of unreality came over each one of the little group.

But, looking back at the splintered, twisted front of the car and seeing the empty revolver still clutched tightly in Merriwell's hand, they knew it to be no dream. It had really happened. They had been saved from a peril, the like of which no human being had ever known before, by the skill and bravery and steadfast purpose of this one man.

Suddenly Celia threw her arms about his neck and kissed him impulsively.

"There! I just couldn't help it!" she cried hysterically. "You're the most wonderful person I ever knew."

Dick's face grew pink and then he smiled. His eyes were fixed steadily on June's. Between those two there was no need of speech.

THE END.

In the story for next week, you will find Dick and Brad on their travels, viewing the wonders and industries of the country. They become involved in a strike of the employees of a mining company, and Dick shows himself a friend in need, not only to the anxious employers, but to the striking miners themselves. The story is called "Dick Merriwell, Mediator; or, The Strike at the Plum Valley Mine." No. 797. Out July 22d.
A STARTLING VISITOR.
By JOHN MARTIN.

A commercial traveler, on his business rounds in Kansas, came to that part of the large towns, where he found, upon his arrival, that the time which, under a lapse of memory, he had chosen for his visit, was most inopportune. "The races were on," and every house of accommodation was crowded to excess. Upon application to the landlady of the hotel where he had lighted the habit of staying, he was informed that every bed in the premises had been bespoken for a week before his coming; and, more than this, that even the very floors and tables of the dining room would be burdened at night with racing men and weary pleasure-seekers.

We are extremely sorry, sir," said Mrs. Boniface, "that we cannot receive you, an accustomed patron of the house; but under existing circumstances, it is impossible that we can. But," she added, "I will give you the names of some persons in the town who let rooms, and perhaps you will find among them some one who can give you a bed—at least, I hope so."

Our friend took the list of names with a rueful face, and at once set about the discovery of a place of rest for the night. But his search was fruitless. Every bed and house "shaded down" in the whole district was preengaged; and if he would remain in the town he must walk the streets until morning. But sooner than do this, he resolved to return to his good landlady of former days, and cast himself upon her benevolent condescension and sympathy.

"Upon my word, sir," she said, "you greatly distress and puzzle me. I really do not know where in the world I can put you up."

But after thinking for a moment, she asked: "Will you consent to occupy the hostler’s room, sir? It stands in a back part of the premises; and perhaps we could manage to make it—at least to some degree—comfortable for you."

The traveler thanked her warmly, and declared that the accommodation she spoke of was the very thing under the circumstances.

In about half an hour the hostler was called, and told to take a lantern and conduct the gentleman to his bedroom. The way proved to be across a large yard in the rear of the inn, up a steep-ladder, along a narrow boarded passage, then up three stairs, and finally through a doorway into the sleeping apartment. Our traveler found, upon looking around, that good use had been made of the half hour he had been kept waiting. A carpet had been put on the floor; blankets and sheets were unexceptionable.

"Good night," said the hostler, setting down his lantern to furnish some light. "I hope you will sleep well, sir; and, indeed, I think you'll have a better chance of doing so here than the gents in the house—you're away from the noise; and in times like these the streets all night are anything but quiet."

It was late in the autumn of the year—the nights were long—and our friend, rather tired, soon fell asleep, and did not wake until the gray dawn of the morning, and not even then, had he not been aroused by some one coming along the outer passage with a heavy step, and entering his bedroom. Turning round in his blankets to learn who the intruder,announced, to his man, tall, gaunt, and grim, his throat bare, the sleeves of his shirt turned up, and his hair all unkempt and standing upright in the most disorderly manner.

The dark figure drew near the traveler’s bed, stooped over him, and peered down closely in the dim light. Evidently anxious to find out if the person lying there was awake. Perceiving that this was the case, our traveler saw him, in the dusky light, draw himself upright in the room, then solemnly raise one arm, extend it, and point with his hand through the window to a place outside; after which, more impressively still, he shook over the extended limb, and motioned with his forefinger three times across his throat.

This done, the strange apparition abruptly departed, his feet singing as distinctly upon the floor and of the door on his going out, as they had been heard to do when he came in.

The commercial traveler was not a nervous man, and he had knowledge, more or less, of the strange occurrences and rough usage of the world. Yet, altogether, the silent intruder, and his most singular gestures, did not strike him as altogether pleasant or agreeable; and he would much rather not have been disturbed in such an unseasonable and unwarrantable manner. He would, however, make no more mention of the matter—at least for the present. Indeed, he felt himself powerless to do this in this lonely part of the premises. But he certainly, when he got up, would make complaint to Mrs. Boniface of the way in which he had been annoyed.
Fixing this purpose in his mind, his isolated lodger betook himself to his chamber, and almost encountered the footsteps of dreams, when, both to his vexation and alarm, the footsteps he had previously heard again sounded upon his ears—the same firm and measured tread—and soon his former visitor repeated his mysterious intrusion.

This time, the gaunt figure looked agitated and angry, and to our traveler's amazement and fear, carried in his right hand a large, long, and gleaming knife. Pointing his hand in a similar direction as before, he shook his grizzly head, and violently winked his eyes and stamped his foot; yet uttered never a word, but kept perfectly silent; and concluded all by dropping his hand and closing both his fingers, not his finger, but the huge knife, determinedly and slowly, across his exposed throat. After this ghastly pantomime, a second time he took his leave, proceeding along the narrow, floored passage, and down the stairladder to the inn yard.

The man before whom this awful dumb show had been performed crumpled and trembled in his bed. He had often heard of spectral and supernatural appearances, and had affected to laugh at those who declared they believed in them. But was this not, after all, an unearthly visitation? It looked extremely like it. He would not, however, fully conclude that he had really seen an apparition; yet he would guard against a third invasion of this uncanny guest. He would do what he now remembered he had unfortunately hitherto neglected—he would fasten the door of his room to stop any further discovery.

To his disappointment, however, when he came to secure his room door, he found that it was destitute of all fastenings. Feeling with his fingers in the dim twilight, no lock, nor bolt, nor latch could he find, he must discover.

Here was a desperate fix; and what plan for his safety could he now resort to? Thinking rapidly over the matter, nothing before it seemed to him, remained to be done than to roll his bedstead head foremost against the door, and thus effectually block up all means of entrance.

Luckily the bedstead was upon casters; it was therefore easily moved; so he had no difficulty in carrying his scheme; and returned once more to bed, somewhat more certain of immunity from intrusion. He could not, however, settle himself for further sleep, he had been too much disturbed and unnerved for additional repose, so he resolved to be awake in his bed until broad daylight.

A quarter of an hour had but barely passed, when our traveler for the third time heard the same footsteps approaching his bedroom. He felt somewhat calm and indifferent, however; for had he not rendered his apartment completely impregnable? But shortlived was this feeling of confidence; for in a few minutes the footsteps seemed to him heard hands and knees pressing hard against it. Then a violent push was made, and, after that, another and another, till the bedstead, on its too facile casters, was driven back into the middle of the floor, and ourapper appeared before him, and with tenfold added horrors; for his face and hands were smeared with blood, as was also the knife which, on his second coming, he had carried. Holding it in his right hand, he drew his son-stained weapon for the second time across his throat, repeating the action once, twice, and thrice; then again shook ominously his disheveled locks; and, turning upon his heel with a look of angry portent, left the apartment.

Our traveler was almost sick with terror; he shook in every limb, while the cold perspiration oozed from every pore of his body. He was an unbeliever in apparitions no longer. He could not stand out against positive proof, and here he had the clear and certain and repeated demonstration of his bodily senses.

When he judged the specter quite gone, and the coast clear, he rose, and hastily dressed himself, rushing down the stairladder, and into the inn, where he roused the whole inmates of the house with his cries that some dreadful tragedy had been committed on the premises, and that every effort should be made to discover and arrest the murderer of his guests.

So much for the ghost; and now for the laying of it. It turned out, upon inquiry, that the gaunt and grotesque figure which had haunted our traveler was only a poor dumb lad, who was sent by the hostler to kill pigs. On this morning three of these animals had to meet the common doom of their kind.

The first visit of the lad to our traveler's room was to inform him how the hostler deliberately slept there—how his food was come for their deadly work, intimating the manner of it by the three passes of his finger across his throat. Upon leaving the room, and finding, after due interval, that the hostler—as he took our traveler to be—had not arisen for his task, he returned that same time, and finding his call had not been obeyed, and took the slaughtering knife with him, as a token and sign of what the lazy hostler had to get up and do. By the time of his third visit to the room, death without the aid of his fellow, and he brought the bloodstained knife to signify as much; and in dumb show to say:

"You may now lie in your bed there for another hour or two, if you like; but I too bad of you to leave all this troublesome piece of butcher's work to me."

We are sorry we cannot add that the traveler was quite pleased either with his wild adventure, or for he felt that he had cut rather a sorry figure in the early morning; and he could not help observing that those whom he aroused with his clamor and terror were slipping back to their rooms with much louder indications of remorse than our hero could properly appreciate. He took an early train out of town, not even troubling his laudable to make breakfast for him.

**TWO SAD CASES.**

A professional beggar was standing with a board in front of him, with the inscription: "I am blind," when a gentleman threw a dime on the ground.

The blind man instantly picked it up.

The gentleman asked, "Why, I thought you were blind."

"The fellow, after a moment's hesitation, looked at the board, and then said, "I'm bless'd if they haven't made a mistake, and put a wrong board on me this morning. I'm deaf and dumb.""

The above reminds us of another affecting story of a kind-hearted lady who was passing a street beggar who bore on his breast a placard declaring that he was deaf and dumb. The kind lady read the placard, and said to the beggar, "My good man, how long have you been deaf and dumb?"

="Ever since my birth," the man ingenuously answered.

"What a heart-touching affliction," said the good lady, as she placed half a dollar in the poor fellow's outstretched palm, and passed on.

**MOVING THE JURY.**

A Canadian barrister named McSweeney was a thorough student of human nature, and master of the art of observation. Nothing escaped his notice. While engaged upon a case he watched the jury as a cat watches a mouse, and frequently astonished his clients by ending his arguments very abruptly and submitting the matter to the jury.

"I've known many a case to be talked to death after it had been won," he said, "What is the use of wasting time and breath after the jury is converted to your way of thinking? I believe I can tell when I have my jury well in hand. At that point they are always most susceptible to my speech. I take it that a client employs a lawyer to win his case, and not to display his oratorical abilities."

The peculiarity of the great criminal lawyer was well shown at a murder trial in Montreal a few years ago. Mr. McSweeney appeared for the defendant. The state had apparently made out a very clear case against the prisoner. When Mr. McSweeney arose to make his address to the jury, he carefully avoided any reference to the facts set forth in the evidence or the laws governing them. He pointed out the terrible responsibility resting upon the twelve men who were sitting in judgment upon the life of one of their fellow citizens. He added that the verdict of guilty would not fall heaviest upon the prisoner, but upon his family. He asked the jury to think for a moment of the effect of an adverse verdict upon the wife and little ones of the prisoner.

Then the lawyer drew a word picture which was a marvel of artistic rhetoric. He pictured the eyes of the jurymen the home of the accused man. He showed the patient and loving wife leaving her work to cast many an anxious glance down the road to see if her husband was yet in sight, eager to be the first to catch a glimpse of his figure in the distance, that a steaming supper might await him upon his arrival. He pictured three ruddy-faced children swinging upon the old gate, waiting till papa should come home; that he might notice that one of the jurymen had considerable difficulty in swallowing a large lump which choked him, and that there was a suspicious moisture in his eye.

The speaker paused. Turning toward that juror, he held out
AN ECLECTIC MAN.

We used to know an eccentric old man who delighted in being odd, and carrying out his taste in dress and manners; nevertheless he was kind and honest, just in his dealings, and a man that used great plainness of speech. He generally wore a red vest of great length, patriarchal style, and the ribbons on his hat were streaming in the wind half a yard long. One very cold morning he called at the minister's, and a dialogue followed something like this:

"Gentlemen, you must send him home to them."

Shifting uneasily in his seat, the juror blurted out:

"Yes, we'll do it, too."

McSweeney instantly sat down. The case was won. His client was acquitted. But the most interesting point in this case, Perhaps, was the fact, which the lawyer afterward learned, that the prisoner at the bar was an unmarried man.

ORIGIN OF TRADE-MARKS.

Trade-marks are understood to be nearly as old as the industry of the human race. Ancient Babylon had property symbols, and the Chinese claim to have had trade-marks one thousand years before Christ. Gutenberg, the inventor of printing, had a lawsuit about a trade-mark, and won it. As early as 130 the English parliament authorized trade-marks, and the laws of other countries have also protected them. Extraordinary means have been required at all times to guard against the fraudulent use of marks of manufacturers. If there were no means of identifying the trade-mark, the best goods at once lost their value. This was discovered very early, and it is deemed probable that the successors of Tathall Cain were the first to use distinctive marks on their manufactures. This is about as near as it is possible to arrive at data.

ROUGH ON THE BOYS.

In a certain academy it was announced that a new teacher of mathematics was coming the next day, and the boys prepared to initiate him. They went to a narrow lane, up which he would probably come, and rigged up a complicated apparatus to trip him up and shower him with flour.

While thus engaged, a well-dressed, stylish young man surprised them. He was a stranger, and they imagined he came from another school near by, which impression was heightened when he volunteered his services, and suggested many improvements in the "trap."

When completed, the boys and their new friend moved away some distance to await the result. Two hours passed in uncomfortable silence, and then one of the leaders said:

"I don't believe he'll come to-night."

"Oh, yes," said the stranger pleasantly; "the truth is he has come."

"What?" cried the boys.

"In fact," continued the young man, "I am Professor C, and I hope our relations will continue to be agreeable. I am sorry to have disappointed you by coming by an earlier train; but I am glad, because it has made us acquainted in a very effective way."

The boys tried no more tricks on that professor.

WHO WAS BLIND?

"John," said his master, "did you take the note to Mr. Jones?"

"Yes," replied the servant, "but I don't think he can read it."

"Why so, John?"

"Because he is blind, sir. While I was in the room, he axed me twice where my hat was, and it wun on me head all the time."
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 8 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. Fourmen.

Pipe Smoking.

Prof. Fourmen: Having been a reader of Tip Top for the past three years, I take the liberty of sending you my measurements. Age, 18 years; height, 5 feet 9½ inches; weight, 120 pounds; chest, 31 inches; waist, 30 inches; thigh, 16 inches; neck, 13½ inches. I would like to have you tell me if it is harmful to smoke a pipe five or six times a day. I am very sorry to trouble you, but I know that you are the only man to help me.

Syracuse, N. Y.

E. J. Bullock.

Your measurements are very good, but you will do well to develop your chest to four or five inches more, and your thigh muscles are a trifle under the standard. Pipe smoking comes under the head of the general use of tobacco, and, as has often been said in this column, tobacco in any form whatever is injurious beyond a doubt. If you smoke at all, the pipe is probably the best form to use, as it is much less harmful than cigarettes, cigars, or chewing tobacco. No athlete can consider himself in prime condition if he touches tobacco in any form. It affects the heart and breathing apparatus, and, while many confirmed users of the weed live to advanced age in apparent comfort, no tobacco user can be considered entirely healthy.

Kidney Trouble.

Prof. Fourmen: As I am a reader of Tip Top, I take the liberty of asking you a few questions. My age is 10 years 2 months. My measurements are: Height, 5 feet 7¼ inches; weight, 140 pounds; chest, 32½ inches; calf, 14½ inches; waist, 31 inches; neck, 13 inches. What are my weak points? I take exercises daily. I have a weak back partly due to kidney trouble, and my blood is impure. I hope you will be able to give me some advice besides recommending a doctor.

Oswego, N. Y.

W. Wieneke.

Your measurements are very good, and if your chest was three or four inches larger your development would be very near the standard. For impure blood exercise is one of the most valuable things, but diet is of equal importance. You should certainly consult a reliable physician in regard to your kidney trouble. Any disease of the kidneys is very serious and dangerous, and should not be neglected. If you know that your kidneys are diseased, you should regulate your diet with the greatest care. Take no foods containing starches or sugar, eat only the specially prepared gluten bread, and take little or no meat. Coffee and tea are very bad, and should be shunned along with all alcoholic beverages.

Great Improvement.

Prof. Fourmen: As I have been a reader of Tip Top for over four years, I take the liberty to ask you a few questions. My measurements are as follows: Age, 16 years 6 months; weight, 148 pounds; neck, 14½ inches; chest, 36¼ inches; waist, 29 inches; thigh, 19¼ inches; calf, 14 inches; height, 5 feet 9½ inches. I take exercise every morning that puts into play every muscle of the body. Three years ago I was about the weakest boy in town. I used to smoke cigarettes and swear, drink, and chew; but reading Tip Top and your letters saved me. Three months after I had given up cigarettes I felt like a new boy. Would you advise me to join the Y. M. C. A.?

Danielson, Conn.

Abram W. Arthur.

Your measurements are very good, but it is to be hoped that your system of exercise will develop your chest about four inches more; and your thigh muscles will be benefited by a little extra attention. It is very gratifying to hear that Tip Top has had such a splendid influence for good in your case. If boys could only appreciate the health and happiness that come from good habits and clean living, we should have little use for reformed schools and the like. The Y. M. C. A. is a great organization for young men in the world, and you could make a mistake in joining it.

Excellent.

Prof. Fourmen: I would like to know if I come up to the average measurements. Height, 5 feet 2 inches; weight, 102 pounds; chest, 32 inches; calves, 13 inches; waist, 26 inches; neck, 13 inches; thigh, 10 inches; age, 13 years.

Marble Falls, Texas.

Your measurements are excellent and need no especial comment. Keep up your present condition by careful exercise and training and your athletic future should be very promising.

A Young Author.

Prof. Fourmen: I am a constant reader of Tip Top, and would like to ask your advice. I am 16 years old and attend the Jersey City high school, but am going to take entrance exams for a five-year course in civil engineering at Cooper Union this September. At present I am writing a book. Although I can write a composition very easily, introducing conversation into a story gives me quite a little trouble. Still I am getting along fairly well with it. Don't authors use a special paper called "foolscap"? What should be done with a story after it is written? Should it be sent to some publisher or first be approved by some writer? Please name some good publisher that the book can be sent to. About how much is paid for a fairly good book of the usual length? Which pay best: magazine or book publishers? Do magazines accept complete novels by a writer as young as I?

Jersey City, N. J.

Herman Gordon.

Your contemplated course in civil engineering is very commendable, and such training will be of great value to you, if you have a taste for work of that sort. You should go at the matter of writing a book very gingerly unless you feel that you have adequately prepared yourself for literary work by taking thorough courses in grammar, rhetoric, and English literature. The making of writing dialogues in stories will be a trial to you if you will study the works of the great masters of English fiction. There is no prescribed size of paper for authors, but most of them prefer, for convenience, a sheet about the size of the common business letter sheet. Manuscript should be typewritten, as some editors will not consider it if it is submitted in longhand. Manuscripts should be mailed flat or folded—never rolled; and a sufficient amount of postage should accompany them to insure their return if unavailable. The matter of asking the opinion of some writer before submitting a story to an editor is one of personal preference. If you have a friend who is an able critic, it might be well to get his opinion, but it is not necessary. You will do well to submit your story to any reputable book or magazine publisher. The book publishers arrange most of the remuneration in the way of royalties, but the magazine publishers usually pay cash at the rate of from half a cent to five cents a word, according to the excellence of the work. The age of the writer does not count with editors. Everything is based upon quality and interest. But most young writers are lacking in experience or training, and the crude story, put together with inferior craftsmanship, is of no interest to any one but the man that wrote it. Be patient, if you wish to become a successful writer, and do not look for success too early in your career.
TIP TOP CHAMPIONSHIP TOURNAMENT OF 1911

One chance for glory and the TIP TOP Pennant
Two chances for a complete equipment of uniforms

BEGIN NOW! TOURNAMENT CLOSES OCTOBER 15th

FIRST—The team that plays the greatest number of games, scores the most runs and loses the fewest games will be declared the TIP TOP CHAMPIONSHIP TEAM OF 1911, and will receive A HANDSOME CHAMPIONSHIP PENNANT OF FINE SILK, bearing an appropriate inscription. In addition, the team will receive A COMPLETE EQUIPMENT OF NINE HIGH-GRADE UNIFORMS, consisting of cap, shirt, breeches, belt, stockings and shoes. The suit will be of gray, trimmed with the colors of the club, and lettered with the insignia of the club. The shoes will be of fine black calfskin with steel spikes.

SECOND—The team showing the next highest average will be declared the winner of second place in the tournament, and will receive a prize of the same equipment of uniforms.

CONDITIONS OF THE CONTEST
For each game played during the season by a competing team the manager must fill out a certificate, like that below, sign it, obtain the endorsement of his postmaster or a reputable news dealer, as provided in the certificate, and mail it to this office. In addition to this, newspaper accounts of the game should be sent with the certificate if possible. THE LAST CERTIFICATE OF THE SEASON MUST BE MAILED ON OR BEFORE OCTOBER 15th.

In the event of a tie between two teams, the batting and fielding average of the teams will be considered. The captains of competing teams are therefore advised to preserve the detailed score of each game, but not to send it to this office unless requested to do so.

TIP TOP BASEBALL TOURNAMENT OF 1911

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CLUB CERTIFICATE</th>
<th>MEMBERS OF TEAM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name of Team</td>
<td>Pitcher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name of Opposing Team</td>
<td>Catcher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winner</td>
<td>1st Base</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Score</td>
<td>2nd Base</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manager</td>
<td>3rd Base</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Address</td>
<td>Short Stop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>R. Field</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Endorsement of</td>
<td>C. Field</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postmaster or</td>
<td>L. Field</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>News dealer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ALL OF THE BACK NUMBERS OF
TIP TOP WEEKLY
THAT CAN NOW BE SUPPLIED

PRICE, FIVE CENTS PER COPY
If you want any back numbers of our weeklies and cannot procure them from your news-dealer, they can be obtained direct from this office. Postage-stamps taken the same as money.

STREET & SMITH, PUBLISHERS, 79-89 SEVENTH AVE., NEW YORK
EARLY NUMBERS OF THE
TIP TOP WEEKLY

WILL BE FOUND IN THE NEW MEDAL LIBRARY

A few years ago we were obliged to disappoint thousands of readers who wanted the stories of the early adventures of Frank and Dick Merriwell which were published in Tip Top, because we did not have copies of the numbers that contained them. It was impossible for us to reprint Tip Top Weekly, so we made the stories up in book form and published them in the New Medal Library at intervals of about four weeks beginning with No. 150.

Here is a list of these splendid books which contain Nos. 1 to 509 of Tip Top Weekly. Our experience with these books has taught us that thousands of boys are overjoyed at this opportunity to secure their favorite stories in a more compact and permanent form. Price, Fifteen Cents per copy.

150—Frank Merriwell's School-days.
167—Frank Merriwell's Chums.
178—Frank Merriwell's Dues.
184—Frank Merriwell's Trip West.
189—Frank Merriwell Down South.
193—Frank Merriwell's Bravery.
197—Frank Merriwell's Hunting Tour.
201—Frank Merriwell in Europe.
205—Frank Merriwell at Yale.
209—Frank Merriwell's Sports Afield.
213—Frank Merriwell's Races.
217—Frank Merriwell's Bicycle Tour.
225—Frank Merriwell's Courage.
229—Frank Merriwell's Daring.
233—Frank Merriwell's Athletes.
237—Frank Merriwell's Skill.
240—Frank Merriwell's Champions.
244—Frank Merriwell's Return to Yale.
247—Frank Merriwell's Secret.
251—Frank Merriwell's Danger.
255—Frank Merriwell's Loyalty.
258—Frank Merriwell in Camp.
260—Frank Merriwell's Vacation.
263—Frank Merriwell's Coach.
267—Frank Merriwell's Cruise.
271—Frank Merriwell's Chase.
276—Frank Merriwell in Maine.
280—Frank Merriwell's Stunt.
284—Frank Merriwell's First Job.
292—Frank Merriwell's Hard Luck.
296—Frank Merriwell's Protege.
300—Frank Merriwell on the Road.
304—Frank Merriwell's Own Company.
308—Frank Merriwell's Fame.
312—Frank Merriwell's College Chums.
316—Frank Merriwell's Problem.
320—Frank Merriwell's Fortune.
324—Frank Merriwell's New Comedian.
328—Frank Merriwell's Prosperity.
332—Frank Merriwell's Stage Hit.
336—Frank Merriwell's Great Scheme.
344—Frank Merriwell on the Boulevards.
348—Frank Merriwell's Duel.
352—Frank Merriwell's Double Shot.
356—Frank Merriwell's Baseball Victories.
359—Frank Merriwell's Confidence.
362—Frank Merriwell's Auto.
363—Frank Merriwell's Fun.
370—Frank Merriwell's Generosity.
371—Frank Merriwell's Tricks.
374—Frank Merriwell's Temptation.
377—Frank Merriwell on Top.
380—Frank Merriwell's Luck.
383—Frank Merriwell's Mascot.
386—Frank Merriwell's Reward.
389—Frank Merriwell's Phantom.
392—Frank Merriwell's Faith.
395—Frank Merriwell's Victories.
398—Frank Merriwell's Iron Nerve.
401—Frank Merriwell in Kentucky.
404—Frank Merriwell's Power.
407—Frank Merriwell's Shrewdness.
410—Frank Merriwell's Set-back.
413—Frank Merriwell's Search.
416—Frank Merriwell's Club.
419—Frank Merriwell's Trust.
422—Frank Merriwell's False Friend.
425—Frank Merriwell's Strong Arm.
428—Frank Merriwell's Coach.
431—Frank Merriwell's Brother.
434—Frank Merriwell's Marvel.
437—Frank Merriwell's Support.
440—Dick Merriwell at Pardale.
443—Dick Merriwell's Glory.
446—Dick Merriwell's Promise.
449—Dick Merriwell's Rescues.
452—Dick Merriwell's Narrow Escape.
455—Dick Merriwell's Racket.
458—Dick Merriwell's Revenge.
461—Dick Merriwell's Ruse.
464—Dick Merriwell's Delivery.
467—Dick Merriwell's Wonders.
470—Frank Merriwell's Honor.
473—Dick Merriwell's Diamond.
476—Frank Merriwell's Winners.
479—Dick Merriwell's Dash.
482—Dick Merriwell's Ability.
485—Dick Merriwell's Trap.
488—Dick Merriwell's Defense.
491—Dick Merriwell's Model.
494—Dick Merriwell's Mystery.
497—Frank Merriwell's Backers.
500—Dick Merriwell's Backstop.
503—Dick Merriwell's Western Mission.
506—Frank Merriwell's Rescue.
509—Frank Merriwell's Encounter.
512—Dick Merriwell's Marked Money.
515—Frank Merriwell's Nomads.
518—Dick Merriwell on the Gridiron.
521—Dick Merriwell's Disguise.
524—Dick Merriwell's Test.
527—Frank Merriwell's Trump Card.
530—Frank Merriwell's Strategy.
533—Frank Merriwell's Triumph.
536—Dick Merriwell's Grit.
539—Dick Merriwell's Assurance.
542—Dick Merriwell's Long Slide.
545—Frank Merriwell's Rough Deal.
548—Dick Merriwell's Threat.
551—Dick Merriwell's Persistence.
554—Dick Merriwell's Day.
557—Frank Merriwell's Peril.
560—Dick Merriwell's Downfall.
563—Frank Merriwell's Pursuit.
566—Dick Merriwell Abroad.
569—Frank Merriwell in the Rockies.
572—Dick Merriwell's Pranks.
575—Frank Merriwell's Pride.
578—Frank Merriwell's Challengers.
581—Dick Merriwell's Endurance.
584—Dick Merriwell's Cleverness.
587—Frank Merriwell's Marriage.
590—Dick Merriwell, the Wizard.
593—Dick Merriwell's Stroke.
596—Dick Merriwell's Return.
599—Dick Merriwell's Resource.
602—Dick Merriwell's Five.
605—Frank Merriwell's Tigers.
608—Dick Merriwell's Polo Team.

Published about March 12th, 1911.
611—Frank Merriwell's Pupils.
Published about April 4th, 1911.
614—Frank Merriwell's New Boy.
Published about April 29th, 1911.
617—Dick Merriwell's Home Run.
Published about May 16th, 1911.
620—Dick Merriwell's Dare.

STREET & SMITH, Publishers, NEW YORK CITY